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*« Education Cannot Wait »
Teaching during the Covid-19 Outbreak
Challenges, Obstacles and Future Decisions
An Exploratory Report at the English Department,
Batna 2 University, Algeria*

GHASKIL Abir Soundous

Mostefa BENBOULAID, Batna 2 University, Algeria

a.ghaskil@univ-batna2.dz

ABSTRACT

Since the covid-19 outbreak that started in earlier 2020, institutions, schools, universities, and many other financial departments have found themselves in the face of a righteous virus that has altered the function of different matters. Due to this covid-19 pandemic, governments have taken measures to limit and besiege the spread of the virus, such as quarantine and the suspension of all academic activities in public and private institutions. "The covid-19 has resulted in schools shut down all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 a billion children are out of the classroom" (C.LI, Lalalni, 2020). Such measures have disrupted the course of education, obliging stakeholders of different institutions to take urgent actions to keep on the natural flow of teaching and learning and help educators maintain a better course of education. So due to this covid pandemic, education has changed dramatically and has adopted E-learning on different digital platforms. The new type of learning that has been presented and established in Algerian schools, mainly universities, has brought educators into a hot debate on whether this type of learning is effective or not and whether we should shift to E-learning instead of old type. This research paper examines the new kind of teaching established in the covid-19 pandemic and whether it has positive or negative effects on education in general and institutions in particular. A questionnaire has been given in the English department at Batna 2 University to gain insights and shed light on the different challenges and obstacles facing teachers. Results are analyzed and reported, along with some future measurements in a form of recommendations.

Keywords: Challenges, Covid-19, decisions, obstacles, teaching.

Introduction

The covid-19 pandemic started in early November 2019 in Wuhan, China and has since been spread to the whole world up to this date. The mysterious virus has brought about severe changes in the whole world, leading governments to take immediate actions to cope with the new living conditions. Education, in particular, has witnessed critical transformations, mainly the shift into digital learning instead of face-to-face learning. The lockdown strategies left academic institutions with little choice on how to continue learning and what measurements can be taken to continue teaching under the new established lockdown issues. Higher education teachers were urged to prepare themselves to teach online and find new assessment strategies. In the Algerian university, teaching face-to-face is the main type of learning, and the use of ICTs within these institutions can be considered humble. This reality is one of the main reasons why teachers of the Algerian universities are asking for immediate and urgent digital training to follow the leading countries and deal with the sudden and unexpected new learning circumstances. On the other hand, students found themselves compelled to transit into E-learning and become acquainted with basic digital devices to learn and execute different academic tasks. The other reality is that Algerian students lack the right digital knowledge to learn from behind a screen. Moreover, many students have admitted that they do not even own a laptop. These two realities combined led many Algerian educators to investigate the effects of the global pandemic on the future of Algerian higher education. Little has been done, and teachers are complaining about many issues that can hinder the flow of education and the future of these students. Based on these concerns, the principals of the Algerian universities are trying to implement new teaching and assessment strategies that can help their institutions cope with the worldly pandemic. The early investigation conducted in the Algerian academic field showed that the main factors blocking the continuity of learning are the weak online infrastructure, the lack of online training for teachers, the information gap, home learning conditions, and the internet feed and speed in general. There has been a shift in learning criteria. Algerian teachers are now trying to deliver their lectures mainly in Google classroom, MOODLE platform and sometimes through online sessions in ZOOM and Google MEET. The shift from face-to-face learning to online learning proved a challenge for both educators and learners. Currently, many Algerian higher education universities are delivering online training to teachers for rapid adoption to the emerging circumstances. "E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools" (Subedi et al., 2020, stated in Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 1). Many Algerian students find it difficult to adjust to online learning, as some of their mindsets proved to be not ready for this type of learning. This is why educators should treat students according to their readiness for the new kind of transition. In addition to that, there is no standard online learning methodology to be applied immediately, as there are many subjects to teach. Each of them requires different skills for the different

students' needs. Doucet et al., (2020), argue that "different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning" (stated in Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 1). As schools and universities are still closing their doors due to the covid-19 pandemic, teachers, learners, and parents equally, are concerned about the future of education. With the number of deaths increasing, health workers are doing their best to combat the virus, whilst education workers are trying hard to keep delivering quality education. Students, in particular, are feeling stressed while learning and taking exams at their homes, and many of them have openly expressed their fear for their future and the psychological effects they are going through due to the pandemic. The use of online digital tools in Algeria is partially limited and dependent upon the teachers' expertise and the students' exposure to these tools. As mentioned above, the online gadgets that are being used so far are Google classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Moodle and the platform used by the Algerian higher education ministry. However, these digital tools are related to many factors like accessibility, internet speed, internet disruption, and affordability in other cases like rural areas. While online learning is the future of education, it presents certain inconveniences like the unlimited and unsupervised exposure to digital screens that can cause many health and safety issues. For this particular reason, educators are calling for self-learning and self-development outside the online classroom, and they are asking parents to help their children with homeschooling. Online assessment is another issue; teachers are indulged in trial and error procedures to find out suitable assessment techniques. Students are worried about the new presented online assessment tools and have expressed their confusion and uncertainty about the relevance of these techniques. The current assessment techniques in the Algerian university vary from Google Classroom assignments, videoconferencing interviews and tasks administered through the teachers' websites. Not only the quality of education that has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the labour market has shut down work opportunities and training that were previously directed to graduate students. Moreover, the school, in general, has many benefits concerning the development of social and communications skills, so with the lockdown being continued into an unknown date, parents are concerned about the psychological repercussions of the pandemic on the life of their children in general. They also expected the quarantine to bring about high-quality time in family gatherings. Still, the reality is quite the opposite, as many children spend more time on virtual platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Tik-Tok than with their parents or siblings. Adding to that, not all young students are aware of the dangers of some online websites as they might be cyberbullied or even presented with harmful or inappropriate content. Teaching and learning online is an excellent way to foster critical thinking, creativity, and technological awareness; however, the online package offers more disadvantages than advantages in Algeria. Students, in particular, are the part that is most harmed, and they are asking the government for effective changes.

