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Algerian Youth and Entrepreneurship: The Struggles of Employment and the Mechanisms of Social Integration

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Abstract:

Youth is considered the paper on which various countries of the world are betting, as this category constitutes an important human wealth in achieving economic and social development, due to its characteristics and components that help it to work and give, as youth is part of the issue as well as part of the solution, which requires the need to invest in it properly so that its efforts are directed in a proper manner.

Among the most important issues that concern young people, including Algerian youth, is the issue of employment, which has many difficulties, so we find that the Algerian state pays great attention to this issue through its adoption of multiple employment programs and its encouragement of entrepreneurial projects that create more opportunities for work outside the government sector for young people, thus contributing to their integration into society.

Keywords: Youth, entrepreneurship, employment, integration.

Introduction:

Youth is an important vital wealth for any society, as it symbolizes strength and giving, and is therefore a segment that is not to be underestimated, requiring the need to invest and exploit it for the benefit of society in its economic, social and cultural aspects and to achieve its stability and security; this is what made the interest in studying youth and their issues receive great attention in various human and social studies and international organizations and bodies.

Youth is an important stage in which the individual realizes the traditional and value system and the expectations it includes on his various life roles, according to which the rights, duties, interactions and the pattern of the social relationship in which he is involved, and among the issues that form the focus of the interest of the youth group is the issue of employment and obtaining a job that guarantees him a decent living and achieving a social status in society.

The issue of employment is one of the most important issues to which the countries of the world pay great attention, regardless of their degree of progress and development, because it is a basic mechanism for achieving economic and social development, and ensuring the material and moral

stability of individuals in society, because it provides jobs and material incomes that help to achieve their social integration; in this context, we find that most economies of developed countries are based on entrepreneurial projects that play an important developmental role as they contribute to the development of creative skills among young people and empower them professionally and socially.

In Algeria, we also find that the state has paid great attention to the issue of employment. Since independence, it has been the main contractor and has been responsible for creating jobs for young people, but as a result of the difficulties experienced by public institutions on the one hand and the high percentage of youth as an active category of job seekers on the other hand, employment in the public sector has become a difficult issue as job offers decreased and demand increased, especially after the drop in oil prices in 1986, which required finding other mechanisms to open the field of employment more and transform youth from job seekers to creators through various entrepreneurial projects.

Through this article, we will try to shed more light on the programs adopted by the Algerian state in order to provide more job opportunities for young people in order to help integrate them into society and achieve balance and stability.

Conceptual framework:

1- The concept of youth:

Researchers differed on providing a precise definition of the concept of youth, due to the biological, psychological and social changes surrounding this category, so we will try to define the concept from several directions:

- ✓ **The temporal or age orientation:** It is the one that considers youth as an age between (15-30) years, which is the stage in which physical and mental development is completed in a way that makes one capable of performing various functions. (Al-Zayoud Majid, 2011, p. 46)

In the same context, Ahmed Zaki Badawi defines youth as “individuals between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, that is, those who have completed the general re-schooling, and this stage is characterized as a transitional stage to manhood or motherhood, in which individuals exceed the stage of guidance and care and are more affected, and therefore this stage needs special attention. (Badawi Ahmed Zaki, 1987, p. 452)

- ✓ **Biological trend:** The proponents of this trend tend to define the stage of youth on the basis of the completion of the development of the organic and functional structure of the basic components of the human body, whether internal or external, such as muscles and so on.
- ✓ **Psychological approach:** Proponents of this trend believe that youth is not an age stage determined by a specific age, but a psychological state that has nothing to do with chronological age, you are young as long as you feel vitality, enthusiasm, movement, ambition, security in life and the importance of the role assigned to the individual, and this trend reflects the human outlook on life, as long as he feels that he enjoys vitality and youth and as long as he can generate in others the desire to work and life is young, and when he fails in this he feels despair, frustration and the desire to escape from life, and this is the beginning of old age stage. (Al-Zayoud Majid, 2011, p. 46)
- ✓ **Social orientation:** It is the one that believes that the period of youth begins when the construction of society tries to qualify the person to occupy a social position and play a role

or roles in its construction and ends when the person can occupy his position and fulfill his role in the social context according to the criteria of social interaction. (Al-Zayoud Majid, 2011, p. 46)

