
Views of Non-Formal Education in Algeria

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Primary school in, Algeria; credit russavia



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Overview

Few Algerians are satisfied with the state of education in their country and a majority of the population is dissatisfied with the formal education system. However, a plurality approves of government efforts to improve the education system even though an overwhelming majority of Algerians are worried about the ability to provide children with a good education. Given these sentiments, supplementary education programs outside the formal curriculum could be used to help alleviate these concerns.

Even though few Algerians participate in youth non-formal education programs, the country enjoys higher rates of participation than do many other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Among those who have participated, rates of satisfaction with such programs are high overall. Nevertheless, the reputation of NFE leaves much to be desired, with over half of non-participants holding a negative view of such programs. To increase their viability, NFE programs need to improve their popular image in Algeria. Meanwhile, the primary barrier to participation is cost, indicating that efforts to increase enrollment in NFE must also address affordability.

Algerians are most interested in NFE programs that emphasize job-related skills that in turn promote career development. Moreover, the results of the survey make clear that critical and analytical thinking in the education system are also highly valued by ordinary Algerians. This finding holds across a variety of demographic differences, indicating widespread support throughout the country. If barriers are limited and programs emphasizing skills of interest to Algerians are promoted, then youth non-formal education programs are more likely to be successful in addressing the needs of Algerian citizens.

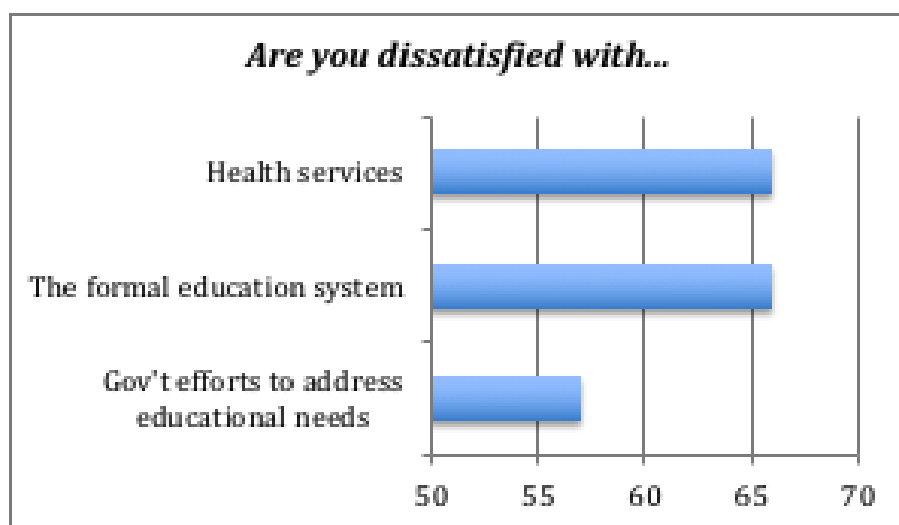
Views on Government and the Education System

Two-thirds of Algerians are dissatisfied with the formal education system (66 percent), while the remaining third are satisfied or very satisfied (32 percent). By comparison, rates of satisfaction with health care services are similar (66 percent dissatisfied, 34 percent satisfied). In terms of government efforts to address educational needs, over half of respondents rate such efforts as bad or very bad (57 percent).

Notably, rates of satisfaction do not differ significantly across income or education levels. However, when asked whether they worry about providing children in Algeria a good education, there are small differences by demographic group. Overall, nearly nine-in-ten Algerians are worried or very worried about not having this ability (89 percent), compared to 9 percent who say they are not. When examined by income differences, those earning below the approximate median household income (DA50,000) are somewhat more

concerned than their counterparts earning at or above the median income (92 percent vs. 88 percent).

Again, a distinction is present when comparing more educated Algerians (secondary or above), with less education Algerians (basic or below). However, in this case, less educated Algerians are somewhat less likely to be worried than more educated respondents (86 percent vs. 91 percent). Despite these small differences, the results make clear that overall the vast majority of Algerians are worried about the ability to provide their country's children with a quality education.

