



Employers' perceptions of young graduates' employability in Algeria: How do recruiters view young Algerian graduates?

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Abstract :

In Algeria, professional integration of young graduates became the concern of universities which try to improve its trainings, knowledge and professional skills, this concern requires the students' skills at the end of their studies to be better defined and adapted to integrate the labor market. Nowadays, Algerian companies are having trouble finding adequate profiles. On the other hand, many young graduates are unable to enter the labor market, often because their training is considered inadequate for current working life. This mismatch is largely due to a lack of understanding of employer's needs. The main objective of the present study is to learn what future employers of young university graduates anticipate from them, as well as to determine the criteria and abilities needed for better socio-professional integration.. In order to carry out this study we opted for an exploratory and quantitative approach with the use of a survey questionnaire among employers.

Key Words: Young graduates, Training, Professional integration, Professional skills, Labor market.

JEL Classification : J21, J64, M53.

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Introduction:

The concept of employability is becoming increasingly important in explaining labor market imbalances, in the direction of educational programs, and in particular the interaction between the university and the socio-economic environment.

Employability is especially important for graduates, who are expected to gain more than academic skills in order to "get a head start" on their transition from higher education to the workforce

We might believe that these circumstances are favorable for recent graduates. However, there are allegations that there is a "mismatch" between the needs of the socioeconomic sector and higher education graduates.

The issue with employability is that it is a complicated and multidimensional idea that evolves over time and can easily lead to misunderstanding. Graduate



employability currently encompasses a wide range of concepts. From how higher education institutions prepare and teach graduates to adapt to the labor market to what skills graduates require to succeed in the labor market (Peter T.Knight; Mantz York, 2003)

Algerian companies complain about the difficulty of finding job candidates among university graduates, concluding that universities are not adequately preparing students to meet the needs of companies. Universities complain that companies are rarely specific enough when it comes to articulating their skills and needs. As these two worlds turn their backs in this way, young graduates find themselves in great difficulty when it comes to finding a skilled job, except for employment in the public sector. Moving from one casual job to another, these young graduates often rationalize their precarious employment situation as part of the rite of transition to decent and qualified employment (BOUHLIA-HASSANE,R; TALAHIT,F, 2008). To better understand the employability of young graduates in Algeria, we will through this research work study, analyze and try to provide answers to the problem of the mismatch between university training and the needs of companies in required skills. Thus, we can generate more significant information that is practically applicable for the benefit of future graduates, companies and higher education institutions. In order to address our problem, it is useful to answer the following questions:

- What are the skills and attributes that new graduates should have to improve their employability?
- What is the role of universities in improving the employability of new graduates?
- What are employers' expectations of graduates?

I. Research methodology:

The main objective of the present study is to learn what future employers of young university graduates anticipate from them, as well as to determine the criteria and abilities needed for better socio-professional integration.

To achieve the objective, we have opted for an exploratory and quantitative approach and chose to interview managers or recruitment officers in private and public companies. The questionnaire was sent to respondents electronically via professional platforms. The respondents received the questionnaires during the months of April-May 2022. Managers were asked to measure the importance of selection criteria of young graduates, and the evaluation of their knowledge, abilities and attitude in relation to the expectations and needs of the company. on a five-point Likert scale. A total of 58 questionnaires were collected. Nine (09) questionnaires were eliminated because of the proportion of missing values. Thus, the final number of usable questionnaires is 49 questionnaires distributed as follows

**Figure 1: « Employer's industry »**

Source: Established by us under SPSS (V26)

The individuals' fields of activity are also diverse, with the majority working in Industry (16.3%), Building & Construction (14.3%), Education & Training (12.2%), and Administration (12.2%). (10.2 %). Participants from the fields of health and social work, business services, telecommunications, education, research and development, tourism, IT services, and software development were among those who attended. The table below lists the specific fields of activity that were investigated.