In this context, sociologists defined the concept of youth as adolescence and beyond, and that caring for youth is done within the framework of social solidarity and the development of the family by caring for the education, economic and cultural welfare of young people to enable them to integrate socially and professionally. (Olivier Galland, 2011,P6)

Bourdieu also considered it to be a word, a heterogeneous and variable social construct that is embedded in a general context that considers age to be a biological construct that can be socially manipulated.

In other words, “youth is a social reality defined by society for a generation that includes groups close in age and different in terms of gender and social affiliation, which share the fact that they pass through the institutions of socialization, the stage of preparation and await entry into social life. (Abdelrazak Amgran, 2008, p. 268)

From the above, it is clear to us that there are different trends in finding precise bases for defining the concept of youth, as each trend is influenced by the angles and areas of interest; in general, youth represents an important stage of human development in which biological characteristics are crystallized through rapid physical changes that have an impact on youth behaviors, in addition to psychological and social characteristics, in this stage the individual's personality is complete and manifests signs of maturity and maturity, making him able to determine different intellectual, social, cultural, economic and political life positions.

2- The concept of entrepreneurship:

The concept of entrepreneurship has become widely circulated, as a result of the economic and social role it plays in the course of society, as it is a bridge between creativity, innovation and application by harnessing the three natural factors of production, labor, capital and the entrepreneur, who is the engine of the coordination process between economic resources and the subjective characteristics he possesses in order to create an economic activity.

Entrepreneurship is the source of ideas and methods that enable the creation and development of an activity in a new or existing organization through a combination of risk and innovation; it also represents a series of stages in which opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited.(Dassa Mustafa, 2022, pp. 4-5)

Thus, entrepreneurship is a dynamic process through which increasing wealth is generated, and wealth is created by individuals who incur basic risks in terms of equality, time, professional commitment or providing a certain value in order to perform a service or purchase a certain good, the production of any good may or may not be a new thing, but the entrepreneur must determine the value by receiving and distributing key skills and resources. (Hezrich Robert, p. 24)

We also find that the concept of entrepreneurship has evolved according to three approaches, each approach depends on a particular angle of analysis, and this is evident through:

- ✓ **Functional approach:** It is widely used in the economic fields and asks the question “what”, finding that the essence of entrepreneurship lies in the realization and exploitation

of new opportunities in the field of enterprises while using the various resources that are put to use to produce new combinations.

- ✓ **Individual approach:** It mostly uses the psychological and social aspect and asks the question “why” and “who”, contracting means a gradual process of creating a human being (i.e. it is concerned with the human being and focuses on building him through his embarking on contracting work, so contracting is a wealth created by individuals, working to preserve it and take risks, especially those related to shares, time, and commitment to provide services and products with added value even if the products are not unique, but they are valuable and appear in the work of the contractor who is keen to secure and employ the necessary skills and resources to achieve this.
- ✓ **The managerial approach:** Based on the processes used in the field of management science (management), or a theory in organizations and asks the question “how”, this approach sees that entrepreneurship is a process that involves creating an idea, evaluating personal capabilities, making decisions and actions related to the present and future, as entrepreneurship is the phenomenon of creating and organizing new activities through the scientific examination of how and by what opportunities exist to create services in the future, so it is a process that involves discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities. (Adan Nabilah, 2019, pp. 97-98)

Based on the above, we can say that entrepreneurship is an important activity that helps to create new or innovative projects and manage resources with outstanding efficiency that contributes significantly to achieving economic and social development, linked to a number of personal, legal, economic and social determinants.

3- The concept of social inclusion:

Integration is defined linguistically as entering or inserting something into something else or part into a whole and harmony and compatibility with it in the sense of integration, orientation and blending (Al-Bustani Fouad Ikram, 1978, p. 123); as for social inclusion, it is the opposite of the concept of social exclusion, which means providing some rights for all individuals and groups such as work, housing, education, health care ...