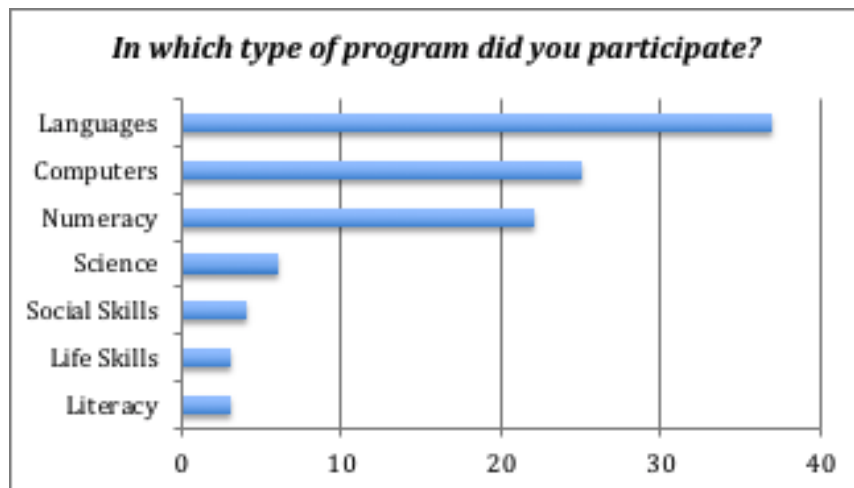


Attitudes toward Non-Formal Education and Reasons for Attending

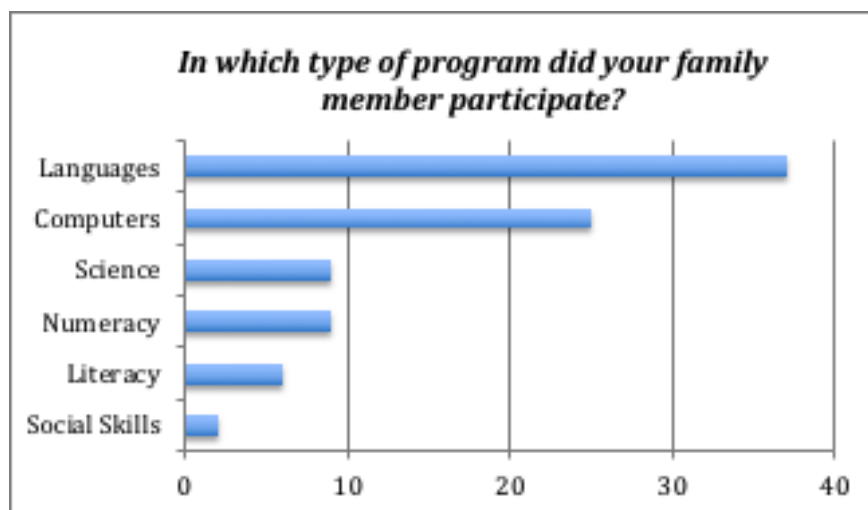
A minority of Algerians have either participated themselves or had a family member participate in non-formal education programs (15 percent). Though this represents a relatively small minority, Algerians nonetheless have higher rates of participation in youth NFE programs than other countries surveyed by the Arab Barometer across the Middle East and North Africa. Overall, most of the programs were organized by a private institution (68 percent) while less than a third were organized by NGOs or other such agencies (29 percent).

Among those Algerians who have either participated themselves or had a family member participate in NFE, the vast majority are from urban households rather than rural ones (67 percent vs. 32 percent), and have at least a secondary education (80 percent vs. 20 percent with a basic level education or below). Not only are the majority of participants from urban areas, but rates of participation were higher among urban respondents than they were among rural respondents (15 percent vs. 13 percent).

With regards to income, participants' backgrounds are split relatively evenly between families who earn above the median and those who earn at or below the median (51 percent vs. 42 percent).¹



The most popular types of NFE programs among respondents who participated themselves are those teaching languages (37 percent), computers (25 percent), or numeracy (22 percent). These are followed at much lower rates by programs teaching science, social skills, life skills, and literacy (6 percent, 4 percent, 3 percent, 3 percent, respectively).

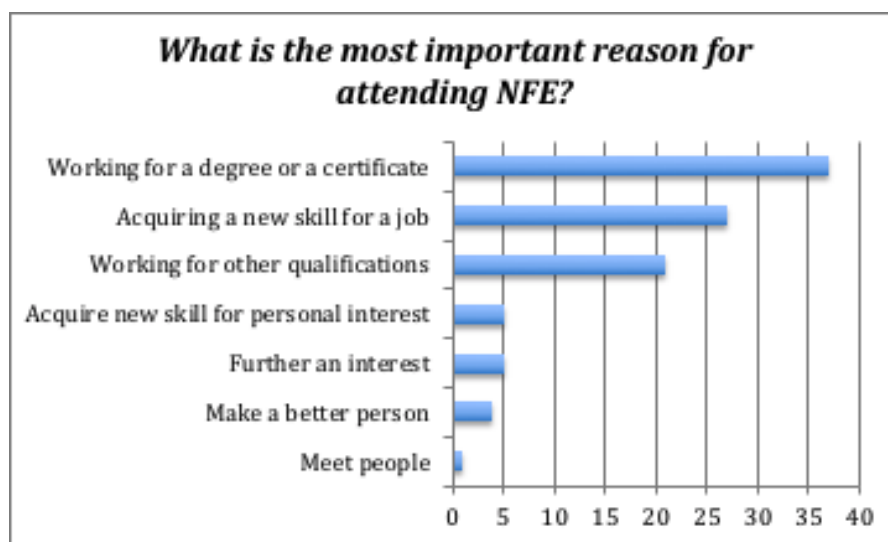


Among those who had a family member participate, the most common types of programs attended are similar. In this case, a plurality participated in a program teaching languages (37 percent), followed by computers (25 percent), science, numeracy (9 percent, each), literacy (6 percent), and social skills (2 percent).

