Exploring professionals' views regarding the alignment of Master translation curriculum with the market requirements in Algeria

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ملخّص: تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة موقع السوق في تكوين المترجمين والتراجمة في الجزائر من وجهة نظر المحترفين، وتستند إلى مبدأ ضرورة القيام بالبحث التجريبي لمعرفة متطلبات السوق وما يتوقّعه من الخريجين الجدد وكيف يمكن للمنهاج التّعليمي أن يلبّي هذه المتطلبّات، ولهذا الغرض فقد تم اعتماد أسلوب المقابلة التي أجريت مع 27 محترفا في سوق العمل بالجزائر العاصمة لمعرفة تصوّرهم لنوعيّة التكوين الذين ينبغي أن يقدّم لمتدربي الترجمة والترجمة الفورية في مرحلة الماستر بمعهد الترجمة بجامعة الجزائر (02). تشير النتائج إلى أنّ منهاج الماستر يخطوا في الوجهة الصحيحة في المسيرة التّكوينية بما يحتويه من مجموعة متنوّعة وثرية من المقاييس النّظرية والتّطبيقية، مع ضرورة إدراج بعض المكوّنات التي من شأنها أن تضمن تحضيرا جيّدا لولوج الطّلاب لسوق العمل على غرار النّصوص الأصلية، وتكنولوجيات الترجمة، والتربصات المهنية، وإطلاع الطّلاب على الجوانب التنظيمية للمهنة.

كلمات مفتاحيّة: تكوين؛ المحترفين؛ الخرّيجون؛ الماستر؛ المنهاج ؛ متطلبات السوق؛ الجزائر .

Abstract: This research paper's primary objective is to investigate the position of the market in translator and interpreter training in Algeria from the perspective of professionals. The paper is grounded on the fact that there is a need for empirical research on what the market expects from future graduates and how curriculum meets these expectations. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with 27 professionals in the market of Algiers on how they perceive Master translation/interpreting training at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Algiers (02). The results reveal that the Master curriculum is moving forwards in the right direction, as it incorporates various theoretical and practical modules. Furthermore, integrating the elements that prepare students for the market in the curriculum – including authentic texts, translation technologies, internships and organisational aspects of the profession is needed

Keywords: Training; professionals; graduates; Master; curriculum; market requirements; Algiers.

1. Introduction: It goes without saying that the requirements of translation/interpreting market change constantly over time, therefore, the curricula offered by the academic institutions specializing in the training of translators and interpreters should be aware of these new requirements and should therefore be flexible enough to accommodate them in

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order to equip their trainees with the necessary skills that will allow them to adapt to the ever-changing translation/interpreting market .

In the same vein, Li (2001) believed that translator training should respond to market needs and that the training can be improved through curriculum development based on careful and systematic needs assessment of the translation market carried out in a regular fashion. From this standpoint, the present research paper raises the following questions:

1-What are the primary considerations in recruiting new graduates in the Algerian translation/interpreting market?

2. What is the assessment of professionals of the Master curriculum?

3. What are the most important competences that need to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the professional world?

In order to find answers to these questions, we conducted interviews with a sample of professionals in the translation/interpreting market to solicit their views on recruitment of new graduates, their assessment of the Master curriculum and their views on the most important competences that need to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the professional world.

2. Literature review: The Translation Studies literature includes ample research on translator and interpreter training that attempt to identify the distance between training institutions and the professional world.

One of the studies by Li (2000) attempts to shed light on the needs of professionals employed in the translation and interpreting market in Hong Kong and their perceptions of translator training.

He concluded that "English Language and Literature" and "Chinese Language and Literature" were the "most helpful" courses in translator-training programs, and that the main challenges at work: the choice of the right style for translation, interpreting practice and time constraints with translation and interpreting tasks.

Li's (2007) study with administrators of translation services also reveals that the most important considerations when recruiting new translators were translation skills, translation experience and English competence. Asked about the challenges for new recruits, the administrators mentioned, in the order given, lack of field knowledge, insufficient mastery of specialized terminologies, inadequate translation skills, low translation speed, and little professional confidence.