Social integration is defined as the process by which an individual can adapt to his social environment in which he lives, by adhering to its rules and regulations, to learn and introduce all forms of behavior and ways of thinking and absorb the culture of his society to be part of his personality. (Massoudan Ahmed, 2006, p. 47)

The concept of social integration is related to the concept of professional integration, which is achieved when the young job seeker obtains a stable professional position in a specific period of time in line with his life project, and is completed when the individual obtains a stable professional position or status in the labor market that enables him to gain qualified professional experience.

Some sociologists such as Robart Castel (Castel) view integration as a professional space that expresses first and foremost a distinctive basis for belonging in the social structure, since professional integration serves as a guide and awakening to strengthen social ties and cohesion, unlike the situation of marginalization, as it enables the individual to achieve himself, form his professional identity and obtain social recognition. (Diras Omar, 2021, p. 67)

It can be said that the concept of social integration refers to the state helping young people to adapt to the social environment to which they belong by opening more job opportunities for them,

developing their personality, developing their creativity, and achieving their openness to the professional and social environment.

2/ The importance of youth in society:

The category of youth received great attention by thinkers and holders of power and decision-making at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially with the political, economic and cultural turmoil that the world witnessed, and therefore governments were alerted to the need to pay attention to youth as a driver of trends and attitudes towards events and also a maker of patterns and conditions of development and development in the future.

The importance of youth today and in the future stands out as an active group characterized by strength, vitality and the ability to change, "The youth in any nation are those who represent the educated and conscious class, who have taken their share of education and culture, as youth everywhere and in all roles of history until this day, the tool of change because they have the ability that other groups do not have in changing societies, and they have a prominent role in the cultures and customs of societies. (Abul Nasr Medhat, 2019, p. 234); that is, they represent a pressure force for change and rapid achievement that does not accept stillness and stability.

Statistically, we find that they represent a high percentage of the total population in Arab societies in general and Algerian society in particular, exceeding 50%, and therefore the future of Arab societies is linked to their youth, which necessitates their integration into development policy and their empowerment in various sectors.

It should be noted that youth are viewed in two different ways, the first is that youth are part of the solution and the second is that youth are part of the issue, as youth are positively the pillar of social and economic development and are its tool and goal, as they constitute a great societal energy if they are well invested and utilized.

Negatively, youth is a force capable of destroying development achievements and creating social unrest, if it does not find those who invest its power and direct it in the right direction that satisfies and benefits society; youth are also more accepting of the changes occurring in the world as they work to adapt their behavior to conform to these changes, as they contribute to various efforts to make changes in social systems, including social roles.

Therefore, the issue of integrating youth into society and meeting their needs is a big bet for countries in order to create balance and stability in society, and this can only be achieved by finding solutions to the issues that youth may face, the most important of which is the issue of unemployment, as obtaining a job is an opportunity to achieve goals, stability and social status; and working to rehabilitate youth and consider them as participants in society and not recipients, by investing the value of participation and enhancing their spirit of citizenship so that they can play major roles in the development of their countries.

3/ Importance of Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship as a thought and activity has become a phenomenon worthy of attention in contemporary societies, due to its great importance in the economic and social development sought by various human societies, especially the developing ones, which required them to work significantly with concerted efforts in order to produce skilled generations who possess the spirit of innovation and creativity, recognize investment opportunities, and take the initiative to adopt them

in an organized manner in order to come up with successful projects that achieve their goals in achieving profit and growth. Its importance can be identified in the following: (Dasa Mustafa, 2022, pp. 7-8)

- Creating many projects that are important for the development of the economy and its development, including improving the individual financial situation and even the community.
- Providing multiple job opportunities, commensurate with the community's labor force.
- Opening the field of employment for individuals in jobs that are often better for them.
- Developing many strategic industries, especially in rural areas.
- Encourage the industrialization of local materials into finished products.
- Potentially introducing a radical innovation that has a positive impact on the economy as a whole.
- Encouraging the use of modern technologies at the level of small industries to increase productivity.
- Developing entrepreneurial qualities and attitudes among new entrepreneurs to achieve further progress.
- Reducing talent migration by providing a new entrepreneurial climate.

