

Education In Algeria Under French Occupation 1830 -1880 A Critical Historical Study

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Abstract:

In this research, we to answer the central question: To what extent did french succeed in implementing its educational policy in algeria? This central question branches into several sub – Question what was French’s colonial policy towards Arab – Islamic education. What was the reaction of Algerians? What were the repercussions of French educational policy on Algerians? Upon entering Algeria, French found a flourishing educational system with low illiteracy rates. However, the French proceeded to dismantle arab - islamic education by destroying its various educational institutions and imposing their own French curriculum. This resulted in the spread of ignorance and illiteracy among Algerians, a decline the role of Arab-Islamic, the emigration of teachers and students, and the dominance of French education.

Keywords: Algerians, educational institutions, Arab – Islamic education, French education, education policy.

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- الملخص:

تكمّن اهداف هذه الورقة البحثية في ابراز الدور الذي لعبته السياسة التعليمية الفرنسية في الجزائر خلال الخمسين سنة الأولى من الاحتلال ، في تفكيك التعليم العربي الإسلامي واحلال التعليم الفرنسي مكانه، وخلق فئة من الجزائريين تؤمن بأيديولوجيتها وقد رات فرنسا في التعليم سلاحا لا يقل أهمية عن القوة العسكرية في إنجاح مشروعها الاستعماري ، وقد استخدمنا المنهج التاريخي الوصفي لوصف وإبراز الاحداث التاريخية ، بالإضافة الى المنهج التاريخي المقارن للمقارنة بين التعليم العربي الإسلامي و التعليم الفرنسي، وقد توصلنا الى نتائج ترتبت عن السياسة التعليمية الفرنسية في الجزائر ومنها: همجية الاحتلال الفرنسي في تحطيم التعليم العربي الإسلامي من خلال هدم مختلف مؤسساته التعليمية، تراجع دور التعليم العربي الإسلامي ، وهجرة المدرسين والعلماء وتشريد طلبة العلم، واحلال التعليم الفرنسي ، وانتشار الجهل والامية بين الجزائريين.

-الكلمات المفتاحية: الجزائريين، التعليم العربي الإسلامي، التعليم الفرنسي، المؤسسات التعليمية التقليدية، المؤسسات التعليمية الفرنسية، الاحتلال الفرنسي.

- Introduction:

This study centers on the state of education in Algeria during the first fifty years of French occupation, tracing the trajectory of the educational policy implemented by French on Algerians. Several motives led to the selection of this topic. Objective reason includes shedding light on the subject of education during that period and exposing and condemning French educational policy. Subjective reasons include a passion for research and an interest in contemporary Algerian history. Algeria suffered greatly from French colonialism in many areas especially in education. The core problem addressed in this study revolves around the extent to which French education policy in Algeria succeeded. The significance and objectives of study in education lie in providing national libraries with quality research,

exposing french educational policy, and revealing its stated and hidden goals.

1- Arab – Islamic education

1.1- The State of Education Before French Occupation

It is well established that education in Algeria prior to French colonization was extensively widespread (Murtad, 2009, p. 39). Scholars, contemporaries, and travelers of that period were astonished by the abundance of existing educational institutions (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 19). These institutions, comprising mosques, Zawias, and Quranic schools ("Katatib"), were fulfilling their entrusted mission of educating Algerian children (Ben Shoush, 2007/2008, p. 5). These educational establishments attracted approximately 25,000 students from various educational levels (Raziq, 2014, pp. 255, 258). There were nearly 2,000 educational institutions across Algeria (Ben Qina, 2014, pp. 255, 258). Primary education was the most widespread (Ramoum, Issue 27, p. 215). At the primary level, students learned reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and memorization of short chapters from the Quran (Masoud, 1980, p. 61). In secondary education, they received instruction in jurisprudence, theology, and linguistics (Maach and Khelout, p. 6). In higher education, they studied various transmitted and rational sciences and graduated as scholars (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 348) within the framework of Arab-Islamic education based on religious sciences, language, and literature (Al-Mashhadani & Ramadan, 2013, p. 436). Education relied directly on endowment (Waqf) revenues dedicated by ordinary people, Pashas, Beys, and princesses for the purpose of disseminating knowledge (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 231). All this enabled Algerians to surpass the French in education, while illiteracy was prevalent in French society at a rate of 40%, according to the testimony of French leaders themselves such as Rozette and Emeret, among others (Brian et al., 1984, pp. 211-212). The famous German traveler Wilhelm Schimper, upon visiting Algeria in 1831, reported that he did not encounter a