2. Literature Overview

With the covid-19 outbreak that started in early 2020, many schools and academic institutions closed their doors, and the learning flow has been disrupted. The covid-19 pandemic has affected more than 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries. The closure of schools and other institutions has changed the nature of learning and led teachers to face many challenges and obstacles. Social distancing and quarantine policies issued by different governments have brought tremendous changes in our lives in general and in education. "Lockdown and staying home strategies have been put in place as the needed action to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease" (Sintema, 2020, cited in Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 1). Since the pandemic's start, many studies have been conducted about the effects of covid-19 on the different fields of life. A considerable amount of research has been done in education, and the preliminary results show that the pandemic has mainly changed the core of education, leading schools and institutions with little to no clue how to maintain quality education by digital means. So this literature review aims at shedding light on how will the pandemic affect education and what are the possible outcomes the closure of schools can generate. In a research conducted in the Flemish community of Belgium, researchers Maldonado and De Witte (2020) stated that "not only has the level of academic performance decreased as a consequence of the school closure but also the learning inequalities have increased significantly within and across schools" (cited in A. Zancajo, 2020, p. 3). This research supports the idea that distant learning has a huge effect on increasing the social inequalities among learners and those students from different areas may perceive distant learning differently. Another study conducted in the UK about the increase of social inequalities caused by the pandemic showed that "primary education children from advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds could have lost 24% of a standard deviation in their performance across subjects as a result of the school closure, whilst socially disadvantaged children could have lost 31% of a standard deviation" Pensiero et al., 2020, cited in A. Zancajo, 2020, p. 3). Considerable research about the effects of the pandemic on education found that parents' social background and level of education have an important role in helping their children in homeschooling. The digital infrastructure of nations plays a critical role in home teaching. As for the Algerian context, the nation's digital background proved to be incapable or, in other cases, not ready "yet" to adopt e-learning as the main type of learning. The nation is still suffering from internet connectivity, and many areas lack the necessary internet feed to be used for different purposes. Besides the internet infrastructure, Algerian teachers consider digital learning as 'challenging', as they lack the necessary training to use digital outlets to teach. Developed countries like Germany had also faced similar obstacles when they started teaching online. A study conducted by Konig, Jager-Beila and Glutsh (2020) analyzed the case of novice teachers and found out that the transition into online learning put these teachers in the face of many challenges like keeping the social contact with their students, presenting new information, providing their students with tasks that are addressed to different levels, providing quality education, providing students with the necessary feedback and assess their work appropriately. Another study was conducted in Serbia, and after implementing a model of online learning for both teachers and learners, it was found that teachers were more acceptable to using this online model; however, learners were more likely to use technology (Zoom, Moodle,) than teachers (Bojovic et al., 2020). The same research added that teachers' uncertainty and lack of technological knowledge could simply be reduced by providing them with the necessary digital tools that can

help them teach remotely. In addition to the correct technological use, there have been multiple types of research on the general health conditions ensured by different universities. The general well-being of both teachers and students was the main concern. UNESCO diagnosed a huge amount of stress and fear among teachers caused by the covid-19 pandemic. Research conducted by Kosir et al. in Slovenia (2020) found out that teachers who started working online at the beginning of the pandemic expressed their anxiety due to many factors like the responsibilities at home like taking care of their children, their inefficacy of using technological tools and the negative perception of remote teaching. These three identified factors have generally affected education quality; however, they expressed their readiness to work hard to overcome the obstacles and challenges introduced by the pandemic. Another research conducted on the issue of the effects of the pandemic on teachers' general working conditions found that "maintaining students' motivation in an online learning environment has been one of the main challenges for US teachers during school closures" (Reich et al. 2020, cited in A. Zancajo, 2020, p. 7). Besides motivation, teachers from different institutions from all over the world had confirmed their inability to finish the curricula compared to when they were teaching face-to-face. This difficulty in completing the curricula has mainly been related to the school closure and the unexpected transition into E-learning. The same case is happening in the Algerian universities; many reports have been sent to the ministry complaining about failing to complete the teaching program. Their incompetence in teaching online is one of the main reasons. A survey made by Aucejo et al. highlighted the effects of the pandemic on the labour market and find that 29% of the students lost their job, and 13 % of them had their internships abrogated. Generally speaking, the labour market in the US has significantly reduced its expectations of higher education students, and these same students expressed their uncertainty about finding a job in the nearest future. The same survey investigated the Arizona State University students' expectations and experiences of online learning, and the majority of them were satisfied and comfortable using online tools. In the case of Hong Kong, a survey was administered by Day et al. 2020 to examine the effects of the covid-19 on higher education, and it found that despite the continuum of lecturing in most the academic institutions, there is an unequal distribution of the pandemic's effects among students and academics. For instance, females, minorities and low-income students were likely to be affected by the pandemic, and there is a critical disruption in the flow of their academic life. More studies supporting the allegation of socially disadvantaged students, claiming that institutions' technological inabilities and teachers' unpreparedness for the current pandemic has more negative effects on these particular students than on students of other classes. Following this allegation, these effects are likely to increase since no current data shows that the end of the global pandemic is soon enough. Many more studies have been conducted on the effects of covid-19 on education, whether in the long or short term. However, few of them have finalized their research since we are still in the middle of the pandemic, and that current data is certainly debatable.

The previous literature review tries to analyze the short and long term effects of the covid-19 pandemic that has generated on education.

These studies were conducted under critical conditions; for this reason, the results are considered "preliminary". Nevertheless, this research paper aims to investigate the

effects of the covid-19 pandemic on Algeria's higher education, and the researcher believes that the following questions are of relevance to the study:

- 1- Are teachers coping with the unexpected shift into remote learning?
- 2- Is the Algerian higher education ministry adopting specific measures to maintain quality learning while using digital tools?
- 3- What recommendations can suggest helping teachers and learners cope with E-learning?