Based on the above, we find that the trend towards contracting work is one of the largest sources of job creation within local and even national communities, as contracting work is classified as a private sector, which provides millions of job opportunities, whether provided by factories, agricultural and service companies, and some small and medium-sized businesses; job creation also has social and economic implications and effects, as it accelerates the economic growth of countries as a whole, as more jobs mean more income, and this increases the demand for goods and thus increases production, and then increases the demand for jobs again and so on, that is, it creates what is called cyclical demand

In general, we can say that entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in revitalizing the economies of countries with different degrees of development, as well as helping individuals create jobs for themselves and others and achieve social status. Through this new approach, we find that Algeria also wanted to move away from the policy of centralized planning based on the full support of the state through the creation of large projects, and to create new development mechanisms through the creation of small private enterprises.

This is why microenterprises have become a source of economic security and social stability in societies and contribute to the development of skills, and thus a source of economic growth for society, and improve the institutional performance of economic units, which develops production and improves its quality, and thus its competitiveness, whose goal is to increase income, which reflects positively on the status of workers. (Tashtoush Habel Abdelmoula, 2012, p. 47)

Thus, entrepreneurship is a source of creating more job opportunities for young people and pushing them to adopt new ideas, solutions and means of work, as it plays an important role in integrating young people as active members of society and addressing the issues that may result from their unemployment.

4/ Entrepreneurship in Algeria as a mechanism to integrate youth into society:

The phenomenon of youth unemployment is continuously rising in Algeria, especially among young people with university degrees, which reflects the growth of the active labor force compared to the growth of the labor supply, which led to a clear imbalance in the structure of the economy, which was unable to absorb the qualifications and competencies; “where we find that the age group between 18 and 24 years old alone represents 32.5 percent of the unemployed in 2004, but it declined to 26 in 2017 and may reach 63.7 percent of the unemployed under the age of 30, so it can be said that unemployment in Algeria is a youth phenomenon par excellence. (Drass Omar, 2021, pp. 49-50)

Hence the need for employment in Algeria, especially after the inability of the state to provide job positions, as for a long time the state took upon itself the policy of integrating the youth of society into the world of work, as it was the sole contractor through its huge public institutions that represented the first sector in employment, and a field for providing job positions for job seekers because they were productive institutions that depended on intensive labor to achieve productivity and profit, which led to the alleviation of unemployment after the establishment of large public institutions in which employment was based on social rather than economic criteria.

“However, the Algerian economy was based on the mono-export of oil, and the sudden drop in its prices on the world market in 1986 was accompanied by the collapse of the directed economic system and the imposition of economic, political and institutional reforms with a liberal orientation after the state submitted to the directives of the World Bank and IMF experts to apply the so-called structural adjustment measures during the period (1994-1997) in exchange for rescheduling Algeria's debt, which reached 63 billion dollars in the early 1990s. (Daras Omar, 2021, p. 42)

This resulted in a striking increase in unemployment rates, which led to the explosion of the Algerian street with the outbreak of youth demonstrations in 1988 to express their rejection of the policy of exclusion and marginalization.

After this socio-political crisis, the state introduced policies and programs to promote employment policy and youth integration and overcome this deficit, by establishing other employment mechanisms in line with the aspirations of young people, these mechanisms depend in their content on social support mechanisms, as we see for example in the vocational integration program, and in another part, on the mechanisms of the market economy and economic openness by motivating young people to become entrepreneurs, i.e. establish their own projects, thus transforming them from:

✓ National Unemployment Insurance Fund:

Established in 1994 as a public social security institution under the patronage of the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, this fund works to mitigate the effects resulting from the settlement of workers for economic reasons (Boussafi Kamal, 2006, p. 49). The National Unemployment Insurance Fund was established to support the unemployed between the ages of 35 and 50 in their projects.

