

Revolutionising Algerian University through English Language and Digitization

الرقمنة و اللغة الانجليزية لتطوير الجامعة الجزائرية

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Abstract:

This paper will focus on the use of digitization and english language in Algerian universities. Our objective is to equip the educators with the necessary tools and resources to create a more immersive and enriching educational experience, ensuring that students are well prepared for success in an interconnected and globalized world. It is important to explore effective strategies and methodologies for integrating English language Instruction with subject-specific content, enhancing language proficiency and academic achievement. However, it remains a challenge for our teachers to put all this into practice. That's why my wish is to share our experience in CEIL Bechar and to foster a collaborative environment for discussing challenges, opportunities and future directions for promoting successful EMI practices in Algerian universities.

Keywords: digitization; english; instruction; Algerian university; CEIL.

ملخص:

يعد التعليم الرقمي وافداً جديداً مهماً إلى قطاع التعليم العالي الجزائري؛ وأصبح خياراً نهائياً و مهماً من اجل تحسين جودة الحياة داخل الحرم الجامعي. تأتي هذه الورقة لتسليط الضوء على السبل الفعالة التي اتبعها المسؤولون عن التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي في الجزائر لتطبيق هذا النظام الجديد في جامعاتنا وكيف كان استقبال المجتمع التربوي لذلك سواء طلاباً أو اساتذة كلمات مفتاحية: الرقمنة. التعليم العالي. الجامعة. التدريس. البحث.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education is considering replacing the French language with English as the language of teaching in Algerian universities. After the generalization, from September 2022, of its teaching from the third year of primary school, the language of Shakespeare made its official entry to the Algerian university since the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. The goal is to make English the teaching language for scientific and technological streams especially, and to take place later in the teaching of medical programs taught until now in French in our universities.

This, new pace in Algerian universities, has already been mentioned by the Algerian president, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who affirmed his preference for the English language over the French one because of its international importance as the language of science. Since the independence of Algeria, despite the use of Arabic language in the human sciences, the French language has always been dominant in technical and medical sectors. With the decision to introduce English into university education, Algeria is moving a step forward towards the eventual replacement of the language of Molière in its education system, and towards digitization through the creation of platforms for the concrete practice of this instruction.

Digitization in higher education research field stems from the need to guarantee a better quality of teaching and learning in the Algerian universities. What is meant by quality in educational field refers to the set of standards and procedures that will improve the educational product. The applying of these standards in reality requires a well-studied procedure in order to achieve the satisfactory result and a better educational environment for teachers and students.

The questions one may ask here are: Does the change from French to English guarantee a better quality of teaching and learning in the Algerian universities? How did the Intensive Language Centers in our universities help in the practice of this instruction? Are there any indicators that show the successful result of the use of the platforms suggested and launched by The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research?

2. Steps Enhanced to the Application of the Teachers English-training Process

As part of strengthening the place of the English language in Algerian universities and monitoring the evaluation of the English language teacher-training process, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research made some guidelines for the good application of the instruction. The concerned ministry sent a correspondence to the rectors of all universities including the main orientations and indicating the steps set by the Minister of Higher Education for the census of teachers that the sector intends to train by the end of the 2023 academic year.

This orientation was confirmed, by a note sent by the Algerian Minister of Higher Education, Pr Kamel Beddari, addressed to the rectors. The official document asks them to comply with the directives of the supervisory authority in this matter and seriously considering it, by putting in place the appropriate procedures.

“In application of the Minister's directives, and as part of the preparation for the introduction of the English language as a language of instruction from the year 2023/2024, you are asked to organize meetings at the effect of forming teaching team according to the subject or module, before leaving on vacation,” (Ministry of H.E.S.R Correspondence 1433, September 29th,2022) this note clarified.

According to the instruction, every team must have a responsible being at the same time a member of the teaching staff. The team is composed of teachers of different grades, including lecturers and assistants responsible for sections of practice, and directed tasks.

The supervision of this procedure, added the same document, “returns to the National Commission responsible for monitoring and evaluating the training program for teachers and postgraduate students in the English language”. “During the month of July, visits to university establishments will be scheduled,” noted the Algerian ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research (Ministry of H.E.S.R Correspondence 1651, November 5th, 2022).

Last November, Pr Kamel Beddari announced via a press release the creation of the digital platform for distance learning of English, for a census of teachers concerned by this learning. This approach provided for the training of at least 80% of science and technology teachers and 100% of those in social and

human sciences(ibid).

Last January, the same ministry launched the said platform. The latter was developed with the American University Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). “Algeria becomes the only African country to equip itself with this digital platform with the support of MIT University,” the Algerian minister rejoiced, specifying that 30,000 teachers will follow online training, and will be able to reach levels B2, or even C1(ibid).