3. Statement of the Problem

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, schools worldwide have been closed, leading face to face classes to be replaced by online learning sessions, and hence obliging the authorities and the leaders in the ministry of higher education to modify the general curriculum and the educational calendar. In Algeria, the minister of higher education urged the heads of different universities to adopt digital tools to maintain the process of learning and teaching. However, Algerian digital infrastructure presented a considerable challenge for various higher education institutions, as it lacked the necessary tools and equipment to ensure a better online educational platform. Few studies in Algeria have been conducted on the effects of the covid-19 on higher education institutions; this is why the researcher hopes to add to the few investigations that have been done on the same issue and to provide initial data that can help educators in the Algerian universities to develop a better teaching process.

4. Objectives of the Study

This research explores the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on the Algerian higher education institutions. Furthermore, it sheds light on the different obstacles and challenges faced by teachers of the department of English language at Batna 2 University. For these particular reasons, the researcher opted for an exploratory investigation to report the different issues related to the shift into E-learning, gain insights into how teachers cope with the changes brought by the pandemic and answer the other questions formulated at the literature overview end.

5. Methodology Design

The covid-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented crisis in all areas of life. In higher education, the Algerian ministry of higher education has taken urgent and temporary solutions to deal with the pandemic and mitigate its impact on education. The suspension of face-to-face classes obliged the Algerian higher education institution to immediately shift to using online courses to continue learning and teaching in the best possible way. This exploratory report aims to shed light on how the covid-19 pandemic affected the teaching process in Algerian higher education. Besides exploring and reporting the different effects of the pandemic on the flow of teaching, this research

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suggests recommendations on how to continue teaching and learning within the digital platforms and even after the end of the pandemic.

To collect data about the effects of the pandemic on the process of teaching in the University of Batna 2, specifically the department of English language, the researcher used a questionnaire as the primary tool of data collection.

A questionnaire of 21 questions was sent to the teachers of the English department at Batna 2 University.

5.1 Data Collection Tool

This exploratory research used ‘a questionnaire’ as the main tool to collect data. Questionnaires provide researchers with a quick and large amount of data, as it they provide both qualitative and quantitative data through open and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire in this exploratory report was formed with Google forms and was sent by email to the teachers of the English department at Batna 2 University.

Forty teachers answered the questionnaire.

5.2 Data Analysis Procedures

Using Google forms to create questionnaires has become the trendiest and current tool to collect data. This automated tool provides researchers with immediate access to the different responses, organized in tables and charts. However, researchers can only analyze the given data and copy the charts to further documents.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Teachers’ questionnaire

The researcher sent the questionnaire to the teachers by email, and 40 teachers responded and shared their own experiences on the issue under investigation.

29 out of 40 respondents were female teachers.

Their average age is 40. (Arranged between 30 and 58 years old).

The average teaching experience is 15 years (Arranged between 5 to 25 years).

Item one: have you been diagnosed with coronavirus?

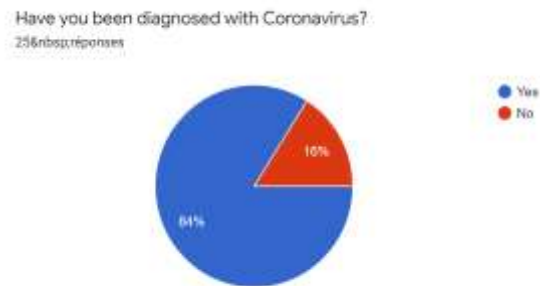
The majority of teachers responded by yes, confirming their positive diagnosis with the covid-19 virus. Results are illustrated in the chart below:

Fig.1. Coronavirus diagnosis

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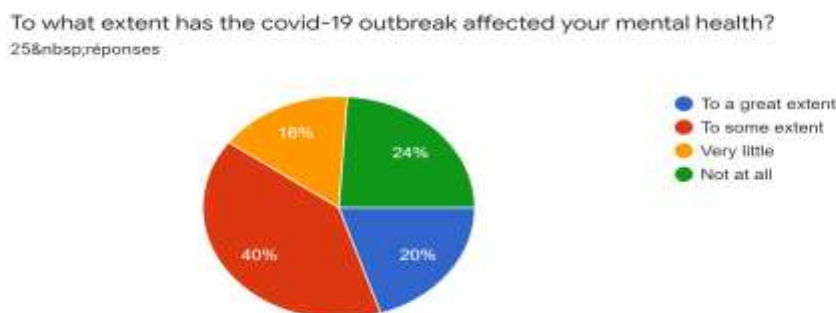
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Item two: to what extent has the covid-19 affected your mental health?

By formulating this question, the researcher wants to know the mental effects of the pandemic on the psych of teachers that can affect their academic conduct. Plenty of research has been conducted on the same issue, with warning results indicating the negative effect of the pandemic on the mental well-being of teachers. In the case of the English department at Batna 2 University, a large proportion of teachers (40%) claimed that the covid-19 affected their mental health. A ratio of 20 % claimed that the covid-19 pandemic has dramatically affected their mental health, followed by a proportion of 16 % who said that it did not indeed affect them. The remaining 24 % of teachers were not mentally affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The following chart illustrates the results:

Fig.2. Effects of the covid-19 outbreak on mental health



Item three: To what extent has the covid-19 pandemic impacted your professional and academic conduct?