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single Algerian who could not read or write (Ben Qina, 2014, p. 24). This evidence demonstrates the widespread nature of education in Algerian society and refutes French claims characterizing Algerians as ignorant, illiterate, intellectually backward, and uncivilized—claims used to justify their supposed "civilizing mission" of education and cultural enlightenment.

1-2. France's Policy Toward Arab-Islamic Education After 1830

When the French entered Algeria in 1830, they found Arab-Islamic education flourishing (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 23) across various levels: primary, secondary, and higher education (Saad Allah, 1982, p. 161). The city of Algiers was filled with educational institutions of different types. In 1830, there were more than 80 Quranic schools, 12 secondary schools, and 349 Zawias (Raziq, 2014, p. 471), attended by 1,200 students who received instruction in jurisprudence, theology, history, geography, and other sciences in study circles (Zouzou, 2009, pp. 223, 226). As for Constantine, the cultural center of eastern Algeria, when the French occupied it in 1837, they found 86 schools attended by 1,850 students (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 23). In general, the Constantine region had 300 schools graduating between 6,000 and 7,000 students, all offering free education (Wald Khalifa, 2001, p. 157). The region also contained 35 mosque schools attracting 600 to 700 students (Maghizli, 2016/2017, pp. 16, 17), where students received lessons in jurisprudence, theology, Quranic interpretation, arithmetic, astronomy, geography, and other sciences (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 23).

In western Algeria, Tlemcen, the capital of Banu Abd al-Wad, had 3 secondary schools, 50 primary schools, and 30 Zawias, with 2,000 students pursuing secondary education and 600 in higher education, receiving instruction in law and Islamic jurisprudence.

Education there was accessible to everyone (Collot, 1987, p. 328). This was in addition to other Algerian cities that competed with each other in knowledge and education (Raziq, 2014, p. 475). This was the state of education the French found upon occupying Algeria—flourishing Arab-Islamic education with educational institutions teeming with students seeking knowledge, representing a continuation of education from the Ottoman era. French authorities weakened education in Algeria from the beginning. They neglected schools and teachers, seized the endowments (Waqf) that funded education, took control of libraries and books, and later monitored teaching materials before eventually replacing them with French education (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 347). Thus, education became one of the first casualties of French occupation. The colonial authorities initially gave no attention to education as France was preoccupied with territorial expansion in Algeria, focusing on settlement, fighting rebel tribes, and suppressing popular uprisings (Bitor, 2022, pp. 140-141). The first measure taken by French authorities against education in Algeria was the nationalization of endowments—essentially eliminating education's most important resource—through the decree of September 8, 1830, issued by de Bourmont, which mandated the confiscation of Islamic endowments and seizure of "Beylik properties" (Al-Jilali, 1994, p. 424). Three months later, his successor, Clauzel, issued another decree on November 7, 1830, granting Europeans the right to own Islamic endowments (Saad Allah, 2007, p. 20). From this point, France began interfering in Arab-Islamic education affairs and implementing its policies toward educational institutions and scholars. They started by weakening the role of mosques. Some writers note that the number of mosques controlled by the occupation in Algiers alone was 122 (both small and large), including 92 Maliki mosques and 14 Hanafi mosques (Sheikhi, 2016/2017, p. 229). In 1830, colonial authorities closed 13 large mosques, 108 small mosques, and 32 congregational mosques, in

