

Challenges of the Labour Market in Algeria between the Multiplicity of Employment Programmes and the Failure of Applied Policies to Create Sufficient Job Opportunities: Towards a Sustainable Development Approach

تحديات سوق العمل في الجزائر بين تعدد برامج التشغيل وعجز السياسات المطبقة لخلق فرص عمل كافية: نحو مقاربة تنموية مستدامة

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Abstract:

This article addresses the challenges facing the labour market in Algeria through a sustainable development approach, considering the weakness of the employment programmes and policies in creating sufficient job opportunities. It argues that sustainable development cannot be discussed without focusing on the economic aspect. Furthermore, neglecting this area will negatively affect any development project and policy, regardless of its objectives. Accordingly, the article seeks to clarify the most important obstacles and challenges facing the labour market in Algeria, focusing on the reality of the labour market and employment policy, which is considered an important part of the economic activity of any country.

This study concluded by pointing out a group of challenges, most notably the nature of employment policies and their effectiveness in confronting the phenomenon of unemployment and achieving development, with reference to some solutions that we see as necessary and important in addressing these challenges according to some local and Arab studies in this field.

Keywords: Labour Market; Employment Policy; Sustainable Development.

ملخص المقال:

يعالج المقال تحديات سوق العمل في الجزائر من خلال مقاربة تنموية مستدامة نظرا لضعف برامج وسياسات التشغيل في خلق فرص العمل لتحقيق التنمية المستدامة للبلاد، فلا يمكن الحديث عن هذه التنمية كعملية هادفة بمختلف أبعادها، دون التركيز على الجانب الاقتصادي الذي أصبح محل اهتمام واسع بوضع مختلف السياسات التنموية، كما أن إهماله سيؤثر سلبا على أي مشروع وسياسة تنموية مهما كانت أهدافها، خاصة تنظيم سوق العمل وسياسات التشغيل. يسعى هذا المقال إلى توضيح أهم التحديات التي تواجه سوق العمل في الجزائر، بالتركيز على واقع سوق العمل وسياسة التشغيل، التي تعتبر جزءا هاما في النشاط الاقتصادي لأي بلد.

خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى الإشارة لمجموعة من التحديات في مقدمتها، طبيعة سياسات التشغيل ومدى فعاليتها لمواجهة ظاهرة البطالة وتحقيق التنمية، مع الإشارة إلى بعض الحلول التي نراها ضرورية ومهمة في معالجة هذه التحديات بحسب بعض الدراسات المحلية والعربية في هذا المجال.

كلمات مفتاحية: سوق العمل؛ سياسة التشغيل؛ التنمية المستدامة.

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Introduction

The Algerian state's interest in the employment sector to provide more job opportunities while striving for better economic growth and thus achieving social and economic development that benefits members of society in particular, has come through the adoption of many development plans that Algeria has known since independence to this day. This has been achieved by working to create strong and specialized structures capable of achieving the various goals set to protect the working class and achieve the well-being of society through development. In this context, a ministry specifically for labour, employment, and social security was established, primarily responsible for monitoring various employment policies, creating job opportunities, and confronting the phenomenon of unemployment, which is considered a global phenomenon suffered by all societies but at different rates. Consequently, the dynamics of development in Algeria have been affected by many economic, social, and political fluctuations at both the external and internal levels.

It can be said in this regard that the global economic crisis and its consequences are among the most important reasons for these fluctuations, especially with the decline in oil prices and the national economy's dependence on it. We also find the weakness of the industrial sector in creating job opportunities, alongside the limited contribution of the private sector, and the emergence of the new world order, which has produced a new distribution in the balances of political and economic power under the dominance of capitalist countries. This has prompted the Algerian state to reconsider its development program policy and the objectives set previously (Brouk, 2020, p. 120).

The state has sought to give this process significant importance through increased and continuous attention to the process of employment and the organization of the labour market, through the multiplicity of development programs and various employment policies, in an effort to keep pace with the economic and social changes that have occurred in the entire world. This has made it imperative for it to adapt to these developments and others in order to develop society and give the labour market more mobility and dynamism.

