

A New Teaching Paradigm amid Covid-19 Crisis in Algeria: Changes and Challenges

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Abstract:

Due to covid-19 pandemic, educational system across the globe shifted from face-to-face to virtual teaching delivery. This study investigates the effect of corona virus outbreak on Algerian higher education, and explores Algerian lecturers and learners' perceptions of emergency online education. It seeks to address the major challenges and barriers in conducting distance education amid covid-19 pandemic. A descriptive approach was used to review 67 articles on Covid-19 published in the Algerian Scientific Journal Platform (ASJP) that tackled attitudes, experiences, measures, preparedness, perceptions, and the feasibility of the virtual teaching-learning modes during the lockdown period. Based on data that depicted the concurrent procedures so as the performances. Results indicated that remote education experience faced several infrastructures related to teachers on the one hand, and to learners on the other hand. Parts of these hindrances are technical- based problems, whilst the other parts pertain to psychological, financial and social difficulties.

Keywords: challenges; covid-19; learners; lecturers; online education.

Un Nouveau paradigme d'Enseignement Face à la Crise de la COVID-19 en Algérie : Changements et Défis

Résumé : suite à la pandémie de COVID-19, le système éducatif à travers le monde a tranché de l'enseignement en présentiel vers l'enseignement en ligne. Cette étude décrit les effets de l'épidémie de coronavirus sur l'enseignement supérieur à distance en Algérie, ainsi que les perceptions et les avis des enseignants comme étudiants de cette transition. Nous avons menés une approche descriptive qui s'est déroulée en consultant 67 articles sur la COVID-19 publiés dans la Plateforme des Revues Scientifiques Algériennes (ASJP) qui abordaient les attitudes, les expériences, les mesures, la préparation, les perceptions et la faisabilité de l'enseignement virtuel et les modes d'apprentissage pendant la période de confinement. A base d'analyse des données, l'expérience de l'enseignement à distance fait face à plusieurs infrastructures liées aux enseignants d'une part, et aux apprenants d'autre part. Certains de ces obstacles sont le manque d'équipement technique, d'autres concernent des difficultés psychologiques, financières et sociales.

Mots-Clés : enseignement en ligne, enseignants, étudiant, covid-19, défis.

I. Introduction

Corona virus is a highly severe pneumonia infection caused by the novel virus COVID-19 which first emerge in Wuhan, China 2019, and lately spread out among individuals across all the continents. The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that the corona virus is pandemic and that “Anyone can get sick with covid-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age” (W.H.O, 2020a). On 11 March 2020, the increase in the number of scale infection outside China led the WHO Director-General to call on the outbreak could be characterized as a pandemic. According to Wilkinson et al (2020) policy makers and health experts in the severely affected countries scheduled several restrictive measures including hand washing, self-isolation, social distancing, and preparation of health system to control the disease. The massive expansion of the global pandemic have changed the entire order of psychological, mental health, economic and social lives of billion of people, and brought about considerable disruptions in most world countries resulted in confinement protocol and isolation policies overnight.

The 20th century advances in the field of communication and information technologies re-shaped the teaching learning environment and has remarkably become a crucial entity in teachers and learners’ educational practices. In light of the rising concern of the pandemic, the Algerian governments issued the “stay-at home” directives to avoid the widespread transmission. Accordingly, many schools and universities have cancelled education to reduce contamination and contain the spread of the infectious disease in the community. As an alternate continuity to education, educational authorities transitioned from face- to face courses to remote education using online platforms.

Despite social fear and despair that spans throughout the university, the sudden shift to online education has had impacted teachers and learners’ functioning, especially with the shortage of technological educational facilities and up to date university equipments. Thus, this study reports a theoretical review of the perceived preparedness and barriers among Algerian higher education tutors and learners; it focuses on the challenges of online education practices during this anxiety- laden period.