As the years went by and the number of refugees decreasing due to the loss of their jobs decreased, the fund began to work on training unemployed job seekers, rehabilitating unemployed

people with projects and enterprises established within the framework of employment promotion procedures, and accompanying unemployed people in establishing their own enterprises as of 1998.

In 2011, the fund financed 18,490 projects and its prospects were to finance 15,000 during the year, and in 2012, nearly 100,000 microenterprises were established within the framework of youth employment support mechanisms, including 34,000 under the National Unemployment Insurance Fund. (Mojahadi Mustafa et al., 2021, pp. 106-107)

✓ **The National Agency for Microcredit Management:**

Established by Executive Decree No. 04/14 of January 22, 2004 as a body of a special nature followed by the Minister of Employment and National Solidarity, its mission is to implement the state policy in the field of combating unemployment and poverty by supporting individual entrepreneurs in order to help them create self-employed activities, and the role of the agency is to provide support, advice and accompaniment to entrepreneurs and ensure follow-up for the success of realized projects.

The microcredit is a small loan of up to 500,000 dirhams for the unemployed and the needy who have reached the age of 18 years and above and have a qualification or knowledge in a specific activity, and thus the microcredit is directed to large social groups, especially those with limited income to enable them to benefit from funding for their initiatives, and among the social groups targeted by the program we find homemaker women by helping her develop an activity in her home that benefits her and her family. (Boumkhlouf Mohamed et al., 2012, p. 207)

✓ **Zakat Fund:**

It is a body supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments that started its activity in 2003. It works to organize the collection of zakat funds and distribute them to its beneficiaries, and the funds are collected at the level of mosques and also through current postal accounts. It uses three types of national committees, the provincial committee and the base committees at the level of the districts that carry out the collection, urging and distribution operations to those who deserve it, headed by the approved imam in the district, and the fund allocates a percentage of the collected amounts provided as interest-free loans ranging between 50000 and 300000 dg over a period of 4 years. In order for the candidate to be accepted, he must be registered in the offices of the local employment agencies. (Ghilali Fares, 2005, p. 107)

✓ **National Investment Development Agency (NIDA):**

Initially known as the Agency for the Promotion and Support of Investments (APSI), which was established by Decree 12/193 of October 5, 1993, and supplemented by Article 6 of Ordinance No. 01-03 of August 20, 2001 on investment development, the National Agency for the Development of Investment (ANDI) is a public institution of an administrative nature with legal personality and financial autonomy.

In the field of investments and in liaison with the relevant departments and bodies, the agency is responsible for the following tasks

- Ensure the promotion, development and follow-up of investments.

- Facilitating the establishment of companies and the realization of projects through decentralized one-stop-shop services.
- Investing, informing and assisting resident and non-resident investors.
- Granting investment-related benefits within the framework of the applicable arrangement.
- Ensuring that the commitments made by investors are honored during the exemption period. (ANPDI, p. 32)

✓ **National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship:**

It was formerly known as the National Agency for the Support of Youth Employment, which was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997. Its name was later changed to the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship in [year]. The youth employment support program is one of the appropriate solutions within a series of measures taken to address the issue of unemployment in the transitional phase of the Algerian economy. The main objectives of this program include the following:

- Encouraging the creation of activities by young people with entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Promoting all forms and measures aimed at enhancing youth employment.
- Providing support and consultation to entrepreneurs in establishing small businesses at various stages of their projects.
- Informing young investors about the laws related to their business activities.
- Notifying approved applicants about the support granted to them and the benefits provided by the small enterprise program.
- Ensuring the monitoring and guidance of small enterprises, both during the implementation phase and after their independence, including in cases of business expansion.

This program targets unemployed youth with entrepreneurial initiatives to invest in small businesses, particularly those who show readiness and inclination for such ventures, aged between 18 and 35, and who possess professional qualifications or technical skills relevant to the proposed activity, along with a willingness to contribute personally to the project's funding.