Accordingly, by presenting the elements of this article, we will attempt to point out the most important challenges of the labor market in Algeria, focusing on the nature and extent of the effectiveness of the employment policies adopted in this regard, so that we rely on a set of sociological readings of some national and Arab studies in this field Which enhances the role of the labor market in confronting the phenomenon of unemployment in Algerian society and contributes to revealing some challenges in this field while providing some solutions for that as results extracted from some national and Arab studies on the labor market and employment policies in Algeria.

First: Labour Market and Employment Policy

1. The Concept of Employment Policies:

Employment policies can be viewed as the totality of government legislation and decisions, and tripartite agreements (government, employers, workers) aimed at regulating and setting controls and standards for the performance of the labour market. It is also an approach that consists of a set of programs, determined by the competent authority in the field of maximizing the utilization of human energy, with the employment of job seekers in a way that aims to reduce unemployment levels and achieve optimal employment. This is consistent with general economic policies and their declared strategies, as well as addressing and reducing poverty levels, to achieve integration between economic development and employment objectives. (Adriouch, 2012, p. 58)

2. The Concept of the Labour Market:

The labour market expresses that organizational economic institution in which the supply and demand for labour interact, meaning that services are bought and sold, thus pricing labour services. The labour

market is characterized by several features, the most important of which is that labour services are hired and not sold, and cannot be separated from the worker. Working conditions are no less important than the price-wage in explaining supply and demand decisions (Al-Hajj, 2003, p. 3). It is responsible for distributing labour across jobs and professions and coordinating between available employment decisions. Accordingly, it can be said that it is that space or place where labour is bought and sold, meaning that it consists of labour and wage or price. It is closely linked to the employment policies adopted by each country in combating unemployment, and the prevailing working conditions in each field of work. This is in addition to the political and economic conditions of each country, as well as the demographic composition of the society particularly the labour force.

3. Importance and Role of the Labour Market:

The importance of the labour market and employment stems from the fact that work is considered part of human effectiveness in all societies, where it is a manifestation of labour (Bennett & al, 2005, p. 509). Through it, we also reach the achievement of development in society. On this basis, the labour market appears as an organized apparatus to whose demands everyone is subject. At the head of this apparatus are the institutions and employers, and the unions on the other hand, but all this is within the government's supervision through its various agencies.

From here, the importance of the labour market appears in directing the labour force towards the most effective entities, because the conditions of supply and demand are constantly changing. It plays a significant role in determining wage levels in light of the existing and continuous interaction between supply and demand. This is in addition to the process of organizing and distributing workers according to various sectors and economic activities for each individual and institution, and reducing the phenomenon of unemployment. This has led many governments to constantly strive to program a set of measures to absorb the issue of the labour market and employment, for the purpose of permanent creation of job positions as a fundamental goal of development. (Salatnia, 1996, p. 67)

4. Mechanisms of the Labour Market:

The study of the labour market essentially begins and ends with the analysis of the demand and supply specific to the labour element. The demand for labour represents the quantitative or qualitative human effort required by employers in exchange for a specific wage, meaning the demand of owners or employers for labour services. As for the supply of labour, it refers to the number of the labour force willing to work, meaning that it originates from workers or individuals willing to work and who have the readiness and capacity for it. (Taqa & Ajlan, 2007, pp. 47-49)

This latter is affected by a set of factors, including economic and social variables, such as the size of the population and their demographic composition in terms of gender and age, in addition to the factor of migration. We also find that the demand for labour is also affected by a set of factors such as the type of economic activity of the individual and the technical and artistic method used or followed in production, in addition to the increase or decrease in population growth rates, and the degree of economic development and backwardness prevailing in society, as well as the changes that occur in the size of income and price levels, and the economic policy followed by each country (Taqa & Ajlan, 2007, pp. 48-50).

The variables that affect the movement of supply and demand in the labour market are not stable, but rather mobile and changing. This is in addition to labour legislation and social dialogue between social partners, which in turn works to influence the labour market and seeks to organize it on the other hand, and this is naturally through the role played by the public authorities through the interventions of inspection agencies that monitor this market, especially in terms of building labour relations. They also provide information and statistics on the reality of employment in general. However, there is another reality that mainly relates to the informal labour market. The economic activity in each country is not always regular in a formal labour market, as there is always a group of individuals, whether they represent the labour force or others, who operate within undeclared work.

