The reality of educational curricula in Algerian universities and the experience of learning after the COVID-19 pandemic

Hassaine Aouicha[1*]

[1]University Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed   aouichahassain@gmail.com

Abstract:

The aim of this research paper is to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in Algeria and analyze the challenges that the Algerian university faced in developing its educational curricula. The pandemic has greatly affected the world as a whole, and education is one of the vital aspects that has been affected by this situation. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Algerian university has been forced to adopt alternative solutions for in-person education, which has posed a significant challenge for both students and professors. Algeria is one of the countries that has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Algerian university had to suspend classes for long periods. At the same time, the educational curricula in Algeria witnessed a new direction by improving the current programs that are compatible with modern technologies and providing a more effective learning experience for students. However, these new developments still face many challenges in Algeria, such as the lack of necessary infrastructure to support distance education and difficulties related to the necessary training for professors to use modern technologies in education. In light of these developments, the following main question can be posed what are the challenges that Algerian universities have faced and are still facing in developing their curricula due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Keywords: COVID-19 Curriculum Distance-learning

*Corresponding author

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted all aspects of life, including education, as many countries have been forced to find alternative solutions to in-person learning that sudents and teachers are accustomed to Algeria is one of the countries that has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with Algerian univerities suspending studies for

extended period. This global health crisis has led to a new trend in developing educatioanal curricula in Algeria, as universities have been forced to adapt and develop new strategies, and improve current programs to keep up with modern technologies and provide a more effective learning experience for students.However, Algerian universities still face many challenges in developing their educational curricula, such as the lack of necessary infrastructure to support the transition to remote learning, as well as difficulties related to training teachers to use modern technologies in education. In light of the above, the following main question can be posed : what are the challenges that Algerian universities have faced and are facing in developing their curricula due to the COVID-19 pandemic ?. This main question leads to several sub-questions :

1. Does remote learning affect the quality of education in Algeran universities ?
2. How can Algerian universities improve the remote learning environment ?
3. What are the difficulties that teachers and students face in using modern technologies in remote learning ?
4. To what extent do students have expertise in modern technology to benefit from remote learning ?

The first hypothesis :

Distance learning in Algerian universities affects the quality of educatio

The second hypothesis :

The difficulties that teachers and students face in using modern technologies for remote learning affect the quality of education

The third hypothesis :

Enhancing a continuous training plan in modern technology field contributes to developing skills and capabilities among teachers and students

Methodology :

The descriptive methodology was used to identify some facts about the reality of distance education in our university system and the physical and moral problems that affect the educational cells at the level of educational programs, digital technologies, and training, and the difficulties it faces to provide a diagnosis and immediate solutions to confront the various challenges that have become a concern for the universty system in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study aims to :

1. Investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational curricula in Algeria and the challenges faced by universities.
2. Analyze the effort made by Algerian educational institutions to tackle the challenges of transitioning to online learning and improve the quality of education.
3. Provide some suggestions and recommendations for enhancing the quality of education in Algeria in light of the current challenges.

The importance of this study lies in :

1. Understanding the challenges faced by Algerian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they were dealt with.
2. Helping to identify the problems facing the education system in Algeria and providing appropriate solutions to improve it.
3. Enhancing the understanding of the importance of using modern technologies in education and developing educational curricula to meet the requirements of students in the modern era.

2. -Basic concepts of the study

2.1 COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 is a new virus that causes acute respiratory illness and belongs to the coronavirus family. It was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, China. This virus causes a range of symptoms, from mild ones such as fever and cough to severe ones like pneumonia, organ failure, and death.COVID-19 spreads through direct personal contact or through small particles released when infected people cough or sneeze, and the spread of the virus can be reduced by following preventive measures. Therefore, the world Health Organization officially declared on January 30,2019 that the outbreak of the virus constitutes a public health emergency of international concern.(United Nations, 2020, p 4).

2.2 Educational Curriculum

The curriculum is defined in modern concept as « a pedagogical plan that includes components of objectives, content, learning experiences, teaching, and evaluation. These components are derived from philosophical, social, psychological, and cognittive foundations, and are related to the learner and their society. It is implemented in educational situations inside and outside the school, and supervised by the school, whit the aim of contributing to the integrated growth of the learner in their cognetive, emotional, and physical aspects, and evaluating the extent to which the learner achieves all of that » (Sa'ada and Ibrahim,2014, p 64).

In the contemporary context, the curriculum is « the sum of educational, cultural, social, sports, and artistic experiences that te school prepares for its students inside and outside the shool with the aim of ensuring their comprehensive growth in all aspects and adjusting their acivities according to the required educational goals to the best of their abilities » (Bishara, 1983, p 12).