As regards the measures of assistance for new recruits, (95 %) of the companies took measures to help them: (57.6 %) of the companies assign a mentor to each new translator, and (36.4 %) offer a formal training session of a week or two. Finally, with reference to the assessment of local translation programmes, over (70 %) of the administrators were satisfied with translation graduates, while (27 %) expressed reservations.

In the same vein, Drugan's (2004) study with language service providers reveals that advanced word-processing skills were essential for translators, and a further (60 %) of the participants stated the opinion that desktop publishing (DTP) skills were also useful. (90 %) also viewed translation memories and terminology management software experience as essential or desirable.

Finally, Sachinis's (2011) study that was conducted with the trainees, trainers and professionals in Greek, it has shown that the most useful subject, according to students, trainers and employees, is "practical translation", followed by "proof-reading & editing texts/translations", "translation memories (e.g. Trados)", "terminology management", "improving mother tongue skills (Greek)" and "improving foreign language skills".

Moreover, all three stakeholders value more linguistic and technological modules which are most useful in the translation market due to their profession-oriented nature, and attribute great value to internships.

Thus, the literature provides the empirical research suggesting that greater interaction and cooperation between training institutions and the market is needed to produce graduates who will be flexible enough to adapt to the ever-changing requirements of the market, and showing that translation memories, terminology management, language competence and text-production skills are more valuable on the market. As a point of departure, this study sets out to describe empirically what is actually happening in the Algerian context from the perspective of professionals.

3. Methodology: The present study made use of the interview technique in order to gain deeper insight into the link between training and the market from the perspective of professionals.

The interviews were semi-structured and participants were asked to elaborate on a number of open-ended questions.

Questions posed to the professionals revolved around background information about the work of translation employers; the major considerations in recruitment of new job applicants, employers' assessment of Master curriculum and competences that need to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the real world of professional translation. (The interview protocol is available in Appendix 1).

The interviews were carried out with 27 participants during the academic year 2019. It should be noted that interviewees were professionals in the market of Algiers who employ in their offices graduates of Master curriculum at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Algiers (02).

Descriptive statistics and frequency tables are used to provide a general overview of responses to each question. The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Profile of employers

Speciality	Number	Rate (%)
Public service translator	23	85.18 %
Freelance interpreter	04	14.82 %
Total	27	100 %
Language combination		
Arabic – French - English	23	85.18 %
Spanish –Arabic	02	07.40 %
German – Arabic	01	03.71 %
Turkish – Arabic	01	03.71 %
Total	27	100 %

The majority of the employers (85.18 %) that have been interviewed answered that they worked as a public service translator, while almost one in seven respondents (14.82 %) said that they worked as a freelance interpreter.

As for the employers' language combinations, the vast majority of the respondents (85.18 %) said that they work in the three language combinations: «Arabic – French - English», while 02 of them (07.40 %) work in the language combination «Spanish –Arabic». Furthermore, only 01 respondent (03.71 %) works in «German – Arabic» and 01 (03.71 %) works in «Turkish – Arabic».

4. Results of the study
4.1. Recruitment considerations
Table 02. The employers' primary considerations in recruitment

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
A Bachelor's/Master's in translation	19	70.37 %
Translation samples/tests	15	59.25 %
A sufficient command of the working languages	10	37.03 %
Previous professional experience	07	25.92 %
Willingness to learn on the job	03	11.11 %
Flexibility	02	07.40 %
Interpersonal competence	01	03.70 %
Total	27	100 %

Employers' primary consideration in recruiting new job applicants in Algeria were: Possessing "a Bachelor's/Master's in translation" (70.37 %) was by far the most important criterion selected by respondents. The second most important criterion was "Translation samples/tests" (59.25 %). This means that most employers require that candidates do a sample translation which is then used as the basis to assess their competence. "A sufficient command of the working languages" came only third with (37.03 %).

These were regarded as the three most important selection criteria of translators, according to respondents.

Other answers given were "Previous professional experience" (25.92 %), willingness to learn on the job (11.11 %), flexibility (07.40 %) and interpersonal competence (03.70%).