Second: Sustainable Development:

1. The Concept of Development:

The concept of development is a complex and multifaceted concept, and it falls within the scope of various sciences. However, this does not mean the impossibility of presenting and monitoring some definitions in this regard, which can be presented as follows:

- Development is those processes that are exerted intentionally and according to a public policy to bring about social, economic, and political development for people in their environment, relying primarily on coordinated and integrated local and governmental efforts. (Mutawaa, 2010, p. 10)

- While (Boumekhlouf, 1983) defines it as meaning the advancement of all different aspects of society, economically, socially, and culturally, using methods that are consistent with the socio-cultural framework of that society. These and other definitions generally revolve around the axis of changes and transformations that the economic, social, and even cultural aspects of societies can experience, meaning that it represents a process of social change in general, and it is a phenomenon that all societies experience, but it varies relatively depending on the characteristics of each society.

2. The Concept of Sustainable Development:

Development in its narrow concept almost equated with economic growth and later evolved until sustainable development was advocated, which is concerned with all aspects of economic, social, and environmental life at the same level (Ghoneim & Abu Zant, 2007, p. 34), meaning meeting the needs of the current generation while preserving the right of future generations to the available resources. It is worth noting that sustainable development was implemented at the "Rio de Janeiro" conference in July 1992. (Latouche, 2007, p. 46)

Sustainable development was the main concept of the Earth Summit held in 1992 in "Rio de Janeiro," which resulted in the Agenda 21 document. This document defined the economic, social, and environmental criteria for how to achieve sustainable development as a developmental alternative for humanity to meet the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century. This was achieved by ratifying a set of agreements emanating from this summit, mainly related to climate change and biodiversity to address the effects of pollution, in addition to providing guidelines for the sustainable management of forests worldwide due to their fundamental relationship to ecological balance, as well as agreement on a set of principles that define the rights and obligations of states in this area related to how to preserve the environment and make good use of its resources in a way that ensures the preservation of the future of generations in the present and the future (Hembey, 1998, p. 18). In this area, Algeria relies on a set of programs to support and develop entrepreneurship and support paid employment to increase the flexibility and activation of the labour market. However, despite this, there remain many challenges facing the labour market in Algeria, which we will try to point out later in some detail.

3. Dimensions of Sustainable Development:

It was widely believed that focusing on growth inevitably leads to environmental damage, and conversely, when implementing environmental policies, this reduces the levels of economic growth. However, the emergence of the concept of sustainable development led to reconciliation between the two concepts, by applying opinions and ideas based on considering them simultaneously without compromising either of them. Hence, the principle of what is called sustainability emerged, and with it the concept of sustainability, so that it has become indicators and dimensions.

Economic development in general is development with four interrelated and integrated dimensions within a continuous interactive framework, characterized by precision, organization, and rationalization of resources. These are the economic, human, environmental, and technological dimensions (Ghoneim & Abu Zant, 2007, p. 41).

From an economic perspective, sustainability means maximizing economic welfare for the longest possible period, taking into account the individual consumption share of natural resources, reducing the size

of income inequality and equality in income distribution while stopping the squandering of natural resources, and considering the responsibility of developed countries for pollution and addressing it to achieve this development.

As for the human dimension, the matter relates more to the importance of population distribution and the full utilization of human resources, especially by improving education and health services. While the environmental dimension revolves largely around the need to protect the climate from global warming and reduce human activities that could threaten the safety of the environment and nature, and what it includes in terms of materials in the service of human life, especially water, and preserving biodiversity. Finally, the technological dimension aims primarily at the widespread use of improved clean and environmentally friendly technologies, meaning that they do not produce significant damage that affects the rest of the dimensions, especially the environmental ones (Milliere, 1992, p. 71). These dimensions appear to be interconnected and more expressive of the nature of the concept of sustainable development.

Third: The Most Important Challenges Facing the Labour Market in Algeria:

Several challenges can be discussed here; they are numerous and varied and cannot be limited.