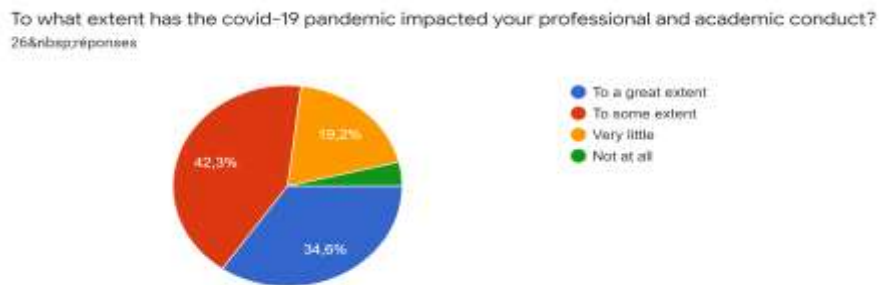
The covid pandemic changed the nature and process of many endeavours. In the field of education, and with the shift to E-learning, the researcher tried to find out how the pandemic altered or impacted the way of teaching. Teachers of the English department at Batna 2 University said that the pandemic affected them to a great extent (34.6 % of them), and 42.3 % of them said that it affected them to some extent, however; the remaining teachers (19.2 %) said that it affected them but in an extraneous manner. Few of them argued that the pandemic did not affect them. Results are better illustrated in the following chart:

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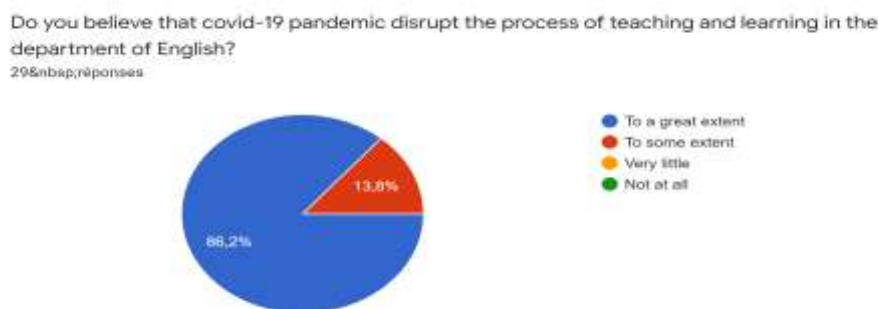
Fig.3. Effects of covid-19 pandemic on teachers' professional conduct



Item four: Do you believe that the covid-19 pandemic disrupts the process of teaching and learning in the department of English?

The covid-19 led to the closure of many schools around the world. Some of them have even changed the nature and schedule of their curricula to adapt to the pandemic. For example, in the department of English at Batna 2 University, the administration urged the deans of the faculties to use digital platforms like Google classroom to keep in touch with students and use MOODLE to drop the lectures there. Teachers involved in this research believe that the covid-19 pandemic altered the way and nature of teaching (86.2%), and only 13.8 % of them claim that the pandemic did not change the teaching and learning process. The researcher believes that these teachers were already using digital platforms before the pandemic, so the shift to E-learning implemented during the pandemic did not affect their teaching methods. Results are illustrated in the following chart:

Fig.4. Effects of the covid-19 pandemic on the process of learning



Item five: Does the University of Batna 2 offer remote teaching and learning?

By formulating this question, the researcher wanted to know whether other faculties of the University of Batna 2 are offered the needed digital platforms and websites to continue learning and teaching. The researcher -as a teacher- in the English department at the same university, is aware that these platforms are available for the

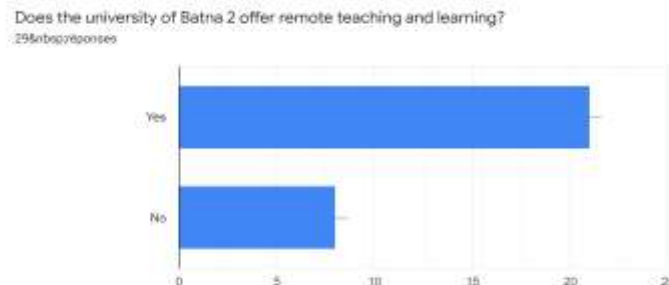
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faculty of Foreign Languages. Teachers at this faculty confirmed the availability of E-learning, and their confirmation is highlighted in the chart below:

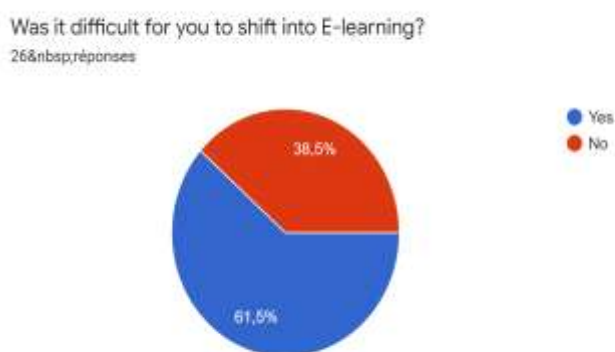
Fig.5. Availability of remote teaching and learning in Batna 2 University



Item six: Was it difficult for you to shift into E-learning?

One of the main objectives of this exploratory research is to shed light on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on higher education. As a first step, the researcher asked the participants whether it was difficult for them to shift to E-learning or not. The majority of the participants (61.5 %) confirmed their struggle to change to E-learning. The remaining participants (38.5 %) said that it was not difficult for them to switch to E-learning. The researcher found out that these few participants are at the age of 35 and below, which means they are familiar with the digital necessities to teach remotely. The researcher asked the participants about their age to differentiate between the digital immigrants and the digital natives. Results are highlighted in the chart below:

Fig.6. Difficulty to shift to E-learning



To better understand the issue under investigation, the researcher asked the participants why it was difficult for them to shift to E-learning. One participant said that it was due to "the lack of training, Instruments and means, and sometimes the lousy connection feed.

Another participant said, "I am an old-fashioned teacher, and the shift to E-learning has "frightened me.

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One participant shared the same idea as the previous teacher; he said, "it is new for me, and "most teachers do not have the necessary computing skills.

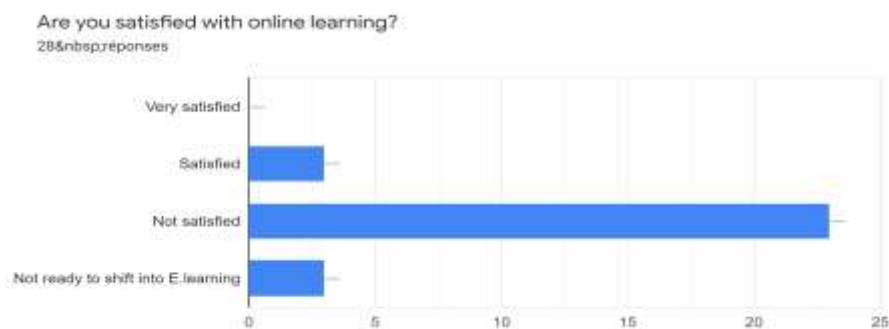
The majority of teachers (26) believe that the shift to E-learning was difficult because there "is "not enough training concerning E-learning.