4.2. Curriculum's strong points
Table 03. Curriculum's strong points

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Curriculum richness	07	53.84 %
Foreign language mastery (English)	02	15.38 %
The qualified teaching staff	01	7.69 %
Tutors' extensive professional experience	01	7.69 %
Knowledge of modern translation theories	01	7.69 %
Total	27	100 %

Employers were invited to elaborate on the strong points of the Master curriculum, as reflected through its graduates. Almost half of the respondents (48.14%) answered this question and the results are classified and presented in the table above.

The first strong point mentioned was the richness of the curriculum which enables trainees to learn basic theoretical and practical translation skills.

The good knowledge of the foreign language was mentioned as the second strong point of the Master curriculum.

Other strong points pinpointed by the respondents were the following: a) the qualified teaching staff who were well trained b) the tutors possess recognized professional experience as they are practically involved in translation on a regular basis, either as part-time translators or certified court interpreters, and c) the knowledge of modern translation theories is also appreciated.

4.3. Curriculum's shortcomings

Table 04. Curriculum's shortcomings

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Limited knowledge of practical aspects of the translation profession	06	35.29 %
Lack of a solid linguistic competence	05	29.41 %
The limited duration of the curriculum	02	11.76 %
Insufficient terminology knowledge	01	5.88 %
Absence of interpreting training (Arabic – German – Arabic)	01	5.88 %
Absence of audiovisual translation training	01	5.88 %
Total	27	100 %

Employers were invited to identify the three main shortcomings in the Master curriculum, as reflected through its graduates. In the end, 17 out of the 27 respondents (62.96 %) answered this question.

It is clear that the main shortcomings in the Master curriculum offered at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting have to do with a) the limited knowledge it offers regarding practical aspects of the translation profession including the following: (limited knowledge on civil and criminal responsibilities of translator - lack of authenticity in some practice texts for translation), b) lack of a solid linguistic competence, and c) the limited duration of the curriculum.

As it can be seen, some professionals mention as a shortcoming in the Master curriculum the lack of a solid linguistic competence although there is the paradox that some of the respondents did indeed mention in the previous question the fact that graduates have good knowledge of the foreign language. This is not necessarily contradictory, as there are both graduates with good language skills and graduates who lack the language competence.

Other weaknesses identified included the limited duration of the curriculum, insufficient terminology knowledge, absence of interpreting training (Arabic – German - Arabic), and the absence of audiovisual translation training.

4.4. Theory versus practice

Table 05. Teaching of theory and practice in Master curriculum

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
More emphasis on practical translation than on	15	55.55 %

	Number	Rate (%)
translation theory		
A balance between translation theory and practical translation modules	11	40.75 %
More emphasis should be given on translation theory than on practical translation	01	3.70 %
No translation theory	00	00 %
No practical translation	00	00 %
Translation theory should be an optional module	00	00 %
Total	27	100 %

The relation between translation theory and practical translation is a perennial bone of contention in translation courses. Here, employers were asked to give their view as regards the extent to which translation theory and practical translation should be taught in the Master curriculum.

More than half of respondents (55.55 %) said that more emphasis should be placed on practical translation than on translation theory, whereas (40.75 %) were of the opinion that there should be a balance between translation theory and practical translation modules.

A very small percentage (03.70 %) said that more emphasis should be given on translation theory than on practical translation. Finally, no one (00 %) maintained that there should "no translation theory" or "no practical translation" or that "translation theory should be an optional module".

4.5. Directionality

Table 06. Directionality in Master curriculum

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Only translation from language B (foreign lang.) into lang. A (mother tongue: Arabic)	00	00 %
Only translation from lang. A (mother tongue: Arabic) into lang. B (foreign lang.)	00	00 %
Both language directions, but more hours translation into mother tongue	06	22.22 %
Both language directions, but more hours translation into foreign language	07	25.92 %
Both language directions, with equal hours each	14	51.86 %
Total	27	100 %

The next question was about the language directionality in practical translation classes, namely whether students should translate only from a foreign language into their mother tongue, only from their mother tongue into a foreign language, or both ways, and to what extent.