Table 1: « The Company's Business Line »

	Staff	Percentage	valid percentage	Cumulative
				Percentage
Valid				
Administration	5	10.2	10.2	10.2
Agriculture	2	4.1	4.1	14.3
PBW, construction	7	14.3	14.3	28.6
Commerce	1	2.0	2.0	30.6
Education	6	12.2	12.2	42.9
Hydrocarbon	1	2.0	2.0	44.9
Industry	8	16.3	16.3	61.2
Insertion	1	2.0	2.0	63.3
Research and development	1	2.0	2.0	65.3
Health, social action	5	10.2	10.2	75.5
security and protection	1	2.0	2.0	77.6
business services	2	4.1	4.1	81.6
serices to individuals, senior consultant and researcher teacher	1	2.0	2.0	83.7
informatic services and software development	2	4.1	4.1	87.8
telecommunication	3	6.1	6.1	93.9
tourism, accommodation, restoration	3	6.1	6.1	100
total	49	100	100	/

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)



Following that, our participants were asked about their roles within the organization. Human resources directors, regional managers, human resources consultants, human resources managers, department heads, and team leaders are among the functions performed by the participants, which span a wide hierarchical spectrum....

It is useful to note that the fact that we have a significant number of senior managers and executives in human resources, reinforces and gives credibility to the results and conclusions of our study, since these people are directly involved in the management of their staff, particularly in the recruitment of the new graduates we are interested in, but are also aware of the needs of their companies with regard to the skills and qualifications required for their future collaborator.

II. Presentation of the LMD reform:

Algeria, following the lead of other developing nations, implemented the LMD system in ten higher education institutions during the academic year 2004/2005. While respecting the fundamental alternatives and orientations selected for higher education in Algeria, this new pedagogical gadget presents a new architecture, similar to that used by European Union countries.

The LMD is therefore the acronym for reform of higher education in the European Union that structures the system into three degrees of diplomas: Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate issued by each country and recognized by all the members of the Union because obeying a common training scheme, thus promoting student mobility and ensuring common legibility of diplomas on the labor market in Europe (Itoua, 2010).

By choosing the principle of designing programs according to a flexible formula, this new training system promotes the development of the capacity of institutions to adapt and renew their training offers regularly by taking into account the evolution of science and technology in the world, and local and regional potentialities. In this novel approach, it is suggested that the student be given more latitude to develop his academic career in preparation for his entry into the working life (Amrani, 2012).

The new system should, in theory, solve some of the Algerian University's concerns by pursuing the following goals:

- Improve the quality of university education by offering diversified and adapted training paths.
- Facilitate the mobility and orientation of students by ensuring the capitalization and transfer of knowledge.
- Introduce tutoring to help students choose a training path that better matches their abilities.
- Facilitate the professional integration of students by opening the university to the outside world.
- Facilitate student mobility and integration into the labor market at the national and international levels.



III. The quality of university education:

The improvement of educational quality is one of the most important factors in ensuring knowledge development and transfer, including preparing future graduates for professional integration and training "employable" graduates at all levels. To this end, university training and pedagogies provided by higher education institutions must play a role.

All evaluations that fall under the quality assurance of universities are oriented towards the usefulness of training and its impact outside the institution of university education, working life is the only social situation that clearly allows us to measure the usefulness of training, especially in its "employability" dimension, which is the operationalization of university training, employability, job retention as well as the power to promotion (Zerrouk, 2017).

Given the current state of the labor market, higher education institutions must now put an emphasis on employability, help students get ready for the workforce, and develop professionalizing degrees whose goal is less the development of sufficient general skills to be mobilized in a range of professions than it is the acquisition of methods and techniques, directly related to a specific profession. The "LMD reform" should also enable the quick training of a workforce that is adaptable and tailored to the needs of employers because it is based in general on a logic of skills and a professionalization of training courses (Ahmed, 2019).

However, the implementation of the LMD system has not made much of a dent in closing the gap between university education and the labor market; in fact, graduates suffer more as a result of the fact that their education, "as good as it is," is rarely tailored to the needs expressed and expected by employers, on top of the challenges associated with professional integration.

A new approach that takes into consideration the increased credentials required by the economy and the job market is now being debated at Algerian universities.

IV. Young graduates facing integration problems:

The unemployment of young graduates in Algeria today, particularly those with higher education, is one of the most noticeable aspects of the country's social landscape because having a degree is no longer a guarantee against unemployment. For a very long time, it was believed that the majority of those who were jobless were either illiterate or otherwise not included in the educational system (Ashley Barry; Dina Dandache, 2020).