1- Covid-19 Outbreak in Algeria

Unexpectedly, Corona Disease has put the world into a plethora of challenging crisis which in turn paralyzed many sectors such as health, economic and education. This viral virus has first emerged in Wuhan, China in 2019 then gradually transitioned to many countries worldwide. The world health of Organization (WHO) declared that “covid -19” will be the official name of this infectious disease, “CO” stands for “corona”, “VI” for “virus”, “D” for “ disease” and “19” for the year. This latter occurs when people are in close contact with each other especially when a person sneezes, coughs or speaks. In other words, it is transmitted between individuals when they breathe in air contaminated by droplets and small airborne particles

containing the virus. Despite deaths, this virus brought about fear, anxiety, mental suffering and the feeling of uncertainty of the future. The vast frightening spread of this virus has made it a global pandemic that has severe side effects on health, psychology, society, economy and politics (Salem & Alasmari, 2020). To contain the spread of the virus and with the absence of the vaccines for this virus, prevention was the top concerned issue to control COVID- 19. Thus, all persons were strictly ordered to follow certain global measurements. Moreover, behavioural public changes were set among which is the wearing of masks, hands washing, restriction of transport, and quarantine.

In Algeria, the first reported case of corona virus was with an Italian in February 2020 who was first of all treated then immediately deported to his country in a special flight without declaring of any one being infected. Few days later, a new case on “March 1 of two national citizens who came from France in the province of Blida (northern Algeria) which became the epicentre of the epidemic” (Lounis, 2020a, p,1). Blida , then, was the first outbreak of the virus. Fearing of the spread this virus to other provinces, the government decided, the same day, to close schools, nurseries and universities. The closure of lands borders and the suspension of flights in and from Algeria was on 17th March (Maouche, 2021). Meanwhile, on 19th March, 90 cases and nine deaths of COVID-19 were confirmed (Martinez, 2020, para.1). On 23rd March, the government suspended all means of public transport and placed the town of Blida in total lockdown.

Even though the onset of the novel virus seems fierce and difficult to monitor, Algeria, as one of the developing countries, strived to fight against it. Accordingly, awareness on social media networks and loudspeakers in mosques of the severity of this infectious disease was the lion share strategy to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and raise safety among individuals. On 4th April, the government imposed a new protocol that banned activities, for example, cafés, shops, restaurants that has progressively extended to all the country’s provinces. Closure included school, universities, markets, workplace, public transportation, moles, airports and mosques and the buzzword “stay home” mulled over. By the same token, curfew plan was also scheduled from 7 p.m to 7 p.m in the same town. Unfortunately, the spread of the virus was imported to other provinces such as Algiers, Sétif, Oran, Bejaia, Tipaza, Tizi Ouzou, Ain Defla, Skikda. On the 1st of May, all the 48 provinces recorded a varying number with affected cases ranging from 2 to 865 of positive cases (Lounis, 2020a). Hence, the curfew time period changes according to the place and spread of the virus.

2- Online Education in Algeria in Light of Covid-19

Online or remote education is a physically distance learning from instructors that implies a delivery method (Wang, Shanon& Ross, 2013; Wild & Hsu,2019). The interaction between teacher- students is mediated via the use of technological and virtual classes. Today, global institutions opt to use synchronous and asynchronous online teaching methods. the former is an interactive method of learning where teachers and students meet in pre-scheduled time, the latter refers to delivering courses without interaction with the students, at the same time,

students can have access to the teaching materials whenever they like (EasyLMS, 2021). In this paper the term “online education ” is used to refer online learning happening via online modes, whereas “ online education” itself is abstract and has many meanings (Unterhalter, 2019). The 21 th century has changed the instruction of education, the teaching teacher-centered mode has benefited from many new technologies such as the internet to enhance learning and enable learners to get online services (Ehlers and Pawlowski, 2006). A research work indicated that online teaching encompasses three main approaches, namely, enhanced, blended learning and online approach. Enhanced learning echoes the intensive use of technology to ascertain interactive and innovative instruction. Blended learning is an integrated approach of face-to face and online education. In online approach, course content is delivered via online modes (Stec et al, 2020)