Slightly over half of the respondents (51.86 %) maintained that both language directions should be taught, but that equal amount of hours should be devoted to each language direction, while (25.92 %) postulated that translation students should translate in both

language directions, but with more hours spent on translation into a foreign language, and finally (22.22 %) said that students should translate in both language directions, but more from a foreign language into their mother tongue (Arabic).

No one chose the option "only translation from language B into language A (mother tongue)" or "only translation from language A (mother tongue) into language B (00%).

In any case, it can be inferred from these results that just over half of professionals (51.86 %) believe that Master's students should translate in both language directions.

4.6. Individual versus group projects

Table 07. Individual and group projects

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Only individual projects	07	25.93 %
Only group projects	10	37.04 %
More individual and less group projects	00	00 %
More group and less individual projects	02	07.40 %
There should be a balance between individual and group projects	08	29.63 %
Total	27	100 %

Professionals were also asked their opinion on individual versus group (team) work within the context of the Master curriculum. More specifically, they were asked whether the projects (not just the translation projects) they had to do in their Master should be only individual or only group projects, or whether both types of projects should be used.

More than one in three professionals (37.04 %) were in favour of "only group projects", whilst (29.63 %) postulated that "there should be a balance between individual and group projects", and (25.93 %) opted for "only individual projects". Finally, while (07.40 %) predicated that there should be "more group and less individual projects", no one (00%) was in favour of students doing "more individual and less group projects".

In any case, the majority of respondents were in favour of group projects in a translation course.

Some respondents added a comment, explaining their stance. They said that team work is essential for all translators in order to cope with the pressure of workload in the labour marker, because translators sometimes work to a tight deadline when they have large translation projects, so more translators have to work on the same project as only one translator or two can't handle the task.

4.7. Internship

Table 08. Provision of internship

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Agree completely	27	100 %
Agree mostly	00	00 %
Disagree mostly	00	00 %
Disagree completely	00	00 %

Total	27	100 %

In the following question, employers were then asked whether they agreed with the following statement: "A work placement/internship in an agency as part of a Master curriculum in translation/interpreting is essential"

All respondents (100 %) expressed their agreement with the statement, whereas nobody selected the other options.

We can therefore infer that all professionals are in favour of a work placement during their studies as it familiarizes students with professional world.

4.8. The languages that should be offered in the curriculum

Table 09. The languages that should be offered in the curriculum

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Chinese	21	77.77 %
Italian	05	18.51 %
Portuguese	03	11.11 %
Tamazight	02	7.40 %
Persian	01	3.70 %
Japanese	01	3.70 %
No other language, these 07 are enough	02	7.40 %
Total	27	100 %

The next question had to do with the working languages that should be offered in the Master curriculum at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting. The question was as follows: "Apart from English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and Turkish which other 3 (three) foreign languages should be offered, in your opinion, in the curriculum?"

As seen in the table above, the most popular language was by far Chinese (77.77 %), followed by Italian (18.51 %) and Portuguese (11.11 %), which were the three most chosen languages. Other languages selected by the respondents were (in descending order) Tamazight (7.40 %), Persian (3.70 %), and Japanese (3.70 %). Finally, (7.40 %) of the respondents stated that no other language was needed to be included in the Master curriculum, as these 07 were enough.

4.9. Competences to be developed in the curriculum

Table 10. Competences to be built in translation curriculum

Responses	Number	Rate (%)
Mastering the Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) Tools	13	48.14 %
Organizing time and meeting deadlines	11	40.74 %
Mastering the technical writing in different fields, namely the law	10	37.03 %
Conducting documentary research	08	29.62 %
Accepting constructive criticism and remarks to develop the professional skills	07	25.92 %

Communicating effectively with colleagues and clients	05	18.51 %
Mastering the working languages and being aware of the cultural aspects of both languages (Source and target language)	04	14.81 %
Being acquainted with the organisational aspect of the profession (the main civil and criminal responsibilities of translator)	03	11.11 %

With the challenges and shortcomings identified, the professionals were asked to share their views on what competences that are needed to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the professional world. Eight competences were identified with the mastering the Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) Tools topping the list (48.14 %), followed by organizing time and meeting deadlines skills because among the most important requirements of the translation market today are quality and speed (40.74 %).