2.3-Distance learning :

According to Al-Saii, it is « an innovative method for providing a well-designed interactive environment centered around learners, which is available to any number of learners in any place and time, using internet features, resources, and digital technologies in line with the appropriate instructonal design principles for the flexible and implanted open learning environment » (Hussein Al-Toubaji,1987,p 9). Modern distance learning technologies have become the primary concept in the reality of educational curricula in Algerian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they have become the main means of communication for students with their teachers and participation in classes and lectures.

3. The reality of educational curricula in Algerian universities before the COVID-19 pandemic :

To study the reality of the curriculum in Algerian universities, it is necessary to clarify the stages they have gone through in order to modify the educational curricula, these stages can be summerized in two phases.

3.1 First stage (1962-1970)

Algeria inherited a western educational system in its content and goals, which was limited in its capacities, and therfore significant attention was given to reform it. This was clearly evident in the first three-year plan (1967-1970), which identified many objectives, such as reforming the content and methods of education inherted from the colonial period, and promoting scientific and creative research. In 1970, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was established for the first time in Algeria, in a comprehensive reform process of higher education, including its programs, objectives,mrthods, and the training of academic frameworks and scientific research curricula. This was in line with what President Houari Boumediene stated in speech on October 10, 1969 « Our country needs a

radical change in education and real revolution that we must undertake urgently, as it has become an urgent necssity ». However, the Algerian university remained in possession of its physical and pedagogical structures inherited from the French administration. Colhen stated about this period « The Algerian university in 1970 is still running on aPairs time, where te first year at the faculty of Arts and Sciences is the preparatory year in the well-known French university before 1966 » (Saliha Hafizi, 2005,p 65-66).

3.2 second stage (1976-2002)

The higher education in this period winessed modifications based on the recommendations of the National Committee for Education System Reform and the guidelines included in the educational reform implementation plan approved by the Council of Ministers on April 20,2002. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research set as a strategic goal for the 2004-2013 phse, to prepare and lay th groundwork for a comprehensive reform of higher education (LMD), which represents a higher education structure inspired by the structures used in Anglo-Saxon countries and generalized in industrialized countries. This structure revolves around three stages of training, each of them is crowned with a university degree.

- The first stage is a three-year program the Baccalaureate degree, is awarded a Bachelor's degree (Academic or Professional).

- The second stage is a five-year program after the Baccalaureate degree, is awarded a Master's degree (Academic or Professional).

- The third stage is an eight-year program after the the Baccalaureate degree, is awarded a Doctorate degree.

And the Algerian education system continues to make adjustments to its educational systems in order to improve educational outcomes and raise their levels.(Wehiba,2010,p 8).

University curricula in Algerian universities have been characterized by the use of educational curricula that are consist with the old higher education environment but not compatible with the current educational environment, especially in light of international changes that have imposed a knowledge-based educational environment whose foundation is human resources. The imported curricula from other developed countries, and their lack of compatibility with the Algerian educational environment, have led to the delay of the Algerian university. Therefore, in recent years, Algeria has attempted to make a series of reforms, including various educational stages, headed by higher education, in order to keep up with current technological developments, modern information and communication technologies, and keep pace with the developments in the information field. The global health crisis was the starting ppoint for these changes, as the COVID-19 pandemic imposed new patterns of education to ensure the continuity of the educational process. Therefore, it was necessary for the university to use communication technology and remote lecture techniques. The Algerian university embarked on a unique experience in this regard.

4- The reality of educational of curricula in Algeria universities after the COVID-19 pandemic :

The experience of Algerian universities in using remote teaching technologies is considered a unique and extremely imporant experience. They began using communication technology extensively to meet the requirementsof current circumstances and ensure the continuity of the educational process.They also found themselves obliged to prepare study courses differntly, where educational content is designed and made available online.they used e-learning platforms and educational programs to manage lessons and duscussions, check understanding, and evaluate students. In addition, this new experience required Algerian universities to provide appropriate training for teachers and students on how to use

these technologies to ensure a smooth process. This experience opened the door to impoving the quality and expanding the scope of education,as well as improving the education system and increasing its effectiveness and efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on educational curricula, with changes in teaching methods and the provision of new educational options for students. Remote learning has been emphasized to a large extent. However, the Algerian university has faced several challenges regarding the quality of education. Remote learning has led to a reduction in the effectiveness of the educational process, as evidenced by the lack of interaction between students and teachers, resulting in a lack of proper understanding and comprehension of the study materials. The Algerian university has also faced difficulties in improving the necessary infrastructure to support remote learning, such as a lack of advanced technological equipment and slow internet speeds. In addition to all of these challenges, some teachers have also faced difficulties in translating study materials into English. Especially older individuals faced difficulties in using modern technology in education, which hindered the transition to remote learning.