The approach provides for "the training of at least 80% of science and technology teachers and 100% of social and human sciences teachers and medical science teachers providing horizontal units", according to the same source.

Universities with Intensive Language Teaching Centers CEILs or English language departments must “ensure the training of their teachers”. An online teaching platform dedicated to the training of teachers in the English language will be made available from December 1, 2022 (Ministry of H.E.S.R Correspondence 1797, November 28th, 2022). Universities with instructors proficient in the English language must begin teaching the subjects they provide in English from the current academic year, the press release concluded.

This process could not be achieved without a deep study of the environment within our universities in order to guarantee a good transition to a better quality of life there thanks to the introduction of the English language and digitization. To ensure this the following steps were followed:

1. Evaluation, making a collection of data through an inventory which will help to know all the capacities and the opportunities in our universities.
2. Relying on the approved standards through new relevant research.
3. The training program and its readiness are essential for establishing quality standards.
4. Identifying the problems and gaps in implementing those standards and monitoring the progress process audit.
5. Continuous checking of external influence to know the causes and motives.

Many advantages will follow the process of bettering the quality of higher education teaching and learning processes. Here are some:

1. A strategic view and planning of the future through expanding the horizon of a good leadership of our higher educational institutions.
2. Maintaining the evident improvement and reputation of the university through development and renewal.
3. Strengthening the competitive position of the university and excelling over the other higher institutions, therefore giving the students self-confidence and satisfaction.
4. Adopting team- work to improve performance and productivity.
5. Creating a good environment for administrators and workers, in order to reach performance efficiency.
6. Meeting the needs of the labour market through achieving the requirements of companies and labour institutions in the society.
7. The contribution of the university in the economic, social and human development in the surrounding environment.
8. Improving the quality of graduates
9. Team- work will help to create loyalty and sense of responsibility towards university for all employees and students.

3. Algerian University and the Big Digital Transformation

Digitization in higher education research field stems from the need to guarantee a better quality of teaching and learning in the Algerian universities. What is meant by quality in educational field refers to the set of standards and procedures that will improve the educational product. Applying these standards in reality requires a well-studied procedure in order to achieve the satisfactory result and a better educational environment for teachers and students.

Quality in education is defined as what makes the process of teaching and learning joyful and fun but these are subject to change. It can also be referred to as the features and characteristics of a good support for students taking into consideration their needs. Providing students with the totality of educational services which can help them appreciate the process of learning in such an environment (Shadrak Katuu, 2020).

The questions one may ask here are: Does digitization guarantee a better quality of teaching and learning in the Algerian universities? Are there any indicators that show any successful result subsequent to the use of the platforms

suggested and launched by The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research?

Now and as time goes on, it becomes less common to find people who are not familiar with the concept of digitization. If one may try to define digitization, it will be defined as follows: A mechanism and a way to change the working methods, trends and tools of those working in educational process through finding new mechanisms that are compatible with the new lifestyle based on technologies. It is also the process of transforming and converting data into an automated digital form, in other words from analog to digital. Digitization is a radical development process in a way any institution can work using modern technologies in harmony with the goals set for the customers of this institution.

3.1 Why is Digitization important in the training process?

First, establishing the appropriate infrastructure providing the required digital transformation that would help to obtain the desired results for this type of education, and would be a professional manner in achieving quality. Make specialized training courses to the employees to be at the level of universal norms and standards. In addition, spreading the culture of digitization among employees, teachers and students through organizing conferences and study days. Another important point is the fact of evaluating the platforms already launched and working on the creation of new ones in order to reach quality performance needed for a better environment in Algerian universities.

The importance of digitization lies in:

1. It helps to spread the culture of learning and self-training.
2. It is considered as a feature of development as it facilitates the access to information and knowledge to everyone and in all fields.
3. Spreading digital culture in all fields, which helps creating a developed society.
4. Increasing learners' effectiveness and achievement, by stimulating their motivation to learn.
5. Increasing the possibility of communication among students all over the world.
6. Easy access to the lecturer even outside working hours, this would avoid attending constraints sometimes. As it benefits the students whose working hours conflict with the teacher schedule.

7. Giving the opportunity to the student to choose the method that suits him whether visual, audio, or reading. This would be helpful for a better assimilation of knowledge.

8. Reducing the administrative tasks for the professor which usually take too much from his time during the lectures.

9. Reducing the workload on the university administrative staff by using tools that analyze grades, results and makes the required statistics about them.

The development of educational technology provides opportunities for research, that is why many platforms based on digital educational technology have been created. These would help in conducting tests, assessment and overall knowledge acquisition. Digitization has revolutionized the high education and research field transforming the educational traditional pattern of teaching and learning process into a joyful exchange between the teacher and the learner. In addition it helps in facilitating the administrative management.