Surprisingly and by the end of 2019, the covid-19 pandemic led many educational institutions at a global scale to flip to online education. In Algeria, the virus has had a profound impact on education, specifically the second semester, whereby the teaching syllabus has not yet been completed. In light of the rising concern of the pandemic, the Algerian government issued the “stay-at home” directives to avoid the widespread transmission. Accordingly, many schools and universities have cancelled education to reduce contamination and contain the spread of the infectious disease in the community. Meanwhile, on March, 17th ,2020, the Minister of higher education and scientific research Chems Eddine Ben-Chitour sent a ministerial decree that raises the alerting epidemiological current situation which forces to shutdown the university doors, and as an alternate continuity to education, educational authorities invited the educational team and the teaching staff to move from face- to face courses to remote education using online university platforms and other facilities. The platform enables teachers to stay in contact with their students and ensure the accessibility of this mean for all students across the country.

3-Online Education in Algeria in Light of Covid-19

Since the outbreak of corona virus pandemic, many educational institutions posed the transition to online education. In Algeria, the Ministry of higher education reacted quickly to these changes, by issuing an online teaching learning policy on March 2020 and by using distance educational platforms to reach learners remotely. However, the shift to this new teaching strategy particularly, in developing countries, lack of relevant infrastructures and facilities. In their investigation of the impact of covid-19 on education, (Onyema et al, 2020,p,114) substantiated a noteworthy findings, the unavailability, the inaccessibility and the non- widespread use of educational technological means were among the many concerns of learners. A similar study of Lamraoui (2021) examined the effects of corona pandemic on education using a theoretical analytical approach. Findings revealed that this outbreak poses several concerns among lecturers and learners such like, the unpreparedness to use online teaching with short span of time, lack of technical support during lectures delivery, some subjects does not suit online teaching method. Another study of (Talhil et al, 2021) explored the reality of distance education amid covid-19, the researchers conducted a descriptive

analytical method, a questionnaire was distributed to 894 university students. Results indicated that remote education was ineffective; it did not meet with the expectations of learners. The authors reported that the Ministry offered only one platform and did not suggest other instructions or platforms such as (Zoom and Google meet). Furthermore, students as well as teachers found several obstacles with downloading or having access to lectures. Another research study of Bensalem (2021) analysed university students' psychological stress during this Corona-19 crisis, an electronic questionnaire was submitted to 100 students from the university of Adrar, the study concluded that students suffered from stress and needs assistance and psychological and social support. Likewise, Nasri (2021) uncovered the reality of teachers lifestyle and scientific contribution and engagement in Batna during the quarantine, analysis of the oral interview showed that teachers developed psychological resilience in time of this crisis and overcome fear, anxiety, and depression, but it has resulted in building their self and intellectual production. To shed light on the reality of digital e-learning in the Algerian educational system in light of this pandemic, Menasria (2021) examined the various directives and stakes of this new imposed complement system, he concluded that the educational system initiatives strived to transit to the digital world, adding that even though this closure may have some drawbacks, it represents a future awareness of the importance of keeping pace with new digitalized learning method as long as it portrayed a global trend in education.

Conclusion

This paper examines Algerian higher education teachers and learners perceptions to the sudden flip to online education amid covid-19; it also explores the barriers and challenges of remote education practices. Based on reviewing some of the research papers published at the time of writing this study, bad management and lack of expertise in operating electronic resources were among the major obstacles. However, the most likely difficulties occur with technical digital-based problems such as internet shortage, problems of maintenance of online platforms, log in and password issues, students' unfamiliarity with digital literacy, lack of materials. Moreover, the quarantine brought about further psychological deficiencies such as isolation, stress, panic, insomnia, lack of concentration, feeling pessimistic which affected teachers and learners' functioning. Thereby, to achieve the learning outcomes and deal better with the complexity of online education and cope with any urgent adversity, the government must ensure reliable communication tools, develop technology-based education and provide new curricula that reflect the accessibility of change.

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