

Najja7ni: Mobile learning services for improving education, English language skills and employment opportunities in Tunisia

The rapidly increasing use of mobile technologies is having a dramatic impact on societies in the Arab region. Mobiles are no longer simply used for making phone calls and surfing the Internet, but are now being used to improve learning and employability, and also for social change.

In Tunisia, where 30% of young people below the age of 30 are unemployed, this has happened through the Najja7ni mobile platform. This is a major m-learning initiative that has helped over 800,000 marginalised young people to improve their education, employability and financial inclusion.

The initiative was launched in 2010 with an education service for primary and secondary school children, and has since developed with an m-English service in 2011 and the employment service in 2013 focussed on helping young job seekers and entrepreneurs to succeed in the job market.

It is affordable, fun and accessible even from a handset even if it has no credit.

The services

Najja7ni is a set of three services for mobile learning and employment:

- **Najja7ni Education** supports **children** in primary and secondary schools.
- **Najja7ni m-English** offers **young job seekers** the chance to acquire new language skills and improve their chances in the labour market.
- **Najja7ni Employment** is the latest initiative. Designed for **young job seekers and entrepreneurs**, it bridges the gap between young people and the labour market.

Key partners

Najja7ni has four partners – Tunisiana (a member of the Ooredoo Group), PRO-INVEST, Edupartage and Silatech.



Tunisiana is the largest mobile operator in Tunisia, with a 54% market share in the mobile market and more than 7.3 million subscribers. Launched in 2002, they have now become a global operator, offering mobile, fixed and internet services and specialising in innovative, simple, high-quality and affordable services. Tunisiana is part of the Ooredoo group. For more information see www.tunisiana.com.

PRO-INVEST (subsidiary of the Consortium for International Development in Education "CIDE"), based in Tunis, is a consultancy firm that works closely with specialist national and multinational consulting firms and technical and vocational training operators in the Maghreb and African regions. They specialise in training needs analysis and labour information systems, the design and development of web portals, intranets, e-learning, mobile education services, learning management systems, e-commerce and customer relations.

Edupartage, created by PRO-INVEST and co-founded with Microsoft and Silatech, is the first Tunisian educational community-based network and aims to enhance the socio-economic development of the

country's youth. It offers mobile and web-based collaborative platforms and access to free online training courses (MOOCs), tutoring and information. An online portal, TounesTa3mal.com, encourages career planning and advertises jobs and internship posts, while young entrepreneurs can access information on business growth and opportunities for mentorship/investment. As a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Edupartage also develops partnerships with associations, ministries and governmental institutions to develop education and promote the integration of young people into social and professional life. For more information see <http://edupartage.com/>.

Silatech is a dynamic social initiative founded in 2008 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar to create innovative solutions to challenging problems, working with NGOs, governments and the private sector to foster sustainable, positive change for Arab youth. They promote large-scale job creation, entrepreneurship, access to capital and markets, and the participation and engagement of young people in economic and social development. For more information see www.silatech.com/home.

Core technologies

Mobile phone technology is one of the most inclusive technologies in the world. Using Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), the Najja7ni platform connects with multiple operators to receive and process USSD traffic from the centralised content repository and push customised USSD menu messages to end-user mobile handsets. The diagram opposite shows the platform environment.

The user dials a USSD short code for the service, they choose to receive a menu in Arabic or French or English, and can then go on to make a selection from the free services.

It is a simple, inexpensive service accessible by everyone.