Except for purely commercial activities, the program funds all types of production and service activities, considering the profitability of the project, with an investment size that may reach up to 10 million Algerian Dinars. The funding formula is distributed as follows:

- An interest-free loan from the agency.
- A low-interest loan from the bank.
- A personal contribution from the entrepreneur, determined based on the total project amount. (Boumokhlouf Mohamed et al., 2012, pp. 206-207)

Since its inception until November 2013, the agency has funded 278,000 projects, leading to the creation of 670,000 jobs at a total cost of 798 billion Algerian Dinars. The number of projects in agriculture was around 30,000, 20,000 related to public works and irrigation, and 18,000 in

industry, with these projects encompassing 700 diverse activities. The share of female beneficiaries did not exceed 48,000 projects out of the total 278,000. (Mjahidi Mustafa et al., 2021, p. 103)

Additionally, the agency has partnered with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to establish "Business Houses" at various Algerian universities across the country, to better inform university students about the possibilities and opportunities offered by the agency, helping them translate their ideas into investment projects.

However, it should be noted that despite these efforts, programs, and mechanisms implemented by the Algerian state to develop entrepreneurial projects and promote employment policies, these remain insufficient unless an entrepreneurial culture and individual initiative spirit are present among the youth, especially considering that Algerian youth are accustomed to and prefer working in the public sector.

"Entrepreneurial culture refers to the set of skills and knowledge acquired by an individual or group, and the attempt to exploit it by applying it to capital investment, through generating new innovative ideas that include behaviors, motivations, reactions of entrepreneurs, as well as planning, decision-making, organization, and monitoring. There are three places where this culture can be consolidated: the family, school, and the business". (Kherkhach Samia, 2021, p. 20)

In other words, it is the culture in which society respects initiative and rewards risk-taking by allowing individuals to earn profits through legitimate activities, i.e., a culture that rewards individual and collective initiatives and innovations for all its citizens. (Dasa Mustafa, 2021, p. 81)

In this context, we refer to some studies that have addressed entrepreneurship in Algeria, such as the study by (Jean Peneff), which examined how the category of entrepreneurs was formed in the 1970s in Algeria. This group was classified according to certain characteristics, including educational level, social background, and geographic origin. The researcher also explored the development of entrepreneurial culture within this group through an analysis of their social and professional paths. (Peneff Jean, 1983, p. 575)

Another significant study is that of (Djilali Liabes), who clarified that Algerian entrepreneurs operate their businesses in a way that blends modern and traditional practices (Liabes Djilali, 1984, p. 102), in addition to the study by (Mohamed Medoui), which linked work to religion and the value that entrepreneurs place on their work, shedding light on the entrepreneurial practices and their relationship to Islam and cultural values. (Loussad Zine El Cheref, 2021, p. 157)

These studies illustrate that the entrepreneurial culture in Algeria is primarily based on social considerations, i.e., it has a hereditary family characteristic, meaning it relies on social networks. The family is the primary influence in shaping entrepreneurial thinking among individuals; this one-dimensional perspective hinders the development of a strong organizational culture, which should stem from diverse sources, as mentioned earlier, and is primarily based on initiative and risk-taking. Therefore, we can say that the limited entrepreneurial culture is one of the major obstacles, in addition to financing, administrative, organizational, training, and marketing challenges, that hinder the success of entrepreneurship in achieving development in Algeria.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we affirm that entrepreneurship is an important topic that requires research and study, as it serves as a mechanism for wealth creation and achieving economic and social

development through transforming ideas into tangible innovations in businesses and projects managed by young entrepreneurs, thus opening up greater opportunities to create jobs.

In light of the shift towards a market economy and the inability of the public sector in Algeria to provide employment for all job seekers, Algeria's recent focus has been on encouraging youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities and reconciling entrepreneurial values—rational values that are a product of the capitalist system—with traditional societal values that guide social actions within the community.

Thus, the transition of youth from job seekers to job creators, and directing their thinking toward the experience of self-employment and wealth creation through establishing their own small or medium-sized businesses, enables them to achieve a social standing and integrate as active individuals in society, contributing to reducing unemployment rates and achieving comprehensive economic and social development.

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