

Fifty Years of Middle School Teachers of English Training in Algeria: From the Institute of Technology of Education to the Higher Teacher Education Institute

خمسون سنة من تكوين أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر
من المعاهد التكنولوجية للتربية إلى المدارس العليا للأساتذة

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Abstract

Looking back at the history of teacher education and its development in Algeria over the past fifty years gives us insights as to understand the state of affairs of the sector of education as concerns the form and nature of the training. This descriptive and analytical review of the initial training program for middle school teachers in Algeria since its independence in 1962 provides an overview of the historical development of the training course. This article examines specifically the aspects of the training under the responsibility of two major institutions namely the Institute of Technology of Education and the Higher teacher Education Institute

Keywords: teacher education - initial training - middle school teachers - Institute of Technology of Education - Higher Teacher Education Institute

ملخص

إن النظر في تاريخ تكوين المعلمين والأساتذة وتطوره في الجزائر على مدى الخمسين عاما الماضية يعطينا رؤى مفيدة لفهم حالة قطاع التعليم فيما يتعلق بشكل وطبيعة التدريب. يقدم هذا العرض الوصفي التحليلي لبرنامج التدريب الأولي للأساتذة مدارس التعليم المتوسط في الجزائر منذ استقلالها في عام 1962 لمحة عامة عن التطور التاريخي لبرنامج التدريب. يدرس هذا المقال على وجه التحديد جوانب التدريب تحت مسؤولية مؤسستين رئيسيتين هما المعهد التكنولوجي للتربية والمدسة العليا للأساتذة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم المعلمين - التدريب الأولي - معلمو المدارس المتوسطة - المعهد التكنولوجي للتربية - المدرسة العليا للأساتذة.

Introduction

Seeking to secure a good educational system and provide the school with competent and qualified teachers, initial teacher training in Algeria has undergone different processes of reform since the country's independence in 1962. The investigation of the development of this training focusing on the training of middle school teachers of English will help us understand the historical development of the training in terms of number of teachers trained, duration and components of the training course in which the different modifications at the theoretical and practical level were operated in order to improve the student teachers' level and competencies and hence improve the level of teaching at middle schools.

The Quest for an Algerian Model of Teacher Training

Since its independence, Algeria has been preoccupied by the development of its educational system. This, of course, could not have taken place without providing the school with qualified teachers. Teacher training was one of the urgent matters that the authorities have taken in charge after establishing the bases of the state and settling its institutions. The preparation of middle school teachers went through three phases from a no institution devoted to the training of middle school teacher to the Institute of technology of Education (ITE), a typically Algerian system of teacher training and, finally, the specialised teacher training at the The Higher Education College for Teachers -Assia Djebbar (ENS).

The No-institution for Training Period (1962-1970)

The first phase took place during the first decade after independence. Algeria was, then, at the quest of breaking down with the colonial model and building its own institutions which would fit the country's orientations and aspiration. This phase was recognized as the no-training institution because the recruitment of middle school teachers was not on the basis of any training. In September 1962, only two months after independence, the major aim of the Algerian authorities at that crucial time was to ensure a seat at school and a teacher for the maximum number of children at the age of schooling. This decision took into consideration all children between the age of 6 and 18. This democratization of education was one of the guidelines of the high commission of educational reform which was the first Algerian agency to consider the establishment of new structures. (Djebbar, 2008)

The increase of the number of pupils was particularly sensible at the middle school level. This situation was due to the decision allowing children who left school for any reason to continue their middle school education provided they were under the age of 18 when registering in the first year. The

middle school level was, then, the most concerned by the lack of qualified teachers.

In 1962, there were 721 teachers who received training at the Normal School for primary school teachers (Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs (ENI)) and who had been recruited in the Middle school sector essentially via internal promotion among primary school grade 2 (Ministry of Education, 1975/76). Their recruitment was on the basis of their long teaching experience especially in teaching older age groups within the primary school as was the procedure in the colonial period (Matougui, 1988). These teachers were Baccalaureate holders who followed a four-year training program provided at the ENI. In some schools where both middle and secondary school instruction were delivered, teaching in the lower grades was sometimes carried out by teachers who possessed a secondary school teaching qualification provided by the ENS. But this category of teachers was very scarce. However, the need for teachers at the Middle school level grew larger. In order to confront the inflated school population, especially at this level of education, the Algerian authorities could no longer rely on the same procedure to acquire staff since many primary grade 2 teachers had either been promoted to administrative positions or left teaching altogether while secondary school teachers could no longer be in charge of lower grades. In this conjunction of circumstances, it was decided that training qualifications for middle school teachers would be temporarily waived and applicants who obtained the Baccalaureate qualification were recruited as teachers without any initial training. This procedure could help recruit a number of teachers, but it did not prove successful to attract a great number because most Baccalaureate holders preferred to register at the university to obtain a higher degree.