1. Deterioration of the Value of Local Labour among Youth:

If we look at Algerian society, and through the various studies and introductions presented in this field, especially after the spread of industrial capitalism, which generalized the division of labor, the growth of wage labour, and the role of the labour market in the economies of countries, we note that it is experiencing a crisis characterized by a limited state of work marked by weak performance and mastery, and the lack of focus of the labour identity on work on the one hand, and a crisis in the patterns of organization and management of institutions on the other. (Abdellawi, 1993, p. 63)

Houaiti, meanwhile, believes that "the crisis of work in Algeria is neither a crisis of organization nor a crisis of means of work, as some believe, but it is in fact a crisis of the perception of the concept of work and its ethics. Algerian society is not the only one that complains of this phenomenon, but all Arab-Islamic societies are subject to this statement. Indeed, the real reason for their backwardness, alongside economic, social, and political factors, is the misunderstanding of work, in conception or practice. The alternative, then, is to find field applications of the Islamic concept of work in our trade and agriculture, and in our economic and social institutions alike". (Abdellawi, 1993, p. 05)

As for "Abdo", he proposes complementary elements to the previous analysis, where he shows in his intervention that the ineffectiveness of work in the Algerian industrial institution cannot be explained by the thesis of rejecting work, but rather by the phenomenon of labour resistance to the patterns of organization of the institution applied since independence to this day. If Europe has fought a long battle from the mid-eighteenth century to the present to create this modern society, and its industrial revolution revolved around work and production, then it is also time for Arab and Islamic societies to wage and begin such a battle, but with an Islamic concept and perception of work, which presents itself as an alternative to contribute to their economic, social, and even political and intellectual development. This necessitates reliance on a dual and continuous intellectual and developmental project by the state, which can be translated into those policies aimed at organizing the labour market and the world of work to positively push the development process.

2. Weakness of Employment Policies in Algeria:

The economic reality of Algeria with independence made it face a distinct unemployment problem in terms of numbers and in terms of the view of work, if not a crisis of labour identity (Sherif, 2014, pp. 43-44). If the years close to national independence were characterized by objective reasons in which the national economy and the Algerian organization suffered, which is due to the lack of Algerian competencies and the weakness of the existing ones, then the subsequent years began to be affected by factors related to the strategic considerations of the Algerian state, the nature of the Algerian manager, and the social structure in which it operates (Kasmi, 2014, p. 207). In addition, the other factors mainly related to changes in the

global economy and technological development, where more attention and care began to be given to the issue of employment and the expansion of its horizons by the state, based on the theoretical development in the Algerian charters for employment policy.

Accordingly, employment policy in Algeria has relied on several development programs, but there is almost a common characteristic in the entire economic path that Algeria has known, which is generally the weakness of the industrial sector in contributing to the creation of sufficient and permanent job positions, alongside the limited contribution of the private sector in this field, as well as the problem of bureaucracy in management and the problem of working conditions that are constantly raised, especially in the field of industrial and even administrative production (Boucherf, 1992, pp. 26-28). This represents permanent challenges to the development process.

Consequently, the necessity of establishing an employment policy imposes itself more and more, especially since the rate of population increase is constantly changing and is likely to increase, which means a greater increase in the demand for employment over time. It is necessary to establish an employment policy with all its components. (Safir, p. 12)

3. Difficulty of Employment Procedures and Conditions:

To achieve economic and social development, the state relies on a number of institutions generally known as public employment facilities, to be able to understand the requirements and fluctuations of the labour market, by ensuring the collection of job offers and applications to supervise the employment of workers fairly. (Ben Azzouz, 2004, p. 26)

However, the Algerian legislator has obligated all employing bodies, whether private or public, to submit job offers to this specialized national employment agency or one of its branches across the national territory, to ensure all employment operations. This process also enables the fight against undeclared work or what is known as the informal labour market. However, many specialists see such procedures as hindering the employment process, especially in terms of the complexity of procedures when it comes to job positions outside the area to which the job seeker belongs.

4. Expansion of the Scope of the Informal labour Market:

The International Labour Office report stated that it "represents workers who lack any kind of protection stipulated by social legislation, and that it represents the number of unregulated jobs that are within the informal sector, or formal sector enterprises, or within households during a specific period" (International Labour Office, 1986, p. 10). However, its definition varies from one country to another, depending on the conditions and the activity practiced through it, making it very difficult to accurately determine the participation of this sector in economic activity.