However, some of the participants (9 of them) claim that it was not difficult for them to shift to E-learning and that many had training in digital skills.

Item seven: Are you satisfied with online learning?

After asking whether teachers faced troubles while shifting to E-learning or not, the researcher expected that the participants who said that it was difficult for them to do so would automatically not be satisfied with the use of digital platforms and tools. The results confirmed the researcher's expectations, and the majority of them said that they were not happy with online learning (82.1 %). Furthermore, none of the participants said that they were delighted with online learning, even those who said it was not difficult for them to shift to remote teaching. The remaining participants were equally divided between satisfied (10.7 %) and not ready to change to online learning and teaching (10.7%). Results are better illustrated in the following chart:

Fig.7. Evaluation of online learning



Item eight: Is it difficult for you to implement safety protocols in your classroom like students distancing, wearing masks and the use of sanitizers?

The use of safety protocols related to the mitigation of the virus brought some challenges to the head masters in the English department, especially teachers.

The majority of the participants said that it was challenging for them to continue implying the safety protocols in their classrooms due to many reasons. Results are highlighted in the following chart:

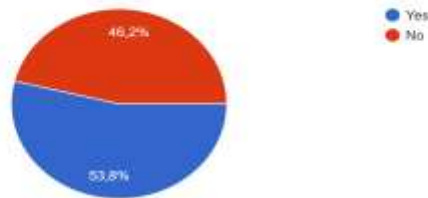
Fig.8. Implementation of safety protocols

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Is it difficult for you to implement safety protocols in your classroom like students distancing, wearing masks and the use of sanitizers?
26&nbpreponses



Some of the reasons that led teachers to fail in the implementation of the safety protocols are illustrated in their answers below:

Students are difficult to obey the rules

“Students refuse to wear their face mask during the course”

“Difficult to maintain a protocol with people they believe less in its effectiveness”

“Students do not respect the sanitary restrictions”

“Wearing the mask and teaching was a hard task for me.”

As shown above, teachers are struggling to shift to online learning on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are implying the safety protocols when they have a chance to teach onsite. Combined, these two reasons are essential elements that led to the declining quality of higher education learning during the pandemic.

Item nine: Are there any academic activities that are stopped and will only resume after the pandemic?

Since the covid-19 led to the closure of schools all over the Algerian nation, some of the educational events, training and activities stopped. The majority of the participants (69 %) said that there are activities/subjects that have been stopped due to the pandemic, and that they will only resume when this coronavirus outbreak is over.

Results are shown in the following chart:

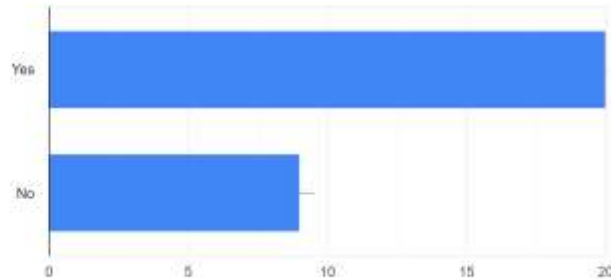
Fig.9. Activities stopped due to covid-19 outbreak

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Were there any academic activities that have been completely stopped and will only resume after the pandemic?
29 responses



Some of the activities that stopped according to the participants are listed below:

- “Outing activities”
- “Pair and group work”
- “On site conferences”
- “Scientific conferences and study days... cultural activities that are supposed to raise students' level”
- “Vivas”.
- “Presentations+ role plays + in class activities”
- “Internships”
- “Some courses (transversal & discovery units)”
- “All practical activities”

Item ten: Evaluate the university digitalization of teaching, learning and assessment during the covid-19 pandemic.

The covid-19 pandemic led to the digitalization of all educational activities, including teaching, learning and assessment. As part of the academic organization, teachers believe that the University of Batna 2 has not managed to digitalize teaching and learning, and they think that their trial is inadequate (44.8 % of the participants). Some participants disagree and believe that the University of Batna 2 has somehow succeeded in digitalizing educational activities (34.5 %). The remaining participants said that the process of digitalizing education was good (17.2 %), and a few of them said that it was perfect. Results are illustrated in the following chart:

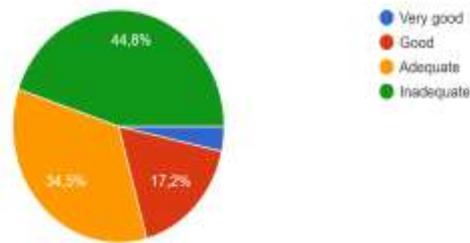
Fig.1. Evaluation of the Batna 2 University attempt of digitalization

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Evaluate the university digitalization of teaching, learning and assessment during the covid-19 pandemic.
29 réponses

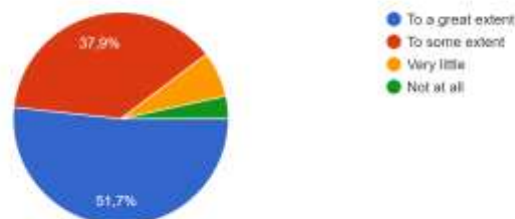


Item 11: Was communication effective during the pandemic between teachers and the administration's staff?