Ten people hoped that more efforts and resources would be committed to the improvement of students' competence in technical writing (37.03 %), and eight believed that conducting documentary research is a competence to be strengthened to help the translator to look for facts and knowledge of the subject of the text to be translated (29.62 %).

Other competences mentioned were accepting constructive criticism and remarks to develop the professional skills (25.92 %), communicating effectively with colleagues and clients in order to define clearly the Skopos of translation according to the client's request and negotiate successfully issues of deadline and price (18.51 %), mastering the working languages and being aware of the cultural aspects of both languages (14.81 %) and, finally, the being acquainted with the organisational aspect of the profession (11.11 %).

5. Discussions of the study: The discussions of the findings will attempt to highlight the issues that this study set out to explore, namely the professionals' primary considerations in recruiting new graduates in the Algerian translation/interpreting market, their assessment of Master curriculum, and their views on the most important competences that need to be developed.

Regarding professionals' primary considerations in recruitment, it can be noticed that, in most cases, the professionals have the same priorities about the qualities and qualifications expected of job applicants, while in other cases they differ depending on the nature of their translation/interpreting services and their personal beliefs about professional translators and interpreters. So, it is clear that most employers seemed to value most the applicants' translation diploma, translation samples/tests, and a sufficient command of the working languages.

So this denotes the importance of diploma when it comes to recruiting new translators in the Algerian translation market.

Furthermore, as can be deduced from the above data, the importance of mastering the working languages as one of the key criteria of recruitment, and that the professional experience is a less important criterion since (74.07%) of translation employers are ready to

recruit new graduates without any previous working experience apart from the interpreting sector where extensive experiences are highly recommended.

It seems that the first strong point of Master curriculum mentioned by professionals was the richness of the curriculum that contains various components. Furthermore, the fact that graduates have good knowledge of the foreign language (English) makes it the second strong point, while the curriculum's third strong point was the existence of qualified tutors at the Institute as they are practically involved in translation on a regular basis, either as part-time translators, certified court interpreters or conference interpreters.

The curriculum's shortcomings most commonly referred to by the professionals were the limited knowledge it offers regarding some practical aspects of the profession, lack of a solid language competence of some graduates, and the limited duration of the curriculum (04 semesters). The implication would be that the practical aspects of translation profession should be taught in the Master curriculum. Furthermore, students who apply for a Master degree in translation should already have an adequate level of language abilities. That is to say, language enhancement should not be a priority. Instead, at Master level, emphasis should be put on translation competence and professional issues to produce highly qualified translators. However, some professionals expressed the graduates' needs for language enhancement.

The significance of linguistic competence for a translator has been proposed by Maria-Gonzalez Davies (2004, p.132) in her book Multiple voices in the translation classroom, arguing that although the level of language competence and performance vary broadly according to students 'ability, aptitudes and attitudes, the greater their command of the languages involved in the translation, the better. Thus, it seems necessary for course designers to consider the embedding of the language enhancement into the curriculum.

As for translation theory, the results reveal that professionals value more practical translation, but at the same time they do not reject translation theory altogether, as it is often believed. As we can see, no respondent said that there should be no translation theory in the Master curriculum, which means that they do realise the value of theory in such a programme.

Some professionals have commented on the effects of teaching translation theory at the university. They believe that translation theory is important for the professional world and should therefore be included in the curriculum, arguing that some theories like «skopos theory» have proved to be helpful for practice and that theory helps future practicing translators justify their decisions, and find better solutions to the translation problems.

However, they emphasized the importance of providing a link between theory and practice in practical translation classes. On this note, Mayoral Asensio also argues that "If translator training is to be efficient, it should be set within the context of professional practice rather than that of theoretical principles or, in other words, it should be based on a theory of professional practice and not on a theory of translation as a self-contained entity" (2007, p.94).