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addition to 12 Zawias, all of which had hosted study circles flourishing with students and teachers (Al-Gharbi et al., 2007, p. 270). When discussing mosques seized by the occupation, the first that comes to mind is the Sayyida Mosque, which was desecrated by the occupation in 1830. This mosque had a school adjacent to it and was located near the Dey's palace (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 38). Other mosques followed, being converted into churches, cathedrals, warehouses, or used for other purposes. For example, the Kasbah Mosque was converted into a church (Church of the Holy Cross), then Ali Bitchin Mosque was also converted into a church ("Church of Our Lady"), while Ketchaoua Mosque, after being desecrated by the French, was transformed into the "Cathedral of Algiers" (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 82). These examples represent only the fate of the capital's mosques, while the rest of Algeria's mosques met roughly the same fate. In Constantine, mosques were demolished, including the mosques of SidiFaraj, Sidi al-Farghani, and al-Waznaji, while the Ghazal Mosque was converted into a cathedral (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 83).

Among the educational institutions affected by the occupation were also the Quranic schools (Katatib), which represented primary education and were the most widespread educational institutions. These schools did not escape French brutality and met the same fate as mosques. The school of the Grand Mosque was converted into a French bathhouse when French authorities granted it to a European to encourage settlement. This was followed by the demolition of the Andalusian School, then the School of the Virgin Mary Mosque, and other schools (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 85). From its first day, the occupation worked to destroy and weaken the role of Quranic schools,

which provided Arab-Islamic education, viewing them as a threat to its existence (Al-Madani, 1956, p. 140). Regarding the Zawias (Sufi lodges) that were abundant across various regions of the country, they too were not safe from French brutality, especially those located in cities. They faced the same fate as mosques and schools, with their educational role being undermined (Bouaziz, 1980, p. 204). Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah provides examples of Zawias that fell victim to French brutality in the capital, such as the Kashash Zawia, the Sidi al-Joudi Zawia (which was purchased by a European), the al-Shorfa Zawia, and others whose fate was either demolition, sale, or confiscation. In the capital alone, 5 Zawias were demolished and repurposed (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 85). Libraries were also not spared from destruction and demolition. By order of General Clauzel, the Kaisariya shops that copied and sold books (functioning as libraries and stationers) were demolished (Ben Othman Khodja, 1982, p. 277). Following the resistance of Emir Abdelkader in western Algeria, when his capital Zemala fell to Duke d'Aumale (son of Louis Philippe) on May 16, 1843, the Emir's library of valuable manuscripts and books was seized, destroyed, and its contents scattered (Daudet, 1898, p. 50). The French didn't stop there; they burned books and manuscripts that were references for teaching (Khalil, 2007, p. 17). French army officers and their assistants looted libraries they discovered during their invasion and sold them to book dealers who in turn sold them in Europe (Khalil, 2007, p. 18). Through this policy implemented by colonial authorities against educational centers in Algeria, the Algerian people were deprived of their cultural heritage, deliberately kept ignorant, and isolated from their history and religion. Of those educational institutions that existed in the past, only a few schools remained, offering incomplete education, and the number of students declined significantly. This is what Alexis de Tocqueville declared: "We have laid our hands everywhere on these properties

[endowments], then directed them away from the purpose they were used for in the past. We have disabled charitable institutions, left schools to die, and scientific seminars to disappear" (de Tocqueville, 2006, p. 87). In 1840, in the capital with a population of 92,000, there were 24 elementary schools attended by about 600 pupils. After six years, by 1846, this was reduced to 14 schools with about 400 pupils (Zouzou, 2009, p. 213). In Constantine, education was also affected, with the number of students dropping from 600 to 60, and schools reduced from 86 to 30 (Raziq, 2014, p. 472). In western Algeria, the number of educational institutions declined after the massive, sweeping attack launched by France to eliminate Emir Abdelkader's resistance. The QitnaZawia ceased operations, as did the Zawia of Sidi Mohammed bin Ouda, while the schools of Mascara, Oran, Tlemcen, and others were all demolished (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 31).