5-The digital transformation of distance learning in Algerian universities

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has approved several precautionary measures to ensure the continuity of distance learning. A pedagogical initiative was launched in reference number 288/A.KH/W/2020 on February 29, 2020, which included the establishment of digital platforms aimed at ensuring the continuity of education. Univesity directors and heads of scientific councils were urged to raise awareness and mobilize teachers to participate in this pedagogical initiative. In addition, on April 1, 2020, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research sent several instructions to university institutions and heads of scientific bodies regarding the development of pedagogical support online. The teacher and researcher remain responsible for choosing the

design of pedagogical documents aimed at students, which may include printed materials, written lessons, videos, simulations, interactive lessons,etc.

In order to create harmony in the technological structures used and their educational techniques, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research recommended adopting a unified digital space represented by the Moodle platform (Sabeha, Boukhedouni, Zahra, Ben Achour, 2020, pp 68-69).

Despite the rapid progress made in distance education in Algeria, there are still many obstacles and difficulties that affect the quality of teaching and learning. This is confirmed by many researchers who believe that the use of online distance education in Algeria has clearly failed, and this can be attributed to a number of reasons, which can be summarized in the following points :

1. Lack of media and technological means, and perhaps their absence, especially in shadow areas.

2. The fluctuating flow of the internet.

3. Teh absence of structured and organized training courses for distance education aimed at teachers and students.

4. Students feeling that the performance level of teachers is lower compared to their performance in delivering lessons in a traditional way.(Aziz Gouda and Zineb Dihimi, 2021, pp472-473)

5. Lack of readiness : both the student and the teacher found themselves forced to comply with the instructions of the authorities to use distance learning. The transition to distance learning was not a strategic choice or a programmed option, which created an atmosphere of confusion due to its sudden implementation.

6. Most students do not have email accounts or computers equipped with internet access.

7. The education platforms designed for remote learning are disrupted due to weak internet connectivity in many areas.

8. The inability to allocate rooms inside homes for this precise process, as parents face a major challenge in dealing with a home-based education system during the months-long quarantine.

9. Difficulty for students to complete their theses due to their inability to access electronic sources and references, as well as difficulty in communicating with supervisors.

10. Difficulty in implementing a successful electronic teaching model in Algeria due to the numerous technical problems in the network, and the lack of control over modern support and relying passively on them (Ahmed Ambark and Mohamed El-Amin Bakiri, 2019, pp 12-17).

From the aforementioned factors, it is evident that distance learning in Algeria requires a re-evaluation due to the shortcomings of the infrastructure, regional disparities in providing technological means, and the low flow of the internet. All of these factors indicate that the transition from traditional education to e-learning requires srategic and limited plans. Therfore, the sudden adoption of e-learning by Algerian universities, which helped to complete the programs and educational standards, is a factor of contigency. However, the question is how effective this educational model is in terms of quality and actual returns ?

6-Components of digital transformation in Algerian universities

The Algerian goverment attempted to keep pace with developments in the international system by adopting the e-goverment project and transforming other sectors into digital formats. In 2000, a special policy was developed to develop the

telecommunications sector in order to provide a legal and institutional environment that allows for competition and access to various communication services. However, Algeria did not have a clear strategy that would allow it to ensure a suitable digital environment that would assist in the digital transformation. In 2008 the « Algerian Electronic 2013 » strategy was developed, which aimed to accelerate the use of information and communication technology in public administrations and institutions, as well as to developed high-flow communication infrastructure, in addition to training and developing research and innovation in this field. Some projects have been launched to upgrade digitization, including the « Your Family » project, the « Smart City » project in Sidi Abdallah, and the e-learning project for university students (Selma Bachari, 2020, p 587).

Despite the Algerian government's attempts to keep up with developments in te international system,it has not followed a realistic action plan that can be implemented within a specific timeframe. Due to the continued application of bureaucracy in government institutions, universities, and other sectors, as well as the lack of contemporary digital Standards.

The higher education and scientific research sector faces many difficulties in dealing with digitization and promoting a culture of information technology. Overcoming these challenges requires adapting to true digital culture and addressing financial and technical obstacles while providing the necessary human resources. A detailed study is necessary to identify available resources that can provide the necessary financial liquidity to support the project. Additionally, digitizatio requires developing tools and acquiring basic digital skills. To achieve success in this field, human elements must be qualified with a high level of scientific competence.

7-Requirements for achieving digital higher education

To achieve the transition to digital higher education in Algeria, the following essentiel elements must be provided.

7.1 New technological applications

In order to improve the quality of the educational process by leveraging the World Wide Web, which is a vast source of information and knowledge, university teachers and students must master the use of email and various technological tools to present their academic work. They should also know how to access the Moodle digital educational platform for delivering lectures, communicating with students, and opening discussion forums with them.

7.2 Educational software

Computer-based education is an interactive program designed to convey knowledge and information about a particular topic. It is a digital resources aimed at training using multimedia software.