The use of online platforms was challenging for many teachers; they needed support from the English department to provide quality learning. Therefore, the researcher asked the participants if the communication with the staff of the English department was effective or not. The majority of them (51.7 %) said that it was practical to a great extent. However, some of the participants (37.9 %) faced some difficulties while communicating with the administration and the remaining ones said that communication was not effective. Results are highlighted in the following chart:

Fig.11. Communication between the academic and administrative staff in the English department

Was communication effective during the pandemic between teachers and the administration's staff?
29 réponses

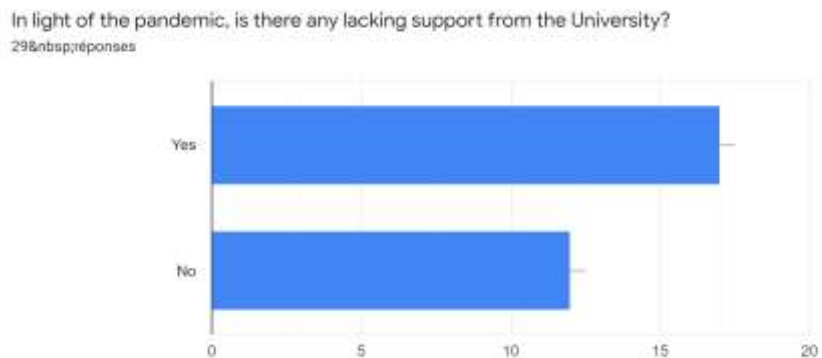


Item twelve: In light of the pandemic, what kind of support you needed from the University?

Educators from all over the globe struggled with the urgent and expected shift to online learning, and many of them expressed their immediate need for assistance to ensure educational continuity in the pandemic. The department of English at Batna 2 University was no exception. The majority of the participants (58.6 %) in this

exploratory research said they needed assistance from the University of Batna. The remaining participants (41.4 %) said they do not need help to teach in the new circumstances, and they believe that the pandemic did not impact their teaching course. Results are highlighted in the chart below:

Fig.12. the needed support from the University of Batna 2



The kind of support participants need is illustrated in the list below:

- *“Not enough concern for teachers mental health.*
- *“In-service Training concerning the ICT modalities”*
- *“Teachers' training in e-learning”*
- *“I urge the administration staff to provide the teachers with training courses to help them overcome the difficulties they face while shifting to E-Learning. Teaching platforms”*
- *“Students need rooms equipped with computers and Internet. Both teachers and students need training on the use of platforms”*
- *“They should not only provide teachers with adequate training to help them hone their technological skills, but they should also think about equipping the academic institutions with the latest technological materials (e.g. interactive whiteboards, equipped language laboratories...etc.)”*

As it is shown in the answers above, teachers are mainly struggling with the shift to online learning and they are asking for E-trainings for both teachers and students.

Item thirteen: Evaluate the overall effect of the pandemic on the department autonomy, and teachers' freedom concerning the teaching methods.

Since the covid-19 pandemic affected different academic endeavours, the researcher asked the participants about the effect it has generated on the general work of the English department and their freedom concerning the teaching methods. The majority of the participants believe that the impact of the pandemic on the English department's

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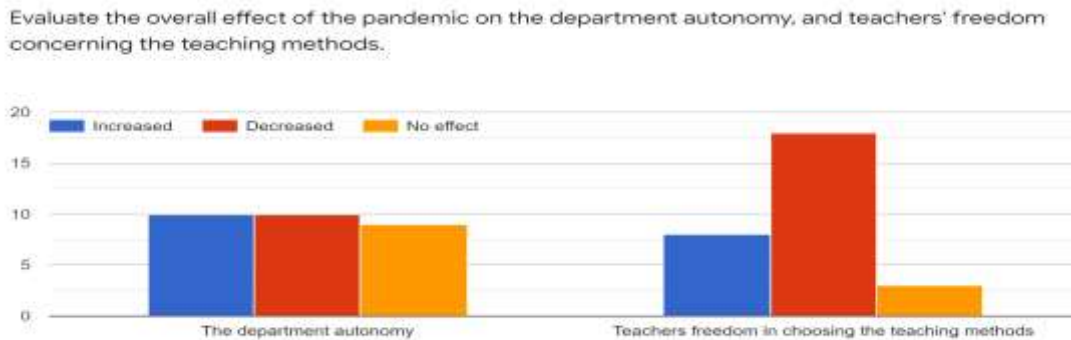
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autonomy is enormous. However, other teachers believe that the pandemic did not affect the work. Concerning the teachers' freedom to choose the appropriate teaching method, most of the participants said that the pandemic had tightened their liberty in selecting the proper teaching methods. Participants believe that the covid-19 outbreak did not leave them with many choices on what kind of teaching technique they should adopt, and they were left only with the option of shifting to online learning

On the other hand, few participants believe that the covid-19 pandemic did not affect their freedom to select the appropriate teaching method. These participants are the ones who were already using online learning even before the pandemic. Results are illustrated in the chart below:

Fig.13. The effects of the pandemic on the overall work of the department of English the teachers



In the comment section that was provided in the Google form questionnaire, some of the participants added further notes on this issue, comments are listed below:

“Students achievement is decreased considerably”

“Students’ behavior is witnessing a radical negative change”

“Teachers are bound with online learning”

“We, as a third world country, are still behind what should be done when it comes to distant education”

Item fourteen: Evaluate the changes that happened in the workload and well-being of teachers during the covid-19 pandemic.