2- French Education (The French School)

2.1-Indigenous Schools

Due to the colonizer's need for Arabic in its colonial policy, it showed some interest in building schools for a certain category of Algerians to educate their children, which became known as indigenous schools. The first school for teaching the indigenous population (Algerians) was established in 1836, called the French Urban School in the city of Algiers. It was known as "urban" because it was established in the city rather than the countryside, and its aim was to integrate Algerians through the French language (Bitor, 2022, p. 141). Another school was established in the city of Annaba in 1837 and similarly in Oran, with the aim of competing with the Arab-Islamic education in Zawias and to foster rapprochement between Algerians and Europeans (Rahwi, 2001, p. 62). However, the underlying goal behind establishing Franco-Arab schools was to penetrate deeply into Algerian society and control it through Algerian hands (Zouzou, 2009, p. 222). In 1833, a school called

"l'enseignement mutuel" (mutual teaching) was established in the capital, with similar ones in Annaba and Oran in the same year. These schools received a modest, if not limited, attendance from indigenous children due to fears of religious conversion (Bitor, 2022, p. 142). In contrast, primary schools for settlers' children were noticeably increasing. Whenever they occupied a city, they established schools for their children. In 1838, 4 schools were established in Oran, 5 others in Annaba, and numerous Catholic church schools were founded in the same year (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 293). It is noticeable that these schools did not succeed in their endeavor despite the efforts made by their teachers and missionaries. Jewish children were not far from education either. During the first years of occupation, specifically in 1832, the first Jewish/French school was established in the capital. One year later, another school opened in Oran, while in Annaba this type of school appeared in 1837 (Bitor, 2022, p. 142). These schools were known among Jews as "Midrashim," where young children were taught the basics of Hebrew and their sacred scripture. These schools experienced considerable improvement after the implementation of the system of January 1, 1845. However, the Jews felt that these schools suffered from educational deficiencies, which caused them to gradually decline and be replaced by French schools (Guedj, p. 24).

2-2-Franco-Arab Schools

During the Second Republic, the decree of July 14, 1850 was issued, which provided for the establishment of primary schools for bilingual Arab/French education in the cities of Algiers, Constantine, Oran, Annaba, and Blida (Zouzou, 2009, p. 226). The decree of September 30, 1850, issued during the Empire, also stipulated the organization, monitoring, and direction of Arab-Islamic education and the supervision of higher Islamic studies (Haloush, 2010, p. 40). This represented direct intervention in educational curricula and lessons, with the prohibition of teaching Algerian history and geography. These schools were also forbidden from teaching Islamic law, especially topics related to jurisprudence and jihad (Khalifi, 2010, p.

253). However, Algerian attendance at these schools was minimal because Algerians saw them as a means to Frenchify their children and spread the French language among them (Saad Allah, 2007, p. 85). Algerians also expressed concern about potential religious conversion affecting their children (Bitor, 2022, p. 142). When civilians took power in Algeria, these schools declined, especially as General de Guignon worked to enable this and municipalities refused to fund them. In 1880, 3,172 students were registered in these schools, and two years later they were permanently abolished (Haloush, 2010, p. 132). It appears that these schools established by the occupation authorities did not succeed in their endeavor because the difference in their objectives was clear and the disparity between their curricula was significant. Until 1848, education was under the jurisdiction of the War Ministry, and until the issuance of the decrees of August 7 and September 8, 1848, education in Algeria was attached to the Ministry of General Education (Zouzou, 2009, p. 222).

2.3. Legal Schools (Government Schools)

Following the decree of September 30, 1850, the occupation authorities established three schools: the first in Constantine, the second in Tlemcen, and the third in Medea (Himer, 2020, p. 263). According to Abu Al-Qasim Saad Allah, these schools were known by this name for several considerations. In terms of supervision and management, they were official government schools, while in terms of objectives and programs, they were initially called jurisprudential schools, which was later changed to legal schools (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 367). To enroll in these schools, prospective students had to submit a written application to the administration containing elaborate expressions of praise and thanks to the French, and insistence and flattery to secure a position to study in those schools (Himer, 2020, p.