In order to face the lack of qualified educators, teachers were then recruited without any qualification or training (Benziane & Senouci, 2007, p. 62). We can say that in response to the high demand in teachers because of the policy of democratization of education in independent Algeria which resulted in a considerable increase of the number of pupils, the education policy has neglected the qualitative dimension of its mission. In this very crucial period, between 1962 and 1970, this situation concerned the whole teachers' population. We can then imagine the number of teachers of English and the quality of their qualification; English as a subject was, then, taught and did not have an inspectorate in independent Algeria until 1969. (Hayane, 1989)

Training at the Institute of Technology of Education (1970-1998)

The start of the school year in October 1970 was different from other school years. This was for two reasons. Firstly, education was affiliated to a new ministry namely the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (1970-

1976). Secondly, it was the first school year following the adoption of the four-year development plan 1970-1973. This plan sought the preparation of the necessary conditions for a long term progress putting forward the schooling of all children at the age of 6 and undertook the realization of new structures to host the growing population of students. The most interesting decision of the plan was certainly the establishment of a network of training institutions called Institutes of Technology of Education (Instituts Technologiques de l'Education (ITE)) aiming at dispensing a specialized training for specific professions like teaching in order to reduce the deficit in qualified personnel which the university could not remedy the shortage (Abdallah-Khodja, 1972). In order to satisfy the rapid increase of the number of middle school pupils which grew from 70,179 in 1963-1964 to 394 115 in 1975-1976 (Haddab, 1979, p. 30), The high demand in teachers made from training a maximum number in a short period of time an urgent matter.

Therefore, the second phase which dominated for more than twenty five years and which contributed in training a great number of teachers securing education to the growing number of pupils at that time was that of the Institutes of Technology of Education (ITE). The teacher training system in independent Algeria was, hence, established in the second decade ensuing independence and was essentially quantitative. This training system has observed many changes at different levels. The evolution of the training in terms of duration and content, and the organization of the course are the most important features to discuss.

Evolution of Middle School Teacher Training at the Institute of Education

During the first years after independence, there was no specific training for middle school teachers. The latter were recruited among baccalaureate holders who applied for the position or among lower primary school teachers trained at the Ecole Normale d'instituteurs (ENI) that fit the conditions for the promotion. In 1970, the number of graduates and the pedagogic organization the ENI offered were no more adequate to meet the growing number of pupils and the requirements of the new educational policy in Algeria which was seeking independence from the colonial educational system model. For that reason, the 70-115 Decree of August 1, 1970 adopting conversion of former Normal Schools into ITEs specialized in training primary and middle school teachers was a measure of adaptation to satisfy the needs of the education system since the objectives, contents, methods and structure of this system have been revised (Mélet, 1975, p. 15). The newly created ministry has therefore endowed these institutions and has made of them instruments of its policy of setting a modern Algerian school (Ferroukhi, 1994). Besides, the growing need for teachers pushed the Algerian authorities towards extraordinary measures. Hence, the creation of the ITEs, in 1970, was an extraordinary solution to train, in a very

short period of time, a great number of Algerian teachers who would take in charge the growing number of pupils (Matougui, 1988). The development of the preparation of middle school teachers, who represented the most required category of teachers since independence, has witnessed three stages corresponding to the length of the training period: one-year training, two-year training or three-year training.

The creation of ITEs which were under the control of the Ministry of Primary and secondary education was to take in charge the training of teachers of “basic” education (primary and Middle school education). The categories of teachers trained in the ITE were Primary School teachers (1st and 2nd cycle) and Middle School teachers (3rd cycle). The ITEs, then, substituted the former Normal School and the first ones were established in three cities: Algiers, Oran and Constantine which had a “Normal School” tradition. Between them, the ITEs in these three cities could train about half of the need for teachers in middle schools. (Ferroukhi, 1994)

In more than twenty years of existence, the teachers’ training institutions network has expanded with the extensive developmental pattern of the education system. The number of such institutes has increased from twenty nine in 1976 to reach sixty one in 1985 (ONS, 2011). We could have at least one ITE in nearly every wilaya (only 11 wilayas did not have any). To get this large number of institutes in a short period of time, very few investments were made towards establishing purpose-built training colleges. We relied mostly on using the old premises of the former normal school or used non-utilized public premises often lacking minimal facilities.