7.3.E-learning

The term " digital learning" refers to the multiple use of digital media technology to improve the quality of learning, facilitates access to resources and services, and promote collaboration and knowledge exchange. The digital line refers to a pedagogical and technological approach to distance education, higher education, and institutional training.(Hafida Taleb, 2022, p 164).

To achieve the success of educational curricula, the infrastructure of information and communication technology must be improved first, and e-learning platforms must be developed to improve the quality of digital content and provide modern technologies, interactive and training programs. It also requires the qualification of teaching staff and students with digital skills, as well as specialized technical and consulting support to ensure the success of this process.

8-Prospects and Aspirations for Digital Transformation in Algerian Universities

The future of e-learning in Algerian universities amidst the pandemic and social transformations relies on the effectiveness of digital educational platforms in acquiring, producing, and disseminating knowledge through pre-designed programs by experts in educational software. Suitable mechanisms for teaching standards and interactive educational activities that align with these technologies, such as Moodle platform, and other electronic applications and programs, are essentiel to achieve human development and enhance te capacities of learners in economic, social, and cultural fields.

E-learning in Algerian universities faces several challenges, including the issue of qualified pedagogical frameworks in the field of e-learning and the necessity of training and graduating scientific and professional personnel capable of dealing with the challenges that result from environmental and cognitive hazards effectively and without fear. Therfore, the Algerian university must confront these challenges by developing the necessary scientific and technical skills and competencies of individuals.

By updating itself digitally, the university will be able to serve the community in which it operates and achieve multiple social, economic, and knowledge objectives that suit the diversity of social contexts. The university is the educational pyramid and the knowledge community, as it provides the community with the reasons for progress and development in all areas of life.

In the light of the current circumstances, the academic framework must be knowlegbeable about how to choose the appropriate educational platforms for each lesson taught. The ability to make such choices is one of the most important condition for the success of teachers in delivering knowledge to students, and in making abstract meanings understandable to them in a tangible way. Some teachers believe that online education is

easy to teach with a high degree of success, especially when using teaching methods that embody real-life experiences(Mohammed Ziyad Hamdan, 1981, p 40) as much as possible. The ability of the teacher, doctor, and researcher to master modern electronic educational approaches, particularly in the teaching of the Arabic language, and their interaction with them, has become an importan element of the pedagogical background for preparing to practice this type of teaching. This cannot be overlooked or separated from other elements,as well of the mentioned elements are important and interrelated, complementing each other and forming a pedagogical background that is considered the basis for optimal teacher preparation, especially when assimilating various modern teaching methods and their application during the lesson(Ahmed Watass,1988,p 61) implementation process to ensure learning among students. In addition, the teacher must have a deep understanding of the conditions and modern evaluation tools used, as these tools accurately measure changes in student behavior. Moreover, the teacher must consider individual differences among students, guiding all learners to participate and be active, and providing them with a suitable learning environment to acquire knowledge and skills.

9-Recommendations :

1. Teaching modern technology is a necessary requirement in all academic programs

2. Continuous training for both teachers and students in the field of modern technology.

3. Developing programs and educational tools to improve the quality of education.

4. Enhancing an informational and guidance system.

5. Improving the learning environment within universities and educational institutions to keep up with the era of technology and information.

6. Compulsory communication between teachers and students remotely for accompaniment, discussion, and to address various difficulties.

7. Advance planning and anticipating future developments, especially in the context of the technological and scientific explosion.

8. Establishing structures and setting up laboratories for the benefit of teachers and students, especially in the field of media and communication

10-Conclusion

The challenges facing the Algerian university in converting educational curricula into digital formats require significant efforts from the government, educational institutions, students, and teachers alike. Therefor, the government must develop a clear strategy for converting sectors into digital formats and provide the necessary infrastructure and training for teachers and students to use modern technologies in education. Logistic anf financial support must also be provided to ensure quality and efficiency in the remote learning process for universities and educational institutions. They must adopt innovation and creativity, develop their own digital education resources, and provide frequent training for teachers.

Despite the significant challenges faced by remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this type of education has become an undeniable reality in the world of education. Despite the difficulty of adapting to the new environment and challenges faced by teachers and students, these difficulties did not prevent remote learning from becoming a tangible reality in the world of education. Teachers and students were able to work together through electronic platforms and various communication applications, enabling them to access study materials and interact with each other despite the geographical distance that separates them.

Remote learning has become a vital method of education at present, and it is likely to continue to evolve and improve in the future. Finally, we recommend that ourselves and our students demonsrate patience, perseverance, cooperation, and flexibility in adapting to

digital education transformations, and work diligently to improve the level of remote learning. Through these joint efforts, Algerian universities and educational institutions can overcome current challenges and achieve complete digital transformation in the future.

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