264). There was no age requirement for those who wished to study there, as it was open to all ages (Paular, 1910, p. 62). According to the director of the Tlemcenschool, Mr. "Alfred Bell," the purpose was to restore trust with Algerians and win them over, and to attract Algerian students who previously chose to pursue their studies in neighboring educational institutions, especially in Morocco (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 370). These three legal schools were placed under the supervision of military authorities, although the administration and teachers were Arabs (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 371). Their curricula were inspired by the general culture of the Algerian indigenous population, in order to prepare (graduates) for public service positions such as judges and muftis. Initially, all subjects were taught in Arabic (Khalil, 2007, pp. 88-89). Abd al-Qadir Haloush notes that the reality of these schools was that they had an integrative character and their goal was political rather than educational and cultural, seeking to eliminate Arab-Islamic culture (Haloush, 2010, p. 54). In secondary education, April 1835 marked the opening of the first institute (college) in the capital, which enrolled 37 students. Later in October 1848, it became known as the National Secondary School (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 298). In the 1860s, the first true French secondary school was established in Algeria (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 292). In 1847, 165 students were registered at this level, reaching 226 students (Algerians, Europeans, and Jews) by 1850. By 1870, the number of Algerians had reached 116 students. French-Islamic institutes in Algeria were established by decree on March 14, 1857, followed by the decree of June 16, 1865, which stipulated the establishment of two institutes in Constantine and Oran. Consequently, the Constantine Institute was established on January 1, 1867, with a total of 112 students, including 108 Algerians. By 1870, its student population had increased to 199, of whom 117 were Algerians (Guedj, p. 29). In 1880, the number of Algerian students decreased to 100 (Haloush, 2010, p. 133). This education was directed

toward the children of French officers and officials, as well as children of Algerians who had entered the service of French interests and children of soldiers who had been wounded while defending France (Haloush, 2010, p. 56). As for higher education, the French administration showed interest in it since 1832, but it was notable that the courses were public and in both Arabic and French. With the spread of epidemics such as cholera and typhus among settlers, the decree of August 4, 1857 was issued (Sidi Mohammed, 2020, p. 362), which established the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy under the supervision of the Faculty of Montpellier in France. It aimed to train French doctors and Algerian healers who were referred to as nurses. Attendance at this faculty was not high, with only 12 scholarships offered in 1866 (Ben Shoush, 2007/2008, p. 66). By 1870, the number of Algerian students did not exceed 5, and they faced significant difficulties due to their weak scientific background. Admission criteria were not based on competence but rather on loyalty and obedience to France, which made them unable to continue their studies. When the law of December 20, 1879 was issued, establishing higher schools in Algeria and the structures for law, arts, and sciences alongside the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Algerian students enrolled (Khemili, 2016/2017, p. 44). These schools relied on theoretical aspects more than practical applications. However, their number was small and did not exceed 35 students at the beginning of 1880, most of them enrolled in the Faculty of Law alongside the Faculty of Arts (Khemili, 2016/2017, p. 51).

3- French Education policy in Algeria; objectives stences,and Repercussions.

3.1 .Goals of the French School

French sought to achieve its own objectives and never truly intended to educate and cultivate the people of Algeria. These goals can be summarized in the following points: — Creating an elite class of indigenous people educated in the French system and fluent in the French language, while also teaching Arabic to the French to understand Algerian customs and traditions (Al-Ghali et al., 2007, pp. 233-234). — Integrating Muslim Algerian society with Christian French society and eliminating what they called "religious fanaticism," spreading French nationalism, and thereby gaining the loyalty of future generations (Miyad, 2022, p. 855). — Relying on spiritual and intellectual invasion of the Algerian people to avoid direct confrontation, thus reducing material and human costs for the French (Haloush, 1996, p. 78). — Limiting anti-colonial ideologies, primarily represented by teachers and sheikhs of Zawias who spread knowledge and advocated jihad against the French presence (Abish, 2017, p. 133). — Domesticating the role of scholars and teachers, reducing their influence and restricting them by controlling their salaries and curricula (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 370). — Christianizing Algerian society through activating the role of the Catholic Church, with encouragement from the French government (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 371). — Organizing Arab-Islamic education after monitoring it and directly intervening in its affairs (Haji, 2013, p. 244).