Taking care of the youth is one of the main axes of the action plan of the Algerian government, in order to bring the higher education institutions closer to the socio-economic world, to intervene on the employment and the fight against unemployment, employment assistance policies are set up, by the creation of new devices, in particular the assistance to the creation of micro-enterprises, pre-employment contracts, and accompaniment to the professional insertion

Organizations founded in the 1990s, like the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC), the Social Development Agency (ADS), and the National Agency to Support Youth Employment, are responsible for managing this set of initiatives



(ANSEJ). The national employment agency (ANEM) and national agency for the management of microcredit (ANGEM) were then established to oversee job seekers and the ADS's social initiatives, respectively

Since the assignments are given in regions where there are no spaces for young people, many individuals view these programs to be inadequate, transient, and economically ineffective. These programs provide entry into the workforce for recent graduates, but their reach is constrained by low pay and a lack of hiring after the insertion contract ends. The latter does, however, provide the opportunity to gain professional experience and know-how, but given that it is only temporary, the Algerian government should introduce improvements.

V. Results and discussion:

1. Integration of graduates within the company:

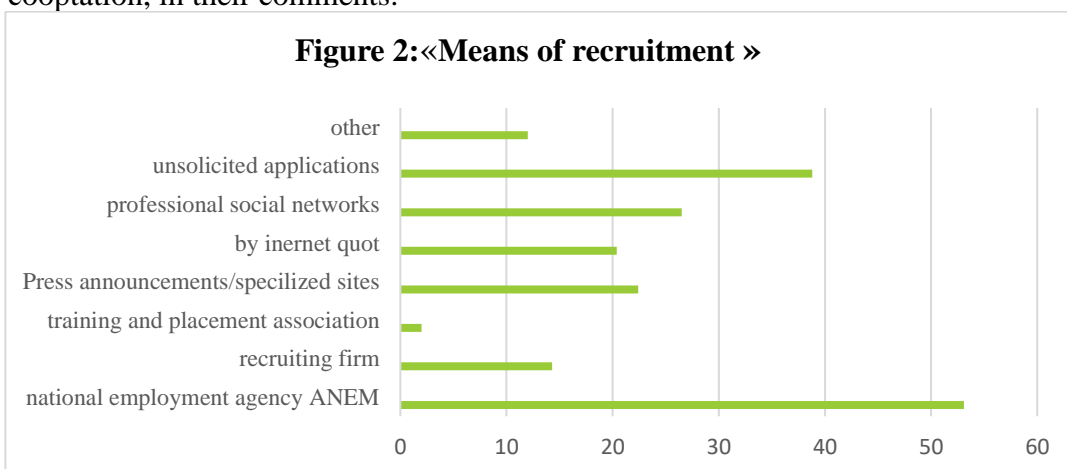
First, we questioned the firms that took part in the survey to better understand their hiring practices, and the answers we received are included below.

Regarding the methods of hiring employed by these companies, we note that a sizable majority of our participants (53.1%) use the National Employment Agency (ANEM). We are aware that companies' recourse to the ANEM is mandated by the government, but it continues to be one of the methods that provide graduates with access to employment through the use of assistance and professional integration devices.

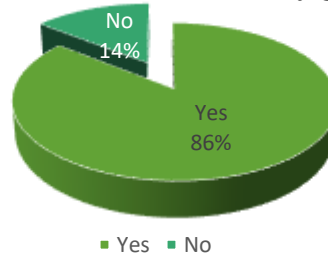
Again, the majority of participants (38.80%) use unsolicited applications, which is a wonderful chance for recent grads to stand out and create an impact. This method also enables them to target the businesses that most closely align with their values and objectives.

Other participants preferred to use a combination of resources (26.50%), websites (20.40%), recruiting agencies (14.30%), and professional social networks.

A few respondents mentioned additional strategies, including internal recruiting and cooptation, in their comments.