The implication is therefore that translation theory modules need to be included in the curriculum and should not be cut off from practice to give trainees opportunities to relate theories to their practice in order to consolidate their understanding of translation as a whole

Regarding the directionality of translation, it can be inferred from the results that the students should be trained to translate in both language directions «from a foreign language into their mother tongue» and «from their mother tongue into a foreign language» as translators and interpreters in the Algerian market are required to translate and interpret into both directions.

The majority of professionals emphasized that there should be more group projects in translation classes to train students to share responsibilities and duties; to share their ideas and experience; a well as to communicate effectively with various stakeholders involved in translation projects. It therefore follows that team work deserves greater attention in the curriculum.

All professionals agreed on the dire need for integrating the internship in the curriculum to help trainees acquire professional experience, make themselves known to employers and improve their skills.

It should be noted here that the Institute integrates the internship into the Master curriculum, and this internship is supposed to take place during the final (4th) semester of the course, however, this component is not mandatory and therefore the majority of students simply undertake their dissertations.

By far the most popular language that should be included in Master curriculum was Chinese followed by Italian, taking into account the quality of ties between Algeria and China, and the existence of common interests between them in the area of politics, economy and culture, as well as the cooperation between Algeria and Italy in the fields of energy, infrastructure and small and medium-sized enterprises.

Professionals' identification of skills and competences that are needed to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the professional world advocates the necessity of integrating CAT tools, technical writing, documentary research, and organisational aspect of the profession in the curriculum.

In addition, the Master curriculum needs to produce qualified translators and interpreters who will be able to plan and manage their time, meet deadlines, accept constructive criticism, and communicate effectively with colleagues and clients.

6 .Conclusion: The present study has aimed to investigate the position of the market in translator and interpreter training in Algeria from the perspective of professionals.

The findings may lead us to the conclusion that the Master curriculum is moving forwards in the right direction, as it incorporates various theoretical and practical modules, and that the elements that prepare the trainees for the market should find a place in the Master curriculum.

The Master curriculum trains the labour force for the market. Thus, the more the tutors are aware of the market requirements in Algeria, the better they should be able to train competent translators and interpreters, furnished with various skills that are required in today's market.

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7. Appendix 01: The protocol for interview with professionals

Interviewee:
Date:
Time:

1- Background information:
Speciality: (translator- interpreter)
Language combination:

2- Recruitment considerations:
1-What are the three most important selection criteria of your translators/interpreters in the office/institution where you work?

3-Professionals' assessment of Master curriculum:
2- In your opinion, what are the three main strong points in the Master curriculum, as reflected through its graduates ?

3- In your opinion, what are the three main shortcomings in the Master curriculum, as reflected through its graduates?

4- The academic training and the market requirements:
4- In the Master curriculum there should be:
☐ A balance between translation theory and practical translation modules
☐ More emphasis on practical translation than on translation theory
☐ More emphasis on translation theory than on practical translation
☐ No translation theory
☐ No practical translation
☐ Translation theory should be an optional module

5- In the Master curriculum there should be taught:
☐ Only translation from language B (foreign lang.) into lang. A (mother tongue: Arabic)

☐ Only translation from lang. A (mother tongue: Arabic) into lang. B (foreign lang.)
☐ Both language directions, but more hours translation into mother tongue
☐ Both language directions, but more hours translation into foreign language
☐ Both language directions, with equal hours each

6- In your opinion, the projects (not only the translation projects) that you have to do within the context of the Master curriculum should be:
☐ Only individual projects
☐ Only group projects
☐ More individual and less group projects
☐ More group and less individual projects
☐ There should be a balance between individual and group projects

7- A work placement/internship in an agency as part of a Master curriculum in translation/interpreting is essential.
☐ Agree completely
☐ Agree mostly
☐ Disagree mostly
☐ Disagree completely

8- Apart from English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and Turkish which other three foreign languages should be offered, in your opinion, in the curriculum ?

9- What are the most important competences that need to be developed in order to bring the academic training closer to the professional world?