3.2 Algerians' Position on French Educational Policy

From the beginning, the occupation authorities worked to weaken the traditional education that prevailed in Algeria and then replaced it with French education (Belajal, p. 185), as part of their policy to attract Algerian children and educate them with the aim of creating a category to integrate into certain positions later (Miyad, 2022, p. 856). Since the colonial administration established the first French school to teach Algerian children (natives), Algerians reacted against it by rejecting French education. Among the steps taken by Algerian students was choosing to migrate to neighboring countries such as Tunisia, Tripoli, Tetouan in Morocco, and Egypt to receive new knowledge and sciences (Turan, 2009, p. 137). Algerian families were reluctant from the beginning to send their children to French schools,

except for some families of the Zouaves, whose number reached 50 students in 1835 (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 292). Scholars and religious figures, led by Ibn al-Annabi and al-Kababti, called for the rejection of French education, stating that "fathers want their children to learn their Arabic language, which [in these French schools] is very weak and limited" (Maryoush, 2009, pp. 120-121). Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah notes that the number of students who joined these schools was noticeably decreasing due to fear of religious conversion—becoming Christians or French (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 284). Algerians viewed French education as initially directed at a certain category of Algerians, so they saw it as a form of racial discrimination (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 285). They also realized that learning the colonizer's language was not religiously permissible and represented abandonment of their Arabic language and Islamic culture (Bouzidi, 2022, p. 85). Despite the activity and effort of ecclesiastical education conducted by clergymen, Algerians continued to reject the idea and held on to their religion and language (Boukhawish, 2013, p. 37). French inspector Peni noted in late 1832 that "children read and write only Quranic verses," which reflected Algerians' attachment to their religion and language (Haji, 2013, p. 236).

3.3.Implications of France's Educational Policy

The French educational policy had negative effects on Algerians due to its neglect of Arab-Islamic education and attempt to introduce French education as an alternative. These effects can be summarized in the following points: — Cessation of intellectual and cultural activities following the occupation in general, as a result of the reduction in the number of educational institutions due to policies of demolition, confiscation, and seizure (Zemerlin, 1985, pp. 81-82). — The occupation authorities prevented teachers, scholars, and jurists from performing their duties and restricted them since the early years of occupation (Raziq, 2014, p. 482). — Educational institutions were placed under surveillance and restrictions (Al-Sayeh and Ghanabzia,

2021, p. 675), to the extent that Algerians began teaching their children secretly (Al-Madani, 1956, p. 140). — Migration of scholars and teachers internally to areas not yet reached by the occupation (Saad Allah, 1998, p. 23), and externally toward neighboring countries (Boukhawish, 2013, pp. 20-21). — Spread of ignorance and illiteracy due to Algerians' reluctance to attend French schools (Wald Khalifa, 2001, p. 158). — The low level of graduates from French schools including jurists, judges, and others, whom Jamal Qanan describes as "illiterate in every sense of the word" (Ben Daoud, 2016/2017, p. 60

4-Conclusion:

From our study, we can conclude that education in Algeria before the French occupation was flourishing and widely spread through mosques, Quranic schools, and Zawias. Due to their lack of need for it, the French neglected and fought against this education system. They later intervened in its affairs and disabled its educational institutions, which were either demolished or confiscated. They then proceeded to replace it with French education that served France's interests and objectives in Algeria. However, the share of this education for Algerians was minimal and directed at only certain groups among them, while the majority of Algerians remained far from its influence. This French education faced widespread rejection by Algerians, who refused to embrace it from the very beginning. French education negatively impacted Algerians as illiteracy doubled and ignorance spread among them. The systematic destruction of educational institutions led to the cessation of scientific and intellectual activity in Algeria. Arab-Islamic education was subjected to French surveillance, which resulted in the weakness and declining standards of graduates from these institutions and a reduction in the number of educational establishments, despite the efforts made by French authorities to generalize education in the French school system throughout colonial Algeria. We suggest opening various national archives to researchers and historians to enrich this subject, and accelerating the resolution of the national memory file given its historical value in the field of education. In addition, we recommend organizing national and international symposiums addressing the

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subject of education in Algeria during the colonial period, and we note the importance of including aspects of education in various graduation topics in Algerian university institutions.

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