Source: Established by us on Excel

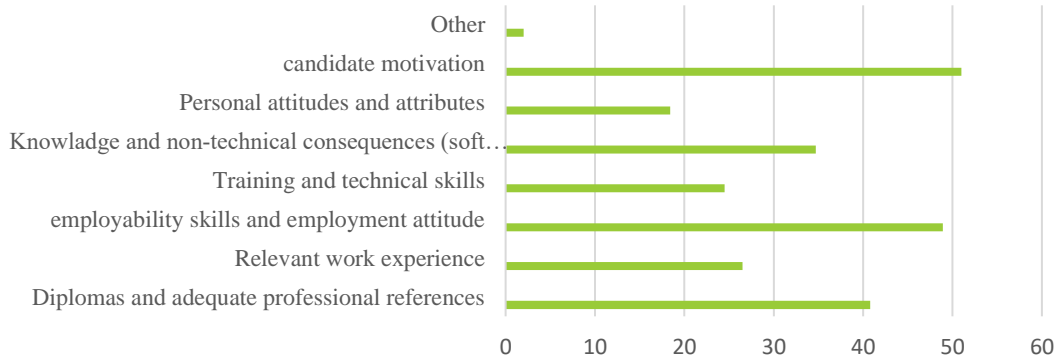
**Figure 3:« Recruitment of university graduates »**

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

Young graduates are preferred for employment by 85.71 % of the employers that took part in the survey. This decision is supported by the graduates' adaptability, motivation, and ease of adhering to the company's goal.

On the other side, 14.29 % of the companies questioned disapprove of hiring recent graduates. Their decisions are supported by the graduates' lack of experience, their lack of professionalism, and the inadequacy of their qualifications for the post.

The following inquiry focused on determining the most crucial aspects to consider when hiring new grads.

Figure 4:«The most important factors when recruiting young graduates»

Source: Established by us on Excel

After studying the data, we can say that the factors that employers value most are the candidates' motivation (51 %), their employability and job-readiness abilities (48.90 %), and their diploma and professional references (40.80 %).

Young graduates that are motivated learn quickly and put their enthusiasm to work for the business. A fresh graduate has less job experience than someone who has been employed for a while. Their inspiration comes from this.

As we have previously covered in our theoretical research, transferable skills—which are particular and related to a particular professional situation—are what we refer to as employability and work readiness skills.



Equally as many companies (34.70 %) prioritize soft talents, often known as cross-disciplinary abilities.

Comparatively speaking, just 26.50% of participants demand it. Contrary to popular assumption, a recent graduate still has some experience. Interns do in fact come into contact with the business world throughout their internships. Theoretically, a recent graduate already has professional experience, thus this enables them to develop a certain level of professional maturity

Additionally, we asked employers if they thought the graduates they employed were prepared for the workplace; the responses are shown below.

2. Recruiters' perception of young graduates

Figure 5: « Preparing young graduates for the workplace »



Source: Established by us on SPSS

(49%) of those surveyed said that the graduates they hired were unprepared for the workplace. When respondents indicated that graduates lacked the necessary preparedness to enter the workforce, the question was extended to inquire what exactly graduates lacked. According on their comments, we may infer the following details about why companies believe graduates are not prepared to adjust to the workplace:

- Lack of work experience, particularly during their university courses' practical internships, and the practicality of theoretical knowledge.
- Professional conduct, function-related research, initiative, and reflection.
- As much as HR strives to see and detect how a candidate young graduates could stand out from another profile identical to his situation, everything is in the particularity, and the originality. The issue with young graduates is that they approach all companies in a very classic way, without differentiation optics, and believe that professional life is identical to the life of the university.

3. Employers' assessment of basic skills:

In the analysis that follows, we gave employers the opportunity to rate the fundamental abilities that the literature has emphasized graduates should possess, Employers should evaluate workers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes at work in accordance with their expectations, which might be extremely high, rather strong, average, or very poor. This makes it possible to gauge employee happiness more effectively. A profile of the talents that companies are looking for may be created using this question as well.



