

The National Entrepreneurial Camp

Morocco

Jihad Hajjouji, Hafsa Anouar, Morocco. Middlebury College. Tufts University.

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The National Entrepreneurial Camp is a one week program that aims to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship to a group of 15 to 19 year olds from around Morocco. Our vision is to develop a generation of job creators, not job seekers. Our mission is to find the entrepreneur in our participants through a revolutionary process: the process of need identification, solution design and idea implementation.

The camp took place in the period of 1-8 of July 2012 in the city of Safi, and it gathered a group of 26 participants representing 17 cities. This group was selected from a pool of almost 300 applicants, which meant that we had a pretty dynamic and engaged group. Our biggest challenge in the month preceding the camp was to find a suitable venue within our limited budget. This was almost impossible, until we met with the department of sustainable development at OCP (Office Cherifien de Phosphate). This new partner agreed to a donation that would cover food and lodging for the entire camp. The new partnership also meant that we needed to change the venue to the city of Safi, where OCP's affiliate hotel was located. A new fear was whether or not we were going to retain our selected group after this drastic change in location, but we were fortunate to have over a 90% retention rate (only 2 participants apologized for personal reasons).

The program of the camp was inspired by two main sources; Babson University's entrepreneurship curriculum, and African Leadership Academy's leadership curriculum. The day schedule focused on developing entrepreneurial skills, while the evening schedule focused on personal leadership training. The themes of the week were as follows: Thinking Inwards (entrepreneurship starts by discovering oneself and one's passions), Thinking Outwards (need identification in the community), Developing a Marketing Strategy, Planning Operations and Finance, Practicing the Elevator Pitch, and finally competing in the National Entrepreneurial Challenge.

The final pitching competition was a great opportunity for our participants to demonstrate their creativity, and share with the jury the solutions they designed for their communities' immediate needs. The external jury selected three winning pitches, while the NEC team selected one winner for the prize of the most active participant. This latter prize was in the form of a paid internship at the winner's organization of choice, and it was awarded by our partner organization- Node Africa.

At the end of the camp, we collected anonymous evaluations from our participants on various aspects of the camp, and the feedback was highly positive. Participants indicated high satisfaction with our program, and said that NEC helped them learn a lot about their entrepreneurial self, and a couple of them have already started work on their personal projects. Our partner company OCP was also very satisfied with our results, and decided to sponsor our camp on a yearly basis.

As political science students, questions of war and peace are puzzles we encounter every day. And while our textbooks would most likely define peace as some point of a stable balance of power whereby no one is able to challenge the status quo, to us peace can be nothing less than a state of a *just* stability. Injustice can also be stable, if the oppressor and the oppressed are assured to remain immovable, but it can never be called peace. Peace is the absence of war, but also the absence of injustice. We would therefore define peace as a state of stable justice.

The National Entrepreneurial Camp came at a very sensitive time in our country and the MENA region as a whole. Not unlike its neighboring countries, Morocco witnessed its own uprisings and forms of social unrest. The demands were simple: the right to employment and the right to a dignified living. Demonstrations became increasingly tense, and some of them escalated to the point of self-immolation. While these demands were undeniably just and fair, they were often packaged in an impossible format; demands for direct employment in government jobs. The issue of youth unemployment has the potential to threaten peace in Morocco in at least two ways: on the long term, a frustrated and unemployed youth is more likely to engage in crime, extremism and violence, thus affecting national security and overall stability; and on the short term, demonstrations against unemployment can easily turn outright violent as has already happened in a few cities.

The National Entrepreneurial Camp was our attempt to address youth unemployment through a long term and patient strategy; nurturing young entrepreneurs through a revolutionary training. It is true that one week cannot be enough to pass on all the necessary skills and knowledge needed in the world of enterprise management, but at NEC, it was enough to convince a group of young students that they, too, can become entrepreneurs. Perhaps our favorite quote on NEC came from one of our participants after a question on the lessons he learned from the camp. He said: "Your dream job does not exist, you must create it!"

"Running NEC was a big challenge for me, as being the director of the program meant that I had to keep an eye on a host of different things at once: the application process, our fundraising efforts, and the content of our program to mention a few. This stretched my leadership abilities and tested my emotional intelligence in various occasions. While NEC taught me a lot about how to run a social entrepreneurship project in my home country, it taught me even more about myself, and I'm glad I had this opportunity to learn what it takes to make positive change happen." Jihad Hajjouji.

"Running NEC taught me to be patient especially with the various challenges we faced while looking for a venue and new partners. The various duties I had improved my organization skills and my leadership skills. Also, working with youth has constantly challenged me to be more creative and innovative in designing activities that would engage them and inspire them to become tomorrow's entrepreneurs. I believe the most rewarding experience in planning and running NEC is witnessing the development of the participants throughout the week. When they first came, they were shy; they did not know much about the world of entrepreneurship. But after a week of entrepreneurial training and personal development, they were able to speak out, develop business plans and pitch them confidently in front of the judges and most importantly, develop long lasting friendships. I am very thankful for this opportunity that allowed me to learn more about myself and develop long lasting friendships with future Moroccan entrepreneurs." Hafsa Anouar

