

The National Adult Education Program Evaluation in Tunisia

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with The National Adult Education Program (NAEP) evaluation in Tunisia by a descriptive analysis via a questionnaire. The study population comprises university graduates who have benefited from this program. A convenience sample of 100 graduates was chosen. Our findings indicate that the passage through this program did not improve the employment rate of beneficiaries nor their financial situations suitably. This result invites the authorities responsible for this program to better improve the conditions and find a suitable solution for these graduates on the occasion of the new resumption of this program.

1. Introduction

The permanence of a high unemployment rate for graduates of higher education is a determining factor in the persistence of unemployment in Tunisia. This growing trend which becomes increasingly strong from 2003 may be due to the great flow of entry of skilled labor into the Tunisian labor market. A market not yet ready to accommodate this category of labor. To deal with this situation, Tunisia, through the intermediation of a public employment service, has put in place various employment measures aimed at improving the employability of young unemployed people and promoting job creation. Our study seeks to evaluate one of the programs aimed at Tunisian higher education graduates, which is the National Adult Education Program (NAEP). This was the program n ° 7 of the National Employment Fund 21-21. This refers to the employment of higher education graduates under the national adult education program. It is under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. NAEP is taken over in 2019 with some modifications. So it is for this reason the study is interested in evaluating the old experience. This training in adult education pedagogy was aimed at employing graduates of higher education for a fixed period not exceeding two years. Now the period is indefinite. The participants benefited from a donation which does not exceed 250 dinars per month and from the social contribution. Now graduates receive the minimum wages in Tunisia. The aim of this work is to deal with the evaluation of the effect of this program. The concepts of the assessments of strategic initiatives (training and employment of graduates) of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) were used through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of beneficiaries of the NAEP. This study can be an information base for the new resumption of the program.

2. Methodology

2.1 Identification and operationalization of the problem

The methodological approach advocated by Perrien et al. (1989) was used. It is articulated in six steps:

Identification and operationalization of the problem, development of the questionnaires, sampling, questionnaire administration, processing and data analysis and interpretation of results.

The first step is to clarify the basic elements of research and information needs. Throughout our research, we want to bring some answers to the research problem already presented; so what is the effect of the NAEP on employment of graduates of Higher Education? By studying this question, the study wants both to explain the results achieved and to verify the NAEP's impact on hiring recipients. According to Perrien et al. (1989), in order to make a business problem more operational, we must realize a need for information. These information needs should consequently respond to the problem. The use of open questions in the questionnaire for the graduates themselves and some experts in the field and the literature review has identified the measures and variables used to gather information needed to prepare the final questionnaire, which is our basic processing and data analysis by using SPSS. It is quite difficult to know the exact and the most important problems related to our study and to draw the most relevant information.

2.2. Development of the questionnaire

The questionnaire seems to be the preferred tool for collecting the necessary and appropriate information for our study. According to Evard et al, (1997), "the questionnaire is a method of collecting structured information". The final version of our questionnaire includes a section relating to the identification of the respondent and to his career before teaching through the NAEP in order to gather information about the graduate's personal characteristics. To assess the effect of this program, the rest of the questionnaire was divided in part on the relevance of the program and a second part to get an idea on the design and implementation of the program. These concepts are used in the assessments of strategic initiatives (training and employment of graduates) of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The two parts may form part of the explanatory variables to see the program's success in terms of effect on employment. And the last part is to give an idea about the program's profitability.

2.3. Sampling

To collect the necessary data, an appropriate sampling procedure must be developed. "Sampling is the process of selection in a population of subjects or units of study" (Fortin et al, 1988). The parent population of our research is contributed by all Tunisian graduates of higher education who were beneficiaries of the NAEP during the period 2004-2008 and recorded in the National Agency for employment and self – employment (ANETI) in Tunisia; whatever are their current employment statuses.

2.4. Administration of the questionnaire

It comes to choosing an approach for collecting data by specifying the mode of questionnaire administration and the time required for the completion of the investigation. There are several methods of administrating of questionnaires: the post, direct interview, the phone and electronic means as well. The use of these various methods is needed to ensure maximum results (Table 1). The direct interview is the best way to have a higher controlled sample and to ensure a better understanding of issues and a total filling of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Questionnaire administration

Program	Postal means	Face to face	Telephonic means	Electronic means	Total
NAEP	20	33	09	09	71

The use of postal, telephonic and electronic means is related to relational and financial reasons as the selected sample is spread over the whole country, and then we tried to reduce the cost of the investigation and the time of its completion. Arbitrary sample was used according to data availability. The number of recipients selected and the corresponding response rates are presented in the following table:

Table 2: Respondent rate

Program	Number of graduated	Respondent	Respondent rate
NAEP	100	71	71

3. Main results: Descriptive analysis

Among the beneficiaries who had taught through this program, 11.3% experienced periods of one or more jobs. Some beneficiaries repeated the same program participation.