In order to put theory into practice the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research did not spare any effort for the digitization of the sector¹. Many steps have been taken in order to realize this project expected to be very rewarding for the Algerian universities.

1. Establishing the appropriate infrastructure providing the required digital transformation that would help to obtain the desired results for this type of education, and would be a professional manner in achieving quality.

2. Organise specialized training courses for the employees to be at the level of universal norms and standards.

3. Spreading the culture of digitization among employees, teachers and students through organizing conferences and study days.

4. Another important point is the fact of evaluating the platforms already launched and working on the creation of new ones in order to reach quality performance needed for a better environment in Algerian universities.

¹Ministry of H.E.S.R Correspondence, 1868, December 6th, 2022

4. The Role of the CEIL in the Teachers' English- training Process.

The CEIL represents a very important structure in the Algerian university. These centers were created by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in order to strengthen and improve the learning of foreign languages in our universities, notably English because it is used by both teachers and students in the writing of their conference presentations and articles. The CEIL is open to all those who are interested to learn a language whether from inside or outside university. The fees are different from students to teachers or workers but the objective is the same.

The CEIL was of a great help in the implementation of the Minister instruction concerning teachers' training in English. The starting of teaching in English this year is the best evidence.

4.1 Organisation of the Teacher's Training at the CEIL:

- Launch a questionnaire addressed to all university teachers in order to identify those concerned by the training and those who are interested.
- Organization of a diagnosis level test
- Classify the groups according to the test result
- Organization by the Intensive Language Teaching Center of a special teachers' session independent of the normal CEIL sessions.
- The session will include lessons in General English and ESP
- 60 hours of general English and 40 hours of ESP for levels A1 and A2
- 40 hours of general English and 60 hours of ESP for levels B1 and B2
- Duration of training 100 hours
- Courses started on December 11, 2022

4.2 Effective Teachers Statistics: Faculties of Exact Sciences- Technology and Biology.

4.2.1 Global percentage.

Table 1. Global Percentage Faculties of Exact Sciences- Technology and Biology.

	Number	percentage	Global Percentage
Global number of teachers	338	100%	100%

registered teachers in the session	202	59.76%	81.66%
Previously trained teachers	74	21.89%	81.66%
Non registred teachers	62	18.34%	18.40%

Source: CEIL UBTM.

4.2.1 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences – Faculty of Economy and Commerce- Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages- Faculty of Medicine- Faculty of Law and Political Sciences.

Only transversal unities teachers concerned by the training are mentioned.

Table 2. Teachers Statistics by Faculty.

	Number of Transversal Unities Teachers	Registered Teachers	Global Percentage
Faculty of Social and Human Sciences	7	7	100%
Faculty of Economy and Commerce	12	12	100%
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages	5	5	100%
Faculty of Medical Sciences	4	4	100%
Faculty of Law and Political Sciences	9	9	100%
Global Number	37	37	100%

Source: CEIL UBTM.

5. What are the challenges that face the practice of English training process in Algerian University?

There are some obstacles that prevent those who belong to the sector of higher education and scientific research to apply the big transformation Algerian

universities are going through or to benefit from it effectively in the desired manner. These are including: first the lack of interest on some teachers in moving from French to English, second the lack of equipment at the level of many universities and their departments notably the language labs which would make the training funnier and enjoyable. Another important difficulty is the lack of culture of digitization among university teachers and students also. These found themselves suddenly face to face with a complete restructuring of the university environment; nevertheless, they are obliged to give up all their traditional habits of teaching and working.

6. CONCLUSION

Quality in education is defined as what makes the process of teaching and learning joyful and fun but these are subject to change. It can also be referred to as the features and characteristics of a good support for students taking into consideration their needs. Providing students with the totality of educational services which can help them appreciate the process of learning in such an environment.

No one can deny the importance of continuous development in any field in order to be at the level of the appropriate and required performance and quality. Due to the fast technological development, the English language imposed itself as the language of science in all the institutions all over the world. Algeria shows a very big interest to this language and devotes great efforts to make it number one and a tool of teaching in all the universities in the country.

Keeping pace with the rapid technological advance, Algerian universities are aware of the fundamental role of digital transformation in raising the quality of higher education in addition to reducing the cost of training and managing.

Despite the challenges that are facing those who work in the sector of higher education and scientific research in Algeria in achieving this goal, digitization in addition to the use of English remain the most important factors supporting the development process in different fields because they provide knowledge and facilitate the access to it. Digitization and the switch to English remain the most important step enhanced by the Algerian government to develop all the sectors notably the higher education one.

7. References:

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