When asked about the most important reason to participate in non-formal education, Algerians primarily cite motivations related to career development and advancement. For

¹ The remaining 7 percent is missing data or those who refused to answer the question.

instance, nearly four-in-ten Algerians say working for a degree or a certificate is the most important reason (37 percent), followed by acquiring a new skill for a job (27 percent), or working for other qualifications (21 percent). Reasons relating to personal development are cited at significantly lower rates with five percent of Algerians or fewer saying the most important reason to participate is to acquire a new skill for a personal interest, to further an interest, to make a better person, or to meet people (5 percent, 5 percent, 4 percent, and 1 percent, respectively).

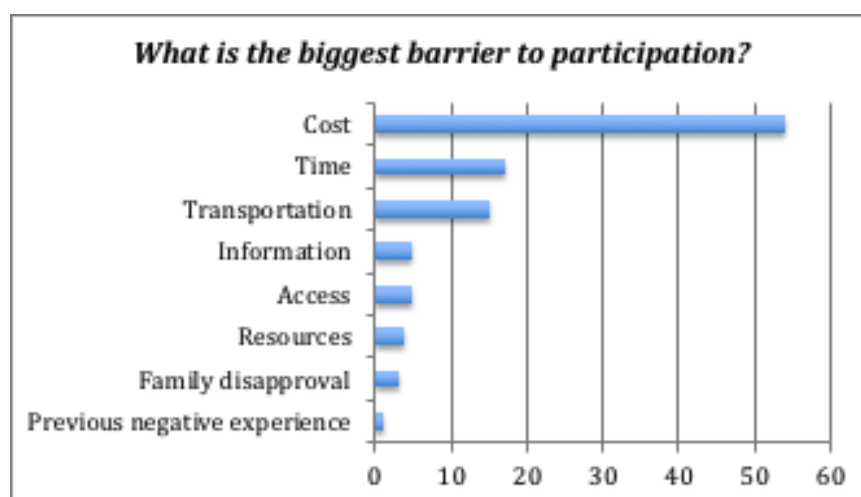


For the second most important reason, preferences are slightly different. The focus remains on career-relevant skills; combined, almost half of respondents say that acquiring a new skill for a job (25 percent) or working for other qualifications (17 percent) is the second most important reasons. However, reasons related to personal development are also frequently mentioned. Furthering an interest, acquiring a new skill for a personal interest, making oneself a better person, or meeting new people are commonly cited as the second most important reasons to participate in a youth non-formal education program (15 percent, 13 percent, 12 percent, and 6 percent, respectively).

Both the reputation of youth NFE and rates of satisfaction with such programs are lower in Algeria than in the rest of the Middle East and North Africa. For instance, among those who did not participate in NFE programs, 56 percent think positively, while 27 percent do not think positively, and 17 percent either declined to answer or say they do not know. Among those who participated in NFE either themselves or have a family who member did, 77 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with such programs. The discrepancy between non-participants and participants in terms of their views on NFE can be attributed in part to familiarity, given that those with direct contact hold NFE in higher regard than those who do not have direct familiarity.

Barriers to Attending Non-Formal Education Programs

Given that private institutions organize most NFE programs (68 percent), it is not surprising that over half of respondents cite cost as the biggest barrier to participation (54 percent). Other barriers include lack of time, transportation, information, access, resources, family disapproval, or even a previous negative experience (17 percent, 15 percent, 5 percent, 5 percent, 4 percent, 3 percent, and 1 percent, respectively). Interestingly, cost is cited as the biggest barrier at the same rate across demographic differences like income and geographic location (urban vs. rural area).



For the second biggest barrier to participation, Algerians commonly emphasize issues other than the cost of the program. A fifth cite lack of time (20 percent), followed by transportation or family disapproval (15 percent and 10 percent, respectively). Meanwhile, fewer cite cost, resources, information, access, or governance as the second biggest barrier (9 percent, 8 percent, 7 percent, 7 percent, 5 percent, respectively). Further, roughly 7 percent of Algerians say they have no reply beyond the initial barrier they listed.