3.1 Relevance of the NAEP

This program aimed to train graduates of higher education to improve their employability. By this assessment, we want to see the extent to which the program implemented has met the need for training and the degree of representativeness of the participating groups with a real need for training. The results found regarding the methods adopted to choose NAEP show that: 16.9% of the corresponding sample chose alone this training, 7% using an employment counselor and 76.1% with local authorities. At this stage, the vision was not so clear to see whether it was the right choice for participants. But we can asked whether graduates can alone knew their real needs in training and on what basis they were selected for such training or another. In trying to verify the existence of the essential step for selecting a folder for these training, 100% of the beneficiaries of the NAEP said they have not gone through a stage of selection. It is rather a choice made by way of some administrative steps. Considering the objective of training sought by the beneficiaries, 83.1% of participants who have joined this program were opting for these training to do whatever to get rid of unemployment.

Quite important percentage results also from the following reason “to benefit from the state compensation” (70, 4% for recipients). Some respondents expressed other reasons for their choices. Among these causes, 8.8% of participants are due to house leaving, and 1.7% wants to improve their relationship side. However they were not the only causes of their choices. In fact, those graduates have chosen these training in order to reach the necessary skills for employment or to develop diverse knowledge. From these results, some recipients of this program really enjoyed the opportunistic aspect.

We can claim at this stage of program relevance that program administrators are conducted to better target beneficiaries. This observation may be supported by the results found regarding the level of satisfaction of real needs and the expected quality of this program. Indeed, 54.9% did not find their real needs through this training and 15, 5% say that satisfaction is more or less guaranteed. The existence of beneficiaries who have not completed their training needs showed the problem of bad choice of training. The majority of NAEP beneficiaries (54.9%) said they could not find the really wanted training and the expected quality through these trainings (or for the instrument 7 and 77.6% for PNDTI. These results suggest considering the plausibility of the program concept and its relevance in terms of its accessibility and its ability to focus on those whose training needs are greater and who would derive the maximum.

3.2 Design and implementation of the NAEP

The evaluation process should provide a preliminary indication as to the effectiveness of the concept and the implementation of the program. A clear picture can be drawn by a process evaluation. 67.6% of NAEP beneficiaries knew beforehand what they will generally do during this program. To get an idea about the level of beneficiary satisfaction of the program benefits and success of his performance, a few questions were chosen to clarify the picture.

The majority of participants in the program did not abandon their training. But does this continuity have as main interest any satisfaction with various aspects of the program or it is an obligation on the part of their professional situations? This result has not prevented the existence of the dropout rate for the training before their completion date (8.5%).

Young people who have found benefit from other cycle of training during the same period (sometimes more than one cycle) were founded. This is argued by the concerned beneficiaries either to find the proper training or to receive compensation, or to improve their relationship side, sometimes imitating friends or because of the existence of an educational problem in communicating with adults. Some graduates were receiving compensation without applying what is required by the training.

There was an almost total absence of contact with the counselor for the beneficiaries. This can be explained by the fact that other administrations are more responsible for conducting this program. But is it beneficial to neglect the role of the Employment Adviser as a practical man? Or it had better use a partnership and collective management of these files? More frequent contacts are effective when needed. It also seems necessary to adopt rigorous performance standards to monitor progress and commitment of participants, even if well selected, and to take adequate measures in case of default.

3.3 Success of the NAEP

This evaluation focuses on the effects of this training program on employability of the considered graduates. It therefore focuses on measure: employment. This measure is equivalent to checking if the recipient is employed after the training: an employee either through paid employment (employees) or self-employment (own business). At this level of analysis, the question of the success of program is discussed in terms of employment rates after training, in terms of employees and creators in business.

During the analysis, the study will not give great importance to the non-incremental program (dead weight) which is the proportion of participants who would be employed or started their own business even in the absence of the program. (Graves and Gauthier, 2000). This question is mainly based on the likelihood expressed by participants regardless of personal implicit skills that can be developed in response to this training and eventually become employable and employed.

In another aspect, the study distinguished between respondents who worked with those who were unemployed just prior to the program to not lead to an overestimation of the effects of training because of the existence of a difference between the beneficiaries regarding the key indicator of the results of employment or employment status.

In general, most participants were satisfied with the experience of training offered by NAEP despite the existence of gaps and even if they were not interested in the content of this program. At the end of this training, different work situations are grouped in the following table:

Table 3: Work situations after NAEP

Program	Employees	active creators	Current creators	Creators out of business	In pursuit of studies or training	Employees who have left employment	Continuation of studies or other completed training	Looking for a job	Total
NAEP	33 (46.5%)	0	0	0	1 (1.4%)	8 (11.3%)	3 (4.2%)	26 (36.6%)	71

In what follows, the different work situations at the end of the training are presented, distinguishing between respondents who work for those who were unemployed just prior to participation in program to show the effect of experience on the sought employability.

