

Summer School 2023 – Kairouan_ Session 4, REPORT

Date: 20-21/06/2023 – 3:30 PM GMT+2

Location: Kairouan, Tunisia

Session held by: Laila Abd El Gawed, Matias Nestore

EVENT DESCRIPTION

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE EVENT:	19
PARTICIPANTS (ORGANISATIONS):	Laila Abd El Gawed, UNISI Matias Nestore, UNISI Luca Verzichelli, UNISI Mohamed Sahbi Charradi, UNIK Marwa Hattab, UNIK Fatma Birgui, USOU Sawsan Bouraoui, USOU BA students from the University of Kairouan (see the attendance sheets in the attachment)
EVENT DESCRIPTION:	
<p>In the context of the third cycle of PACTUM summer schools, the University of Kairouan launched its program about <i>Democratic Instability and authoritarian revival</i>. The program counted six classes held by Professors of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Kairouan, Amine Jassi, Anis Snoussi, and Ghaith Chaouch. The University of Siena proposed two sessions, one held by Prof. Luca Verzichelli and the second held by Laila Abd El Gawed, Junior Project Manager of the PACTUM project for the University of Siena.</p> <p>The fourth session of the Kairouan third summer school had the aim to involve students in practical activities for different purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide the attendants with practical activities for the development of their soft skills.2. Shape the activity to make it work as interviews too, from a dissemination perspective.3. Offer a new forum for discussion among students about current challenges in the field of international academic cooperation. <p>The session titled “Fostering Political Awareness from an International Perspective: who, where, and How</p>	



fostering political consciousness, Critical Thinking, and civic engagement among Students” sought to investigate the role of universities in promoting political awareness, critical thinking, and civic engagement among students, with a focus on the international/European Union (EU) perspective and its combination with the Tunisian/local context. By employing a mix of open-ended and specific questions, the study sought to gather valuable insights into the definition of political awareness, critical thinking, and civic engagement within the context of university education. Furthermore, the project explored the importance of universities in fostering political awareness among students and identifies specific strategies and initiatives that universities can implement to promote political consciousness and civic engagement in an international environment. This will be useful to assess how the new master’s in political sciences developed as part of the Pactum Project will contribute to young people’s political literacy in Tunisia.

Thus, students were first asked about their definitions of political awareness, critical thinking, and civic engagement in higher education. We tried to identify the main sources or kinds of activities at their disposal to develop these skills. Consequently, students were asked about eventual strategies or initiatives (and related challenges) adopted by Tunisian universities in general to foster these three competencies. In this perspective, we investigated both students’ opinions about the role played, and the efforts made by teachers and instructors to fulfill this goal. At the same time, the questions also focused on the external connections that students have or might have in terms of personal networks of students, organizations, and civil society, in general, to understand what they might do on their own or with the help of higher education institution in collaboration with the local government and public administrations.

- The weak points identified in the two focus groups mainly concerned a lack of financial and digital resources which might help students with the development of the three skills mentioned above. For instance, the access to digital platforms to download the needed references, papers, essays, and articles of any kind.
- A second strong point concerns the need for an innovative practical approach to teaching and learning to implement and apply the theoretical knowledge wisely transmitted from the local instructors. We analyzed in a further session the possible use of **Collaborative learning** activities (e.g., negotiation simulations, workshops, etc.) and **Problem-oriented and project-based learning (POBL)**. These proposals met strong enthusiasm from the students who explicitly asked for the inclusion of this kind of innovation (and thus, an innovation of the role covered by their teacher who would not be involved in frontal lessons anymore but would be the main actors of innovation and community interaction). The discussion brought attendants and instructors involved in this



summer school to widen their gaze towards the development of soft skills and useful multidisciplinary competencies which would allow students to be ready for an international job market and that, most of all, would push them to aspire to many kinds of job position rather than the standard ones.

- Last but not least, a third weak point consisted of the lack of *fora* for discussions within and outside their universities because of a lack of entrepreneurial approach to widely open discussion with different publics. The students have been spurred to do this as pioneers of social/public discussion.

The experience in the context of this summer school concluded with an overview of possible competencies that an innovative approach to teaching and learning (which the PACTUM project would like to adopt in its MA on Social and Behavioral Sciences) and corresponding possible job positions that the students might apply for. Matias Nestore, a researcher on impact evaluation of projects in an international context, led the sessions and concluded it with a practical activity focused on the first approaches to projects' implementation.