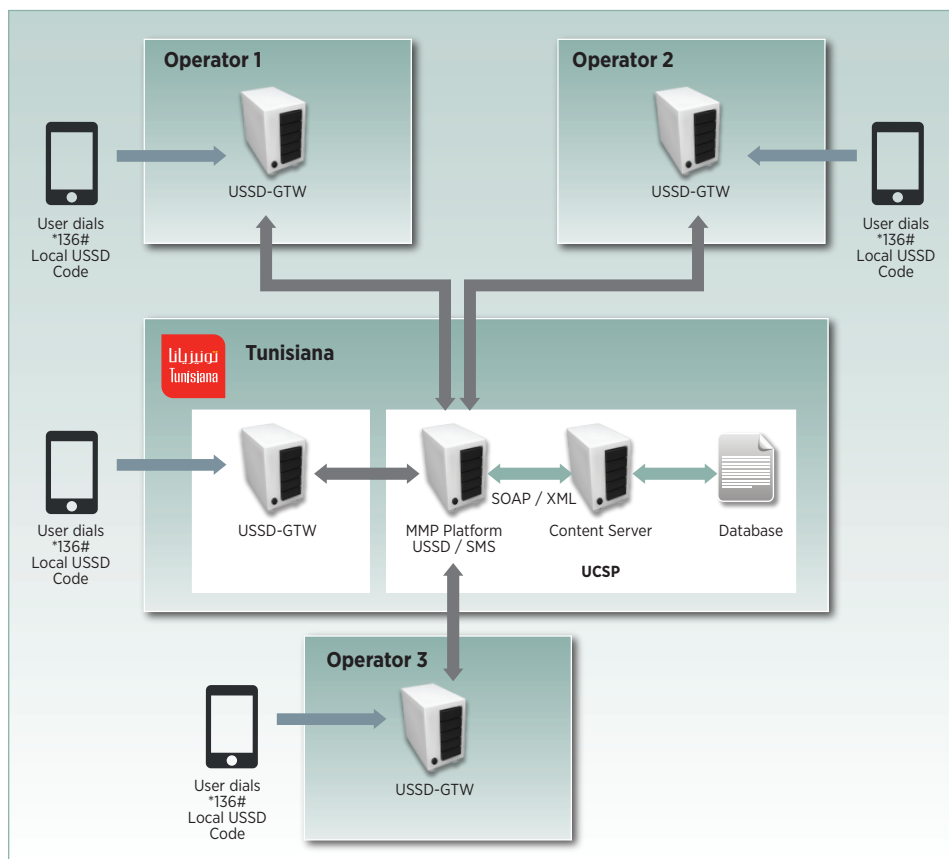
Learning content

Najja7ni Education offers children from remote areas, and disadvantaged children in urban areas, the chance to learn mathematics, sciences, Arabic, French and English. The approach works through popular subject areas such as travel, technology and the environment and uses around interactive 2,500 questions and answers. The content is prepared by teachers and based on the official education curriculum – learners find it a particularly useful revision aid.

There are currently approximately 2.5m learners using Najja7ni and it is intended to make the service available to all 22 countries served by the Ooredoo Group.

Example

Ridha Sassi, an Inspector of National Education, describes the cases of Lobna (aged 7) and Selim (aged 8), children from poor families living in remote areas. Given the challenges of inaccessibility and insecurity in these regions, their parents are particularly keen to encourage them to do well in school. The children enjoy using their 2G phones to access the Najja7ni Education service once they have finished their homework and the parents are reassured that the contents are clearly organised by grade, subject and session.



‘With the launch of Najja7ni Employment, we will be able to reach youth in even the most marginalised communities, connecting them with skills and employment opportunities.’ Dr Tarik M Yousef, Chief Executive Officer, Silatech

Najja7ni m-English enables young people to access English courses that include 50 daily conversation scenarios and 500 interactive quizzes. It was developed in partnership with the US Department of State and the American Embassy in Tunis to help students and young professionals enhance their English communication and writing skills.

Examples

Makrem Sboui is a 20-year-old university student from Sfax, Tunisia. He needs to improve his English but his family cannot afford private tutoring and there are no English speakers living nearby. Makrem uses m-English because it means he can practise and improve his English spelling and grammar wherever and whenever he likes – while waiting for the bus on his way to or from the

university or when he is with his friends – at very little cost. He is also eager to use the 24-hour free session. Makrem’s obvious enjoyment of m-English has made his friends very curious and they can all try it out because it is accessible on any phone and to anyone who uses the Tunisiana service.