Table 4: Employment and professional experience before program

NAEP	Employees	In pursuit of studies or training	Employees who have left employment	Continuation of studies or other completed training	Looking for a job	Total
No jobs	33 (52.3%)	0	8	3	19	63
One or more jobs	0	1	0	0	7	8
Total	33	1	8	3	26	71

Since the rate of employment sought is formed by the employee rate and the rate of creators in business. The employment rate of the NAEP for the period studied is 46.5 %.

The employment of beneficiaries is done at a certain level, but is it good and sufficient or not? Why we could not achieve higher rate? Are there any gaps to fill in so to further improve these results and make indirect lessons for other programs of active employment policy in Tunisia?

The work experience has no effect on the employment rate, we, therefore, chose not to distinguish between respondents according to this criterion, namely the work experience before the training in the rest of our analysis. For those as employees, we were able to take cases claiming that the training have developed their personal skills and provided them with knowledge and skills for employment. For those who worked and left the job the majority of graduates worked two jobs (75%) and the majority were interns during their first and second job. These results are logical given that the majority of graduates beneficiaries of two or three jobs benefited during these jobs from state measures for the employment of graduates of higher education. These measures are mainly SIVP (Aloui, 2019) and a 50% or 75% contracts. Here we can ask about the effectiveness of this program in the integration of beneficiaries.

Concerned respondents said that they left their jobs because the wages offered by employers is low, their skills are insufficient to fulfill the required tasks, the job did not match their university training, the employer seeks the benefits of the state and because of other reasons such as long distance between places of work and their homes, the problems encountered in work, health and end of the course or duration of vacation.

Despite these failed experiences of work, many of these beneficiaries have not yet intended to create their own projects. 7 respondents (26.9%) who are seeking employment spent job interviews without success. The causes of the failure of these talks are different. Some said this is due to profile mismatch between requested and acquired academic skills. Others thought they were unable to pass an interview and some of respondents failed the interview because of the low salary offered.

Some cases have indicated that the absence of strong relationships with family and friends is one of the causes of failure of their interviews. Similarly, the fact that the candidate can no longer benefit from SIVP or that the position offered is actually related to a worker not to a part as is required form also reasons for the talks fail.

To increase the value of the important work of the consultant job especially in the direction, work that needs to have more time and attention, more than half have confidence in this council and its duties and argue that it can help them achieve success in a job interview.

Remaining in the administrative field and have a general idea of this environment as seen by those most concerned, many of these beneficiaries found problems with information on job vacancies in employment offices.

The main issues focused on: the display of satisfied bids, lack of guidance and counseling, poor organization of space in those offices, the existence of some non-qualified consultants for the home of graduates and the problem of incomplete information. Other respondents said that the counselor is always stressed, and gives short answers with no details, and because of the scourge of the unemployed.

These statements lead us to ask several questions related to the evaluation process of the main intermediary in the employment market in general and of the main tasks for a guidance counselor: Is he a technician or administrator? Despite these realities and the quite important waiting time of an employment, almost all of these graduates totally refuse the idea of creating a project. Enormous work is still waiting for those responsible to know how to guide these graduates towards the entrepreneurship.

4.4. Profitability of the NAEP

At this level, the study considered beneficiaries who have had employment experiences at the end of this program. The question of profitability for this program is that graduates opt to be employed and satisfied with their income that will, therefore, improve their financial situation.

The remark here concerns those getting a monthly salary of less than 200 dinars (1.8% of all employees after training including those who worked and left the job) or between 200 and 300 dinars (20.2%). Are they satisfied with this income? Whether they are trainees who are beneficiaries of a SIVP or others.

36. 6% of graduates stated the positive impact of the training on wages earned.

Generally, 83.5% of employees have marked improvement, whether important or relative, in quality of their domestic life and family through this training. Others suffer from low wages and significant personal or family expenses.

On the other hand, it was found that the compensation received during the training helped the majority of the beneficiaries of this program to cover some personal expenses (travel, home, food ...), whether in a significant (23.4%) or limited way (61.7%). Others believe that it is not sufficient (15.3%). 74.9% of all beneficiaries believe that their academic specialty has prompted the state to invest further in order to improve their employability. The other 25% are defending their academic training that is not, according to them, the main reason for new investment.

- **Conclusion**

This study was designed to evaluate the NAEP in Tunisia by a descriptive analysis via a questionnaire distributed to the beneficiaries of the program. From these results, it is clear that the experience of NAEP had shortcomings in tackling graduate unemployment. Now, will the new recovery improve their situations and find them the solution for hiring once and for all?

The study presents some limitations such as: the data were collected at a certain point in time and it could well be that the respondents' opinions may change. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to overcome this limitation. The small sample size affects the generalizability of the results. Therefore, we recommend increasing the sample size when repeating this study.

Future research should consider the potential effects of several variables which can affect the employment and the employability of these young people. These variables may be related to program characteristics, participants' individual characteristics and even environmental factors through a corresponding model (Aloui and Shams Eldin, 2020, Harry et al., 2018, Mishra et al., 2017).

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