In the 1990s, the period of budget restrictions in Algeria, teachers’ recruitment was temporarily stopped, and the number of teacher’s training institutes has been reduced (Benziane & Senouci, 2007). According to the ONS statistics, in five years the number of ITEs has dropped from 51 in 1991-92 to 35 in 1996-97. In the academic year 1991-92, the 51 working ITEs, received 12570 teachers (3729 Maître de l’Enseignement Fondamental (MEF) and 8841 Professeur de l’Enseignement Fondamental (PEF)) a number which has not stopped from growing since 1970; however, in their last year of training in 1996-97, the 35 ITEs still at work received only 4265 teachers (56 MEF and 4209 PEF). Training in some subjects like English has been stopped before that year. The teacher trainers have been reoriented towards teaching in their initial positions as secondary school teachers.

The ITEs have, in fact, lasted for a longer period than it was planned in the 1970s, and abandoning them was mostly because of economic reasons than pedagogic ones. In fact, they have not disappeared, but their orientation has changed to take in charge in-service training. They were identified, then, as

institute of training and development of teachers (instituts de formation et de perfectionnement des maîtres) and were in charge of three types of training: primary school teachers' initial training, school headmasters specialized training and different categories of teachers' in-service training.

Organization of the Training at the Institutes of Education

Aspiring to renovate and redesign the Algerian school in order to form a committed citizen to allow the country to take its place among the modern states, Algeria was preoccupied by constructing national frameworks that would enable her to emerge from its position vis-à-vis dependence on cooperation. Before the comeback to school in 1970, the authorities took stock of the situation comparing the achievements with the objectives still to be achieved. The review posited that in order to achieve complete independence, we must master an important element that can be considered as one of the keystones of the educational system: teacher training. Traditional normal schools that could not meet the massive demand in initial training have been converted into ITEs which were under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

The curriculum developed at the ITEs included the aims and the contents of the syllabi in the form of booklets issued by the different general inspectorates at the level of the training department at the Ministry for all ITEs in the country. According to the ordinance 76-35 of April 16, 1976, teacher training in Algeria aimed at providing the trainees at the ITE with the notions and knowledge necessary for the practice of their profession, imparting to them the techniques of the job, a high level of education and qualification and developing a constant political commitment to the Algerian revolution.

Duration of the Training Course at the Institutes of Education

The Organization of the training at the ITE in terms of duration witnessed changes and progressed according to the different requirements of the country in terms of number of teachers and quality of teaching. Between 1970 and 1997, the initial training course of Middle School teachers at the ITE was residential, concurrent and went through three phases in which the course was extended from a one-year course (1970-1983), to a two-year course (1983-1992) and, finally, to a three-year course (1992-1997).

When the ITEs were first launched in 1970 to satisfy the need for teachers, the Middle School teachers' initial training course started as one-year training. It was organized in 28 weeks of concurrent study in all the three areas of study: academic, professional and cultural. These 28 weeks were organized in two equal terms of 14 weeks with a very busy timetable of 34 hours per week then 36 hours according to the revision of 1979 (Ferroukhi, 1994; Matougui, 1988; Ministry of Fundamental Education, 1983). The training was devoted mainly to

the theoretical component but not exclusively since the trainees went on practice once a week in a practicing school and had two fortnight block training. This situation lasted until 1983.

Noticing the inadequacies of the one-year training which was incomplete and did not respond to the trainees' needs; and seeking for more qualified teachers, the training department at the ministry of education decided in 1983 to extend the Middle School teachers initial training to two years of 28 weeks each. Every week, the pre-service teachers received 34 hours of instruction including both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the training. This decision was taken to remedy the trainees' shortcomings in their subject of specialty. (MEN, Training Department Booklet 1983)

In the 1990s, time came for quality in education. Although imposed by economic reasons more than pedagogic ones, this decision aspired for a long time ago and which everybody agreed on, came in time. The country started to control the number of pupils and the number of teachers who graduated from the ITEs during the two decades of the existence of this institution. The duration of the three-year training was, at that time, considered as short duration training for former "technicien supérieur". The academic year was divided into three terms and included a total of thirty weeks. Every week comprised thirty hours of instruction (MEN, Training Department Booklet, 1992).