The covid-19 pandemic brought some modifications to the different educational fields. These changes led to an increase in the workload of the university principals in general and educators in particular. The researcher asked the participants how the covid-19 pandemic affected their overall workload and well-being. The majority of teachers said that the average workload has increased, while some believe that no change has been reported. Few of them said that the average workload has decreased because it has shifted into online teaching and saved them the efforts to go to the

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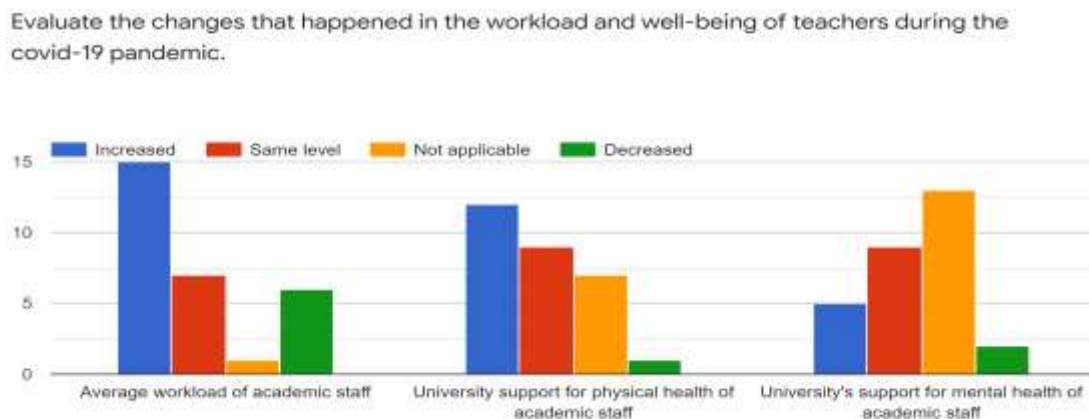
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University and do onsite activities. Concerning the University's support for teachers' physical health, most participants said it increased thanks to the different physical health offers. However, some other participants believe that there is no noticeable physical support from the University.

In contrast, the rest of the participants said that the physical support is either the same or not applicable. When it comes to the University's support for the mental health of the academic staff, the majority of the participants said that it is not practical, and this is related to the fact that the University is busy with controlling the impact of the pandemic and save the academic year. Therefore, mental support for the academic staff is still in process.

Results are illustrated in the chart below:

Fig.14. Effects of the pandemic on the workload and well-being of teachers

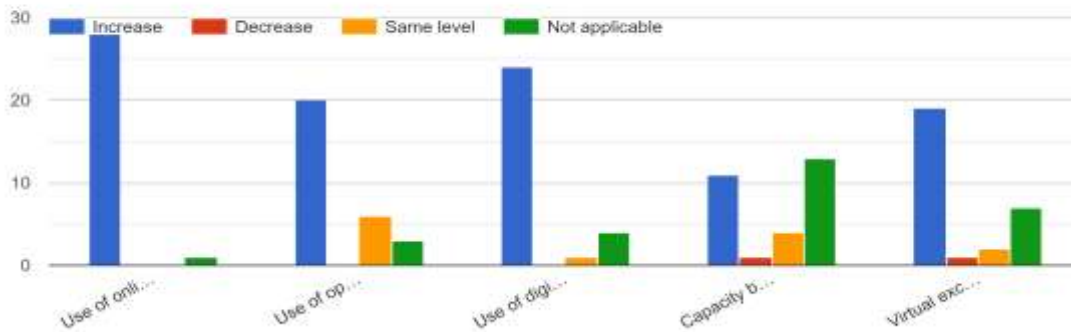


Item fifteen: Please describe the development of the following due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Besides the physical and mental support of the University of Batna 2 for teachers, the researcher asked the participants to evaluate the development of the following academic conduct during the pandemic. Concerning the use of online tools, the open educational resources and the use of digital infrastructures to communicate with the students, most of the participants agreed that it has mainly increased. The covid-19 pandemic is the reason that led to the risers in the use of digital tools and platforms, just like it happened in the rest of the world. Concerning capacity building and the offer of online teaching pedagogies, most of the participants said that it is not applicable. The University of Batna 2 failed to offer teacher training on how to use online tools, which made teachers of the English department struggle while transitioning to online learning. For the virtual exchanges and collaborative online education, most participants said that it increased, and the department of English language at Batna 2 University has witnessed many virtual and business events since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak. Results of the development of different academic acts are illustrated below:

Fig.15. Evaluation of online transition acts

Please describe the development of the following due to the covid-19 pandemic.



Item sixteen: Are you worried about your students' academic achievement and growth in light of the covid-19 pandemic?

Besides the opened-closed questions developed above, the researcher gave the participants open questions to get more insight into the research issue. In this question, the researcher asked the participants whether they were concerned about their student's academic achievement and growth or not. The researcher found that participants are all worried about their students' academic achievement and are trying hard to provide them with the best quality learning to succeed in the future. However, one participant said he is concerned because his students seem lost in online learning?

Another participant said “*the students still find difficulties in understanding online courses due to the absence of classroom interaction*” this belief is shared by another participant who said “*the content of the courses that we provide them with is not enough and because attendance is not obligatory, the majority of the students do not know what is going on.*” One of the main challenges brought by the shift to online learning is the lack of personal interaction between teachers and students. Actual classes provide better explanations than online classes where the human factor is absent. One participant held the same concern; he said, “*students do not have enough time to meet their teachers, which will affect their learning process.*” Another participant expressed his deepest heed; he said, “*I am concerned because my ultimate objective is to ensure my students' academic achievement despite the difficult circumstances we go through under covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, I am always trying to provide and create a healthy learning environment.*” So as it is demonstrated above, teachers in the English department are intensely concerned about the academic future of their students, and they are doing their best to help them succeed despite the current circumstances.

Item seventeen: Compared to previous years, and due to the covid-19 crisis, was it difficult for you to form a healthy teacher-student relationship?

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Since one of the main concerns of the teachers of the English department at Batna 2 University is the failure to form a social relationship with their students, the researcher asked the participants how it was difficult for them to teach without direct interaction with the students. One participant said that *“Students being absent during face to face classes has not given the teacher the possibility to form such relationship.”* Another participant said, *“since attendance is not obligatory, we do not know our students, and the majority of them do not know even the names of their students”*. This was true for many participants, and they all wish to go back to traditional learning where they can better interact with the students.

Item eighteen: Your suggestions for a better teaching process during the covid-19 pandemic.

As a concluding question to the questionnaire, the researcher asked the participants to suggest some ideas for the future of education during and after the pandemic. Their suggestions varied but mainly focused on the necessity to implement digital training for both teachers and students. Some of their recommendations are listed below:

“Multiple digital trainings for teachers, multiple digital courses for students”.