Khouloud Ben Rejeb is a 17-year-old schoolgirl living in Nabeul, Tunisia. She wants to improve her spoken English but her school concentrates on written English and grammar. Using the Najja7ni m-English course, she can practise anywhere, including at school with her friends and at home with her cousin. Sharing her phone she can even compete with her friends to see who gets the best score in English quizzes because there is unlimited service throughout the day. Her English is improving all the time and she hopes to sit the exam for a certificate as soon as her parents can afford it.



Najja7ni Employment is the region's first career-related mobile service. It offers an employability support service that connects young people without Internet access to employability resources, financial inclusion and job opportunities via a basic handset. The content has been developed by education experts with solid experience in vocational guidance and employment and brings together opportunities from a range of youth support organisations, such as the National Employment Agency and Self Employment, Making Cents and the World Bank. Through partnerships with the Ministry of Employment and Microsoft, Najja7ni Employment also offers job matching, a mobile marketplace and links with local training opportunities. There are currently about one million young people using this service.

Najja7ni Employment targets entrepreneurship, career guidance, labour market and training opportunities, and financial literacy. Quizzes, SMS alerts and psychometric tests keep the user updated with information regarding vocational areas of work and they can reach out to potential employers by posting a mini CV with Najja7ni Employment.

Example

Nihel is a 19-year-old student living in Kairouan who is keen to move on to a job. The Najja7ni Employment service helps her draft her CV, write cover letters and prepare for interviews. The quizzes and tests help her work out what her career interests are, what sort of job she might be suited to and whether being an entrepreneur with her own business might suit her. She can use the service wherever she is and whatever she is doing. And when she visited her grandfather in his village and forgot her phone – she was still able to access the service on his mobile phone. Nihel enjoys getting the SMS alerts for jobs, training and internships.

Solution support

The USSD technology used by the Najja7ni services works on any GSM phone, even one without credit, and any handset – however old or legacy. It does not need a special program installed on the user's device: the user simply connects directly to the service database via *136#.

Tunisiana and partners have specifically designed the different services to make them engaging and appealing for young people and easy to support.

The Najja7ni Education content can be regularly updated for specific exams and revision periods, school holidays and other main events.

Timescales

Najja7ni Education was launched in 2010 and m-English in 2011. In 2012 and 2013 these services were extended to job seekers and young people.

The mobile employability support service was launched by Tunisiana in 2012, in partnership with Silatech.

The plan is to make the Najja7ni services available soon in other emerging countries, once again focussing on services that will empower women and offer financial inclusion to groups, including the young, who are often overlooked and under-served.

'Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, youth unemployment is a major issue and has an impact on individuals, their families, their communities and the wider economy of the region. At Ooredoo, we believe we have a responsibility to promote human growth, and we can have a real impact in enabling young people to achieve their ambitions. We are studying the success of Tunisiana's Najja7ni Employment, and assessing how this approach could be mirrored in other markets in the MENA region and Asia.' **Dr Nasser Marafih, Group CEO, Ooredoo**



Business model

Tunisian and PRO-INVEST provided the technical aspects of the service (the servers, the cleanroom, the hosting and the technical developments). Using their corporate and social responsibility budget, they have also underwritten the operating costs for the first two years (licenses and yearly fees). Silatech has covered part of the capital expenditure costs and supplied technical assistance and expertise. Along with PRO-INVEST, it has drafted the content. From the second year, the service has used a mix of revenue share models – other companies can offer value added services on the platform, such as job advertisements and news. This generates additional revenue and ensures that the service remains sustainable.

Prêt pour le monde de l'emploi?
Testez-vous avec **NAJJA7NI** Empleo

*136# Tunisie

Suis-je prête pour chercher un job?
Comment gérer mon argent?
Suis-je faite pour entreprendre?
Pour quel métier suis-je douée?

Najja7ni Empleo, un service

Silatech™ Young People...Enterprise...Employment... Tunisie Edupartage

Organisation

Najja7ni is a social initiative supported by international aid agency Silatech – a combination of public partnership and NGO. Much of its success is due to this partnership approach.