As for the reasons for its spread, some point to the weakness of the legal framework that combats this phenomenon and punishes its perpetrators. There has been increasing international attention and recognition of the risks of this type of work, which necessitates combating this phenomenon by organizing the world of work and the labour market by monitoring the extent to which the provisions of labour law are applied in the working community in general. It serves as an obstacle to development in its various forms, and Algeria, like other third world or developing countries, still suffers from this phenomenon, which costs it continuous efforts to combat it and achieve a degree of social justice in the field of the labour market and employment.

5. Weakness of Programs Adopted in Algeria to Create Job Positions:

Algeria has worked to adopt several programs since independence until this day, including structural adjustment programs to emerge from the economic crisis that affected most of its public and private institutions, then economic recovery programs where it worked to strengthen the strategic sectors in the state to build a strong economic base while involving youth in development. In addition, it has used many bodies to employ a sufficient number of job seekers, trying in various ways to absorb unemployment, create positions in the public sector, and provide support for the private sector to contribute to eliminating this phenomenon. However, these programs and policies remain lacking in the strength and effectiveness to create positive, continuous, and permanent job opportunities, making these programs weak in the face of the

changing and unstable demands of the labour market due to several internal and external factors, which affected their inability to create sufficient and appropriate job positions.

6. Failure of Applied Policies to Create Sufficient Job Opportunities:

Since independence until today, Algeria has pursued many policies and programs to combat unemployment and create sufficient and permanent job positions, but it has failed to do so due to several reasons, including that most job positions are temporary and that the available workforce is not qualified to perform some of the jobs offered. One of the manifestations of these adopted employment policies is that they are negative, meaning they are for employment only, and not for production and achieving development, as stated in the report of the Arab Labour Organization on employment policies in developing countries, which indicates that they rely on negative employment services as negative procedures or measures based on material support programs through which they seek to maintain the stability of the social situation.

Despite the adoption of employment policies and reliance on integration contracts, the positions are also temporary, ending with the expiry of the contract period, and even if renewed, they are renewed only once for a maximum period of one or three years.

7- Unsuitable Wages for the Effort Exerted:

It is generally accepted that the value of wages should be equal to the effort exerted, but this is not easy at present. Many groups work for meagre wages, and even those with high academic qualifications, such as doctors and professors, are not immune to this. Wages have become unable to meet various daily needs, in the face of the weak purchasing power of citizens and the deterioration of the value of the national currency. Exerting effort at work without an improvement in individuals' living conditions pushes them, both employed and unemployed, to constantly search for more suitable and appropriate work.

8- Fragility of the Social Security System:

Algeria established social security bodies to protect wage and non-wage workers from various risks they may be exposed to. However, their benefit from this coverage depends on a set of conditions, including affiliation, as well as performing a period of work and paying contributions. However, there are cases where the employer does not declare the worker, making them work without protection from risks. Social security bodies may also refuse compensation in some cases, such as occupational diseases. If the disease suffered by the worker is not listed in the list of occupational diseases prepared by the state, they are deprived of compensation even if other conditions are met, in addition to delays in paying compensation, whether in case of illness or when paying retirement pensions. These funds often suffer from financial deficits as a result of employers evading their obligations, which affect them and the affiliates of this sector.

Conclusion:

What can be concluded after presenting the elements of this article on the challenges of the labour market in Algeria by referring to the development experience that the country has known from independence to the present day, to achieve is essentially the failure of the development experience that the country has known since independence to this day in achieving sustainable development that guarantees the rights of generations in the present and the future.

The development experience in Algeria has known several challenges and difficulties, the most important of which are the lack of job opportunities, the deterioration of the value of local labour according to the majority of members of society, the weakness of the adopted employment policies, the fragility of the social system, the spread and expansion of the informal labour market, in addition to the fact that the conditions and procedures for employment have become complex and working conditions are generally poor.

Therefore, it has become necessary for the state and official authorities to reconsider how to organize the labour market and reduce the widespread phenomenon of unemployment, as it has become a real threat,

and the fundamental solution to this is to give impetus to development through more positive mechanisms and procedures that contribute to the flexibility and activation of the labour market. This can be achieved through the digitalization of the labour and employment sector, facilitating investment in the private sector, activating and revitalizing the industrial sector to create more job opportunities, and supporting and promoting entrepreneurship and emerging institutions, which are considered an important element and source in achieving development.

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