The initial teacher training at the ITE from the 1970s to the 1990s was in accordance with the prevailing transmissionist educational philosophy (Matougui, 1988; Bellalem, 2008). Teachers according to this philosophy were required to pass on their knowledge to their learners in order to preserve their cultural heritage and social values. The academic education was about acquiring specialist knowledge; the professional education included prepared the teacher technician to how to transmit that knowledge while the cultural education was mainly to develop in the teacher human values, attitudes and behaviors necessary for the transmission of knowledge (Ministry of National Education 1975 pp. 18/19 as cited in Bellalem, 2008). The content and the time volume of the initial training at the ITE favored to a large extent the academic component over the professional one and within the professional component it emphasized the theoretical more than the practical.

Training at the The Higher Education College for Teachers 1999-2018

In a reconsideration of the importance of training teachers, in 1997 and 1998, the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and the Education Higher Council (Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation) have issued different declarations regarding the new design and organization of the initial training of teachers which was perceived in terms of "professionalization". A concept that stands for the combination of all the qualities required in trained and skilled teachers

guaranteeing the efficiency of a school looking to the future by breaking with the model that prevailed until then (Benziane & Senouci, 2007). Seeking for a more qualified and competent teachers, teacher education of middle school teachers has been taken in charge by a higher education institution namely the ENS.

In 1999, it was decided that the ENS, a non-university higher education institution registered with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 1983 specializing in teacher education, will be responsible for the training of the “new teacher” in an extensive reform of the educational system. The government aspired through this policy of establishing a new teacher education and training system to break with the period of emphasis on quantity over quality and launch a more qualitatively-orientated system which would “train and develop teachers according to the principles underlying the reforms of the educational system, in order to meet the demands of the new curriculum” (Bellalem, 2008, p. 64). The organization of the training and the content of the course at ENS are the most important characteristics of this new training system.

The teaching practices in the Algerian school have always been teacher centred focusing on knowledge transmission. The MNE stipulates that the objectives of national education through the new curriculum are to develop reasoning and judgement skills as well as learner autonomy. The years two thousand, in Algeria, witnessed then a rehabilitation of the school system which was crying out for reform and required qualitative teacher training through the adaptation of the initial teacher training course to the new approach, textbooks and pupils exit profiles suggested by the MNE (Reghioua, 2012). Accordingly, national guidelines recommended that teacher training institutions should focus on providing the future teachers with knowledge of different teaching techniques and develop in them the ability to select and adapt these techniques according to educational needs or context because “specific techniques to develop higher order thinking skills and learner autonomy are not immediately evident” (UK NARIC, 2012) in the teacher training syllabuses. The realization of this concern of the reform became the responsibility of the ENS by granting teacher preparation meeting international standards in accordance with the specifications submitted by the MNE. The new organization at the ENS dictated new access conditions and provided new profiles of the trainers in order to secure the enrolment and the preparation of the elite for the profession of teacher.

Organization of the Training at the Higher Education College for Teachers

When the ENS took in charge the training of middle school teachers, it was decided that the qualification awarded to the graduates upon completion of the teacher training course would be called Middle School Teacher Diploma and would be equivalent to a Bac+4 degree. The first three years would be deserved to the common part of the curriculum devolved to all trainees applying for the position of a middle school teacher or a secondary school teacher in which most of the teaching would be theoretical focusing on the development of the trainees' knowledge of the subject they would teach according to their choice or their orientation in the first year. In their fourth and final year, the 'Bac+4' trainees would take professional subjects in addition to fostering their academic knowledge and go on teaching practice in placement schools. The ENS took, then, the responsibility of organizing both the theoretical and the practical components of the student teachers training.

The theoretical training is, now, held at the ENS and includes academic instruction, a course in methodology and a course in educational psychology (Reghioua, 2012, p. 274). The academic instruction is concerned with knowledge related to the subject the students will teach (subject specialisation) and pedagogical theory/practice to develop skills in order to put that knowledge into practice either in the practical part of the course or in their future career (UK NARIC, 2012). The course focuses on providing the students with training that would produce teachers who master their subject. In order to achieve that, it comprises modules related to subject specialisation, education studies, and professional studies. The focus during the first three years is on subject specialisation building the students' subject knowledge. Though the final year of studies is devoted to the practical aspect of teaching, national guidelines stipulate that 15.5 hours of a 28 hour week should be assigned for theoretical modules distributed as follows: psychology and general pedagogy (2 hours per week), specialized pedagogy (12 hours per week), and education legislation (1.30 minutes per week). The distribution of the other half of the weekly time volume and its allocation to subject specialisation or pedagogical theory/practice is controlled by the course provider, i.e. the ENS. The entire theoretical training is dominated by the trainer's concern to impart knowledge and the student's apprehension of that knowledge by acquiring the maximum of it in order to "give it back/restore" (Benziane & Senouci, 2007). Accordingly, at least half of the time devoted to teacher training is assigned to theoretical study but this proportion can be as high as 85% depending on the faculty offering the course. (UK NARIC, 2012)