3.1. Knowledge

Table 2: «General knowledge »

	N	Sum	Average	Percentage
Basic technique	49	109	2.22	63.200
Specialized techniques	49	123	2.51	46.900
Language skills	49	124	2.51	49.000
The use of ICT	49	98	2.00	75.500

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

The aforementioned table demonstrates that employers have fairly high expectations for the knowledge needed, particularly in the use of information and communication technologies (75.50 %); in fact, as ICT adoption increases in businesses and leads to a wide range of specializations and changes in occupations, employers are requiring more skills. Young graduates need to be prepared to continually learn new skills and reinvent themselves if they want to compete in a work market that changes in line with technology advancements.

Graduates with these talents adapt to technological and organizational change more rapidly since the fundamental techniques (63.20%) depend on the abilities learned in the context of education.

Expertise (49%) and language proficiency (49%) are somewhat expected (46.90 %).

3.2. Capabilities

Table 3: «Technical and professional capacities »

	N	Sum	Average	Percentage
Team work	49	89	1.82	79.600
Adaptability	49	99	2.02	73.500
Oral and written communication skills	49	104	2.12	75.500
Plan and organize work	49	117	2.39	57.200
Labor activity	49	112	2.29	61.200
Understand and follow work instructions	49	95	1.94	79.700
Formate and delegate tasks	49	125	2.55	55.100
Copewith stressful situations	49	120	2.45	53.100

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

According to the findings, employers admit to having very a rather high expectations for graduates' abilities, particularly in teamwork ability 79.60 %, understanding and adhering to rules and regulations at work 79.70 %, written and oral communication skills 75.50 %, adaptability 73.50 %, and productivity 61.20 %. Next, designing and assigning duties 55.10 %, supporting difficult situations 53. 10 %, and planning and arranging work 57.20 %.



3.3. Attitudes:

Table 4: «Attitudes »

	N	Sum	Average	Percentage
the senens of responsibility	49	93	1.90	83.700
punctuality and assidity	49	87	1.78	83.700
Productivity	49	98	2.00	73.400
respect for authority	49	86	1.76	77.600
good listening skills	49	81	1.65	83.700
Flexibility	49	106	2.16	61.200
have a good relationship	49	98	2.00	71.400

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

As shown by the findings above, employers have high expectations for graduates' attitudes in the workplace, in particular, they want graduates to be responsible, punctual, and present for work (83.70 %), as well as having a strong capacity to listen (10 %).

4. Analysis of the gap between expectations and employer satisfaction

Table 5: «Employer satisfaction»

	N	Sum	Average	Standard deviation
general knowledge	49	112	2.29	69.400
technical and proffetional capacity	49	107	2.18	71.400
Attitudes	49	111	2.27	65.300

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

The amount of satisfaction or discontent that employers have with graduates' prior competence assessments is depicted in the table above. They appear to be quite content with their general knowledge, as well as their technical and professional talents, but less so with their attitudes. What we can infer from our study is that the knowledge and abilities that employers value might change depending on the type of work being done. Employers value adaptability, language abilities, and communication skills most in the administrative field. Oral communication, problem-solving, and information technology abilities are typically higher valued by employers in the computer services and software development industries. Engineering-based businesses value abilities like problem-solving and cooperation the most.

On the other hand, we discovered that when it comes to graduates' opinions, all of the businesses that took part in our study have comparable expectations. The existence of innovation and creativity at work may be influenced by workplace attitudes, which may then boost productivity. Employees that are enthusiastic about their jobs and the business are more likely to come up with proposals or ideas that will benefit the business.

In comparison to the prior analysis, participants were asked to list the qualities graduates should possess in order to achieve their expectations and professional aspirations.



5. The most important attributes for employers

Table 6: « The most important attributes for employers»

	N	Sum	Average	Percentage
previous professional experience	49	113	2.31	22.040
able to interpret and carry out the given tasks	49	169	3.45	61.200
Linguistic skills	49	153	3.12	40.800
Teamwork	49	163	3.33	26.500
the ability to communicate orally	49	165	3.37	57.200
the ability to communicate in writing	49	175	3.57	63.300
mastery of computer tools	49	176	3.59	55.100

Source: Established by us on SPSS (V26)

This table shows that employers believe that while having relevant experience is necessary and that having prior professional experience is not very important, employers who want competent workers who can work quickly and efficiently look for candidates whose experience and the requirements of the position they are filling are as close as possible. However, experience does not always equate to high-caliber skills.