Success to date and its evaluation

Najja7ni usage statistics show that:

- within 1 month of it going live, over 200,000 Tunisians had registered for the Najja7ni Education service
- within 1 month of it going live, over 300,000 Tunisians had registered for the Najja7ni m-English service
- within 2 weeks of it going live, over 300,000 Tunisians had registered for the Najja7ni Employment service
- 3 months later 60% of those users were still actively engaged with the service
- the highest penetration rates are among those in rural areas and 15–35 year olds.

This was all achieved without any formal advertising or promotion.

According to the learners themselves:

- 68% of subscribers use the service several times a week
- more than 80% of them are satisfied with the quality of the learning content describing it as very helpful and, overall, excellent
- 96% find it user friendly and intuitive
- 96% find it accessible from everywhere and from any kind of handset.

The Najja7ni service has also won awards including:

- CommsMEA 2013 Award for Best Corporate and Social Responsibility campaign
- Global Telecoms Business Innovation Awards 2013 Award for Consumer Service Innovation
- Seventh Annual Stevie® Award winner for best new product or service of the year (Silver) 2013

Lessons learned

- The design of the platform needs to integrate fully with local telecom providers' systems and servers. This makes replication in other countries difficult, time-consuming and expensive. However, the Ooredoo group has a strong presence in the MENA region and is committed to the initiative as part of its corporate social responsibility. Working with fellow Ooredoo providers should enable Najja7ni to achieve economies of scale in other countries.
- Extracting relevant and meaningful data on take-up and services has been a challenge as the initial Najja7ni platform was integrated into a broader group of Tunisiana services. This gave great access to an existing network of subscribers but made it hard to pull out specific Najja7ni data. To solve this, the Najja7ni platform is moving to a dedicated cloud server where the data can be controlled and accessed when needed.
- It is crucial that the content provided corresponds to the needs of the local labour market. The Najja7ni content in Tunisia was developed by Edupartage, a local Tunisian NGO very active in education and youth employment, and a network of local educators and experts.
- The impact of Najja7ni on the education market is significant because it has enabled young people with low financial capacities in both rural and urban areas to access m-education content that is compliant with official academic programmes and presented in a playful and interactive style.
- Partnerships are important to successful collaboration. As well as content providers, Najja7ni uses partnerships with the Ministry of Employment and Microsoft to offer a range of job and training opportunities. This is the first service of its kind in the MENA region, and only a few months after its launch has gained more than 800,000 users, 68% of them regular customers.



Publications

Papers have been submitted to the following conferences to publicise this work:

- mLearn conference, Doha, Qatar – 22–24 October 2013: Sessions 1 and 2 ‘Using mobile technologies to promote learning and youth employment: a partnership approach.’ Chamseddine Ouerdiane, Jo Aggarwal and Mourad Zamiti
- Annual conference on Education Innovation, Okinawa, Japan – 21–23 November 2013
- Global Youth Economic Opportunities Conference, 10–12 September 2013, Convention Center, Washington, DC USA

Comment by the GSMA

This case study is a good example of the development of a sustainable mobile learning service into education and employment over time across different market segments. It has developed from supporting children in remote areas with curriculum-based learning materials to enhancing the learning of English language skills and, most recently, improving job seekers’ employability with revenue generating opportunities. These services are a valuable way to help young people, even in the most marginalised communities, to improve their skills and employment

opportunities in a country that suffers from severe youth unemployment (more than 30% of young people below the age of 30 are unemployed), using basic mobile technology that makes the service accessible to everyone with a mobile device.

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‘The mobile English language learning program has the potential to have the greatest impact over the short term. We will be collaborating with Edupartage to leverage its Najja7ni platform, and collaborating with Tunisiana as a technical implementer to be able to offer instruction in conversational English to Tunisiana’s nearly six million subscribers.

Gordon Gray, US Ambassador to Tunisia



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