“The university has to play a great role during the crisis in terms of availability of ICT resources and free access to computer based instruments”.

“We should evaluate the past two years’ experience thoroughly to develop better teaching strategies that will enhance students learning process”.

“A necessary revision of a whole pedagogy to deal with changing times”.

“Keep using the digital support as a tool of education”.

“Increase the internet speed and infrastructure”

“Teachers and learners should be trained to use various platforms to deliver Knowledge and access it effectively. Teachers should guide learners and promote learner autonomy”.

“To enhance the teaching process, teachers need to take into consideration their students' needs and interests during this crisis without neglecting the negative impact covid-19 pandemic on students' academic achievement”.

“The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research should accelerate technology readiness”.

“Universities should hire a professional technical staff to provide technical support to teachers and learners and handle technological problems”.

“We have to improve online teaching/learning and make it more effective”

The central idea developed based on the participants' answers revolved around the urgent need for digital training and the thought of moving toward adopting digital outlets even after the pandemic. In addition to that, the University of Batna 2 has to develop educational measures that promote higher education learning in regular and urgent times.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The covid-19 pandemic led to an unprecedented change in different domains of life. In education, teachers struggled to shift and adopt E-learning, and students found themselves obliged to learn using digital outlets. Algerian higher education teachers had to make decisions concerning the teaching methods to keep up with the urgent circumstances. These decisions reflected the educational level and achievement of students who are left with little to no choice on how to learn and develop different skills. The main issues discovered in this exploratory research are that teachers are struggling with the shift to online learning, and they are asking the University of Batna to provide them with training on digital skills. Teachers of the English department expressed their concern about the future of education during and after the pandemic. They suggest that online learning must be adopted and strengthened even when the pandemic is over. The global outbreak showed the flaws of the Algerian digital infrastructure, and it proved that the government should take immediate actions to develop and enhance the different digital tools and platforms. The long term effects of the pandemic cannot be detected yet; this is why further research must be conducted to investigate the consequences of the pandemic on the different educational institutions. Evidence presented by Aucejo et al. (2020) showed that “the covid-19 pandemic will significantly affect the academic and labour outcomes of the current undergraduate students” (cited in A. Zancajo, 2020, p.11). For this particular reason, social, economic and labour market organizations must consider the effects of the pandemic on students who graduated during the period of the pandemic when they apply for a job. This exploratory research suggests that policymakers and educators must make appropriate and effective choices and decisions for the Algerian higher education ministry. Algerian universities should be acquainted with the necessary digital tools to benefit teachers and learners. Education is the essence of any nation; it is “a bulwark against inequalities. In education as in health, we are safe when everybody is safe; we flourish when everybody flourishes” (International Commission on the future of education, 2020). The covid-19 pandemic showed that Algerian universities are vulnerable and that they are not ready to handle urgent matters

Moreover, the Algerian higher education ministry should collaborate with foreign universities to benefit from their knowledge and expertise. The covid-19 outbreak is one factor. There will be other unexpected issues in the future, so Algerian universities must evolve and change their teaching and learning strategies to join the flow of the

developed nations. We cannot return to the world that we knew, but we may work together for a better world in the future.

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9. Appendix A

Dear colleague,

The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate the effects of covid-19 pandemic on higher education. The questionnaire aims to gain insight on how did schools closure disrupt the process of teaching and learning, and how did Batna 2 University, particularly the department of English language cope with the unexpected shift into E-learning. By taking part in this research, you will be able to share your experience on how were you affected by the pandemic, what are the main challenges that you faced and what is your suggestion for the future of education in the light of this pandemic.

Thank you in advance for your participation (your contribution will remain anonymous).

- Gender

Male

Female

- Age

- Years of experience

- Have you been diagnosed with coronavirus?

Yes

No

- To what extent has the covid-19 affected your mental health?

To a great extent

To some extent

Very little

Not at all

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- To what extent has the covid-19 impacted your professional and academic conduct?

To a great extent

To some extent

Very little

Not at all

- Do you believe that covid-19 pandemic disrupts the process of teaching and learning in the department of English?

To a great extent

To some extent

Very little

Not at all

- Does the University of Batna 2 offer remote teaching and learning?

Yes No

Was it difficult for you to shift into E-learning?

Yes No

If yes, explain how?

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- Are you satisfied with online learning?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Not satisfied

Not ready to shift into E-learning

- Is it difficult for you to implement safety protocols in your classroom like students distancing, wearing masks and the use of sanitizers?

Yes No

If yes, specify how?

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- Are there any academic activities that stopped and will only resume after the pandemic?

Yes No

If yes, identify them.

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- Evaluate the university digitalization of teaching, learning and assessment during the covid-19 pandemic.

Very good
Good
Adequate
Inadequate

- Was communication effective during the pandemic between teachers and the administration staff?

To a great extent
To some extent
Very little
Not at all

- In light of the pandemic, is there any lacking support from the university?

Yes No

If yes, please specify the kind of support you need.

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.....

- Evaluate the overall effect of the pandemic on the department autonomy, and teachers' freedom concerning the teaching methods.

	Increased	Decreased	No effect
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The department autonomy			
Teachers' freedom concerning the teaching methods			

Any other comments?

.....

- Evaluate the changes that happened in the workload and well-being of teachers during the covid-19 pandemic.

	Increased	Decrease	Same level	Not applicable
Average workload of academic staff				
University support for physical health of academic staff				
University's support for mental health of academic staff				

- Please describe the development of the following due to the covid-19 pandemic.

	Increase	Decrease	Same level	Not applicable
Use of online learning				
Use of open educational resources				

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Use of digital communication infrastructure to communicate with students				
Capacity building and training offer on online teaching pedagogies				
Virtual exchanges and collaborative online learning				

- Are you concerned about your students' academic achievement and growth in light of the covid-19 pandemic?

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- Compared to previous years, and due to covid-19 crisis, was it difficult for you to form a teacher-student healthy relationship?

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- Your suggestions for a better teaching process during the covid-19 pandemic.

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