Young graduates must develop their flexibility and complete the tasks assigned, including oral and writing communication, language proficiency, and the use of digital tools, depending on the results acquired.

Finally, employers were questioned informally about additional skills they felt graduates' university curricula should include.

We may evaluate and compare the abilities and qualities graduates can develop during their university studies to the demands and needs of businesses using this question.

Below are some of the programs and skills that our employer participants indicated should be included in the university education system and that, in our opinion, are crucial to enhancing graduates' employability.

- Organizational skills, originality, and optimism.
- To be able to contribute innovation and extra value.
- Coaching mostly focuses on helping students establish their goals, create a career strategy, and learn how to expand their professional networks.
- Therefore, experiential learning offers the modules utilizing the TOTE approach (test, operate, test, exit) and encourages the learner to work on a project by putting the obtained information into practice.
- Complete hands-on internships in third-generation businesses.
- Update the modules to reflect the realities of operating businesses.
- Show graduates how to properly introduce themselves and emphasize their accomplishments.



- Learning English while applying it to the topic of study, research technique, abilities in identification and interpretation, and requirements analysis with the goal of offering tailored solutions.

Conclusion:

Given the significance of employability for workers in general and graduates in particular, one empirical goal of the study was to investigate how employers experience and perceive graduates' employability in order to highlight the variety of needs of employers and the skills graduates should have in order to adapt to the needs of the socioeconomic world.

We had to do quantitative research using an exploratory methodology to address our inquiries, and as a result, provide as much detailed information as we could by surveying the various employers.

The following abilities were considered as the most crucial for graduates to have after graduation by employers:

- Verbal and written communication abilities.
- Soft skills;
- Proficiency with modern technology and computing tools.
- Flexibility and collaboration.

Employers, on the other hand, anticipate graduates to be prepared to enter the job immediately after graduation and to have the skills necessary to do so. Since the university learning process does not adequately prepare students for the workplace, the university's primary responsibility must be to help students better adapt to the demands of the labor market and integrate practical training and personal development in addition to theoretical learning, according to the majority of employers who participated in the study.

Youth profiles don't match what employers are looking for, The findings of empirical study demonstrate that there is undoubtedly a gap between employers and graduates, with more than half of respondents saying that the graduates they hired weren't prepared for the workforce. When respondents said graduates weren't prepared for the workforce, the question was expanded, and we asked them to explain what graduates lacked in terms of being prepared for the workplace. One of the factors that impact graduates' success at work, according to employers, is a lack of prior job experience. Additionally, it was said that graduates lack soft skills and have distinct expectations for the workplace.

The findings of this study, in our opinion, will benefit recent graduates who hope to increase their employability. To better fulfill the demands of companies, we have concentrated on enhancing the qualities and abilities needed of graduates.

Since our findings are more comprehensive and useful in real-world settings, our empirical data complement and concur with earlier studies.

Our study's findings may be advantageous to higher education institutions as well as upcoming graduates. Students may get an understanding of what employers appreciate and what they think is crucial to accomplish their professional expectations and objectives from the data, which is both educational and useful. With



the help of the skills profile we have provided, students may improve their employability throughout their further education and strive toward being more employable. Higher education institutions, on the other hand, can use these findings to work toward bridging the labor market divide. Employers can also gain from the results by considering their own policies on the treatment of students and recent graduates, and even by identifying strategies to better integrate recently graduated employees into their workforce.

The following recommendations are given after researching the subject and the findings

- Employers should be consulted by higher education institutions to determine their requirements.
- Employers must create initiatives to aid students in their transition from higher education to the job.
- Encourage collaboration and efficiency-enhancing group activities.
- Graduates must establish their brand on professional networks like LinkedIn (Self-branding) and speak with companies directly.
- Pick final study projects that address issues that the firm has and offer specific remedies.

Graduating students' employability is a subject that is always changing as markets evolve and become more sophisticated. As a result, there will always be a demand for fresh information and a need for more study. Finding strategies to bridge the gap between business graduates and the labor market will be necessary as long as it exists. Whether it's emphasizing the value of higher education or assisting businesses in finding better and more efficient methods to acquire and develop talent

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