In the final year of their studies at the ENS, the students undertake the practical component through a school placement of a half day per week from October to March and a block placement in the month of April or May (Reghioua, 2012). A procedure which is not so different from the one applied in the time of the previous institution in charge of the training of primary and middle school teachers, namely the ITE. This practical training component is based on the pedagogy of the “Model” represented by the training teacher, a master teacher chosen for her/his experience and professional skill who hosts the trainees in her/his class, guides, advises, and teaches them the intricacies of the profession. However, the tradition shows that the criteria of ‘experience’ is sometimes put aside considering that what is important is to find a volunteer teacher who would accept to receive a future colleague in his class (Benziane & Senouci, 2007). This practical part of the training which occurs in the final year of studies at the ENS is a compulsory vocational placement the trainees go through in a primary school, a middle school or a secondary school corresponding to the degree they enrolled in (Bac+3, Bac+4, or Bac+5). It consists of attending class with a training teacher or delivering a lesson or part of it under his/her supervision. This training is governed by the Presidential Decree No. 836-356 of 21 May 1983 organizing the studies and training of student teachers at the ENS.

This part of the training is, then, considered as the most important one, not only by the trainees but the institution as well. The purpose from the practical training is to ensure a teacher training that provides the future teachers with opportunities to adapt the theoretical and cultural knowledge they received to the needs and constraints they may encounter in the field so that they can provide an effective and quality teaching. The practical training is, then, an integral part of the training offered at the ENS. It is compulsory and regulated by the internal regulations of this higher education institution. The circular of the Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of National Education Joint Committee of October 21, 1986 concerning the organization, monitoring and evaluation of the teacher education of students at the ENS highlights the need to identify the necessary educational aspects and the organizational arrangements of the practical training in order to ensure a coherent, unified institutional framework to the practical vocational training of student teachers. This practical component is organized into three phases during which the trainees go through observation, participation in teaching activities and lesson presentation which correspond to three phases: the observation phase, the alternate phase and the block placement phase.

In a meeting with the teacher trainers at the ENS in Constantine, it was stated that the theoretical knowledge dispensed in the course represented 60% to

70% of the whole training and that should aspire to redress the balance between the theoretical and the practical components.

The Quest for Quality and Competence in Teacher Training

Teacher education has then been through different developments which sought every time to secure qualified teachers with a better training. The training, at the two institutions in charge of the preparation of middle school teachers, have been concerned mostly with the academic area of the training at the expense of the professional one. The organisation of the practical component in the preparation of teachers remained the same and the practices either on the part of the trainers or the trainees have not much changed since 1970. The model followed is still the apprenticeship model with an applied science touch. The reflective model based on a constructive approach to teaching like competence based education is not adequately implemented if it were. The evaluation of the practical training, for example, revealed no change since 1970. We can conclude that the teachers are not sufficiently prepared to be able to implement the curriculum adopted by the MNE and guarantee a competence based education to their pupils in order to get the required pupil exit profile in light of the reforms launched in 2004 emphasising construction of meaning through reflection. In order for the trainees to construct their “professional skills”, it is important to focus on the theory/practice articulation and not on the application of theory to practice or focus only on practice with a complete neglect of theory. These partners who are expected to contribute to the trainees’ preparation for their career should be integrated into the logic of development and identify with trainers rather than only with teachers. (Benziane & Senouci, 2007)

Conclusion

Since its independence, Algeria has been preoccupied by the development of its educational system. This of course could not have taken place without providing the school with qualified teachers. Teacher training was one of the urgent matters that the authorities have taken in charge after establishing the bases of the state and settling its institutions. To break down with the colonial model and building its own institutions which would fit the country’s orientations and aspiration, two established institutions contributed in training a great number of teachers securing education to the growing number of pupils namely the ITE and the ENS both seeking for a more qualified and competent teacher.

Teacher education, in Algeria, has then been through different developments which sought every time to provide qualified teachers with a better training. However, what can be noticed through the examination of the teacher training at the two institutions which were in charge of the preparation

of middle school teachers concerned mostly the academic area of the training at the expense of the professional one. In order to equip the future teacher with the necessary competence, we should reflect more on the procedures and emphasize the development of skills, values and attitudes in addition to the already provided knowledge.

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