In addition to barriers like cost or transportation, cultural barriers can also limit participation. Though the majority of Algerians say that male and female students attending class together is acceptable in Islam (67 percent) and that university education is no more important for males than it is for females (76 percent), a sizable minority disagrees. Nearly a third of respondents believe that Islam does not permit coeducation (32 percent), and nearly one-quarter say that university education is more important for males (24 percent). When examined by demographic differences, the data show that respondents who self-identify as not religious are more likely to support coeducation (81 percent) than are their somewhat religious or religious counterparts (68 percent and 59 percent, respectively).

Views of Education

When asked about the kind of education system they prefer, most Algerians favor one emphasizing critical and analytical thinking, over rote memorization. In contrast, preferences are more evenly divided on teaching emotional intelligence in the classroom. Further, while disaggregating results based on gender shows little difference between the preferences of men and women for critical thinking skills, the same is not true for emotional intelligence.

Overall, three-quarters of Algerians agree that it is important for students to learn to think about how to answer the question, as opposed to focusing simply on giving the correct answer (76 percent vs. 22 percent). Similarly, most Algerians say that a good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves even when it goes against what the teacher is saying (74 percent). They significantly prefer this approach to a system that encourages students to simply accept the answer offered by the teacher without a need for alternatives (23 percent). In addition, Algerians favor examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class, as opposed to examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught (77 percent vs. 21 percent). These results show little difference, or none at all, when disaggregated by gender. Thus, the vast majority of Algerians clearly favor teaching students critical thinking skills, as opposed to more traditional methods like rote memorization.

In terms of preferences for an education system that emphasizes scientific skills vs. emotional intelligence, Algerians tend to prefer a system that includes the latter, albeit not by a large margin. For instance, slightly over half of respondents think that just as there are courses to teach scientific skills there must also be courses to teach students how to recognize and express their own emotions, and to respond to others' emotions (51 percent). Meanwhile, slightly fewer Algerians prefer that the education system focus primarily on developing the scientific skills of students (47 percent). In this case, however, attitudes vary by gender. Although men are about equally likely to prefer a system that emphasizes scientific skills over emotional skills (50 percent vs. 48 percent), women are more likely to prefer teaching emotional skills (54 percent) as opposed to scientific skills only (45 percent).

Respondents also favor an education system that places a greater importance on learning social skills such as the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others compared with a system that emphasizes academic achievement (50 percent vs. 46 percent). Again, a difference exists between men and women in terms of preferences. While men prefer certificates recognizing completion and an emphasis on academic achievement (50 percent) to a system placing primary importance on learning social skills

		Prefer
1	Statement 1: The education system should focus primarily on developing the scientific skills of pupils and students	47%
	Statement 2: Just as there are courses to teach scientific skills there must be courses to teach students how to recognize and express their own emotions and respond to others' emotions	51%
2	Statement 1: Giving the correct answer to a question remains the most important goal for pupils and students	22%
	Statement 2: It is not important for pupils and students to always reach the correct answer. What is most important is that they learn to think about how to answer the question	76%
3	Statement 1: A good education system is one that encourages the student to accept the answer offered by the teacher because it is the best answer, there is no need for alternatives.	23%
	Statement 2: A good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves even when it goes against what the teacher is saying.	74%
4	Statement 1: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	21%
	Statement 2: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	77%
5	Statement 1: The education system should place primary importance on academic achievement and certificates recognizing completion.	46%
	Statement 2: The education system should place primary importance on learning social skills such as the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others.	50%

(46 percent), women have the opposite preference. Over half of women prefer the latter method to the former (55 percent vs. 42 percent).

Conclusion

Overall, Algerians are deeply concerned that they may not be able to provide their children with a good education. Though few have participated in education programs outside the formal curriculum, there is evidence that such programs would have appeal among citizens. Given that participation rates in Algeria are already higher than in much of the Middle East and North Africa, there is some tangible evidence that youth non-formal education programs are already relatively common in the country.

A successful NFE program will be one that emphasizes the skills Algerians seek, like languages, computers, and numeracy at an affordable rate, given that cost is one of the greatest barriers to participation. Practical, job-related skills have a proven record of appeal among citizens. There is also a clear preference for programs that promote analytical and critical thinking skills, although fewer Algerians favor teaching skills in emotional intelligence in the country's curricula.

In addition to cost as a barrier, some youth may face cultural barriers. Although a majority of Algerians approve of coeducation and believe men and women should have equal educational opportunities, a sizable minority does not. In an attempt to increase participation, an NFE program should account for this segment of the population, as well. A non-formal education program that incorporates the aforementioned qualities is more likely to be successful in the Algerian context.