



Quality Education in Algerian Universities Torn between Traditional Learning Practices and Phobic Attitudes Technology and E- learning

جودة التعليم في الجامعات الجزائرية بين ممارسات التعلم التقليدية والمواقف الرافضة للتكنولوجيا والتعلم الإلكتروني

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Abstract

The technological boom that the world has witnessed has altered different sectors and changed the very nature of their mechanisms to be, later, labeled traditional practices. Globalization on its turn has transformed the world into a small village whose time and place notions are redefined along internet and connectivity. That being said, global communication has become central to daily and academic practices. In connection with this, the influence of technology on Higher Education can be identified in relation to e- learning. The latter, according to the review, is believed to enhance quality education since it supports students' learning processes and enables them to develop their skills disregarding their age, race, and upbringings, to boot. However, the status quo of e- learning in Algerian universities is torn between certain negative attitudes, lack of trainings, lack of materials, and traditional views learning. This paper, by means of highlighting the already-mentioned shortcomings, tries to suggest certain propositions to affectively and appropriately use e-learning platforms a so as to assist quality education in Algerian Higher Education.

Keywords: Quality education, e-learning, attitudes, training, traditional practices, teachers, learners.

المخلص

شهد الازدهار التكنولوجي الذي عرفه العالم تحولات في مختلف القطاعات، وغيّر طبيعة آليات عملها نفسها، حتى أصبحت تُوصَف لاحقًا بالممارسات التقليدية. وقد حوّلت العولمة بدورها العالم إلى قرية صغيرة أعادت فيها مفاهيم الزمان والمكان تعريف نفسها في ظل الإنترنت والاتصال الدائم. وبناءً على ذلك، أصبح الاتصال العالمي عنصراً محورياً في الممارسات اليومية والأكاديمية. وفي هذا السياق، يمكن تحديد تأثير التكنولوجيا في التعليم العالي من خلال علاقتها بالتعلم الإلكتروني. فالأخير، وفقاً لما تشير إليه المراجعة، يُعد وسيلة قادرة على تعزيز جودة التعليم لأنه يدعم عمليات تعلم الطلبة ويسمح لهم بتنمية مهاراتهم بغض النظر عن أعمارهم وأعرافهم وخلفياتهم الاجتماعية. غير أن واقع التعلم الإلكتروني في الجامعات الجزائرية ما يزال يتأرجح بين بعض المواقف السلبية، ونقص التكوين، وغياب الوسائل، والنظرة التقليدية إلى التعلم.



وتسعى هذه الورقة، من خلال إبراز هذه النقائص، إلى اقتراح بعض السبل التي تساعد على الاستخدام الفعال والملائم لمنصات التعلم الإلكتروني بما يخدم جودة التعليم في التعليم العالي الجزائري. الكلمات المفتاحية: جودة التعليم، التعلم الإلكتروني، الاتجاهات، التكوين، الممارسات التقليدية، الأساتذة، المتعلمون.

Quality Education at the Core of Higher Education

It would be logical to suggest that education strives to achieve various objectives and goals which mainly relate to processes of learning and clear-cut ends as well. However, effective education, in the postmodern and technology- based world, underscores the same mechanisms and endeavours prioritizing quality as the main feature to be sought. Despite this promising statement, quality as a concept and a process triggers certain controversies as to what it means and how it can be measured and maintained (Becket, 2006). Thus, the review of the literature exhibits a lack of consensus as to the identification of quality within cultures and among students, teachers, policymakers, the business community, unions, etc. Following such line of thought, it would be necessary to delimit the nature of quality and its feature and, then fetch for befitting measures to implement it and assess it as well.

Understandings of Quality

The review of the literature of the concept quality documents a lack of consensus as to its exact definition. Despite this fact certain understandings have outlined key features of quality in education. According to Green (1994) ; Westerheijden (1999), it is “*a philosophical concept that lacks a general theory in the literature*”. Gibson (1986); Neave (1986); Scott(1994) argue that quality



is “notoriously elusive” (cited in Kahsay, 2012). Hammond (2013) suggests that quality education embraces many aspects, among them are the following ones : *learning resources, technology, programme followed , lecturing methodology, attachments, qualifications, co-curricular activities, performance awards, students and lecturers perspective in the institution operating management also their opinions and appraisal toward education*’. According to Sallis (2002) quality in education is a multi-dimensional concept with different components . Harvey, 2005 as cited in Brucaj (2014) argues that quality relates to excellence, perfection, value for money, fitness to purpose. Among the illuminating definitions to the concept of quality, is the one advanced by Coombs in his book ‘*The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties*’ and which goes as follows:

..Qualitative dimension means much more than the quality of education as customarily defined and judged by student learning achievements, in terms of traditional curriculum and standards. Quality (.....) also pertains to the relevance of what is taught and learned - to how well it fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question, given their particular circumstances and prospects. It also refers to significant changes in the educational system itself, in the nature of its inputs (students, teachers, facilities, equipment, and supplies); its objectives, curriculum and educational technologies; and its socioeconomic, cultural and political environment. (Coombs, 1985, p. 105).

The Significance of Technology for Quality:

Despite the lack of consensus as to the exact meaning of quality, its significance in relation to 21st century higher education objectives is a fact that cannot be denied. That being said, it may be suggested that seeking quality and maintaining it are the target of many educational institutions. Therefore, applying its traits would be mandatory. But, before that, one should outline that quality had accompanied the technological boom which makes it self-evident that any process of quality education should account for technology. This rapid technological metamorphosis in the teaching-learning process initiated endeavours aiming at improving the quality of education. In connection with this, Godfrey (2001) argues that technology via the flexible environment it displays to its users, allows them to embrace multiple perspectives. It also accounts for learners’ differences. Following the same line of thought, seekers of quality in education be they teachers, learners or administrators, need to develop positive attitudes towards technology and a mastery of its use so as to enhance their practices, to feature quality.

Technology, Pedagogical Beliefs and Attitudes

Developing quality in education requires generating positive attitudes towards technology. The concept of attitudes outlines various definitions (Ankiewicz et al. 2001; Ardies et al. 2013). However, the commonest understandings emanate from the traditional approach to attitudes which identify cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the concept (Breckler 1984; Fishbein and Ajzen 1973; Ostrom 1969). The multidimensional nature of attitudes suggests that the rapport



between attitudes and science may not be straightforward as unitary construct. (Osborne et al. 2003; van Aalderen-Smeets and Walma van der Molen 2013)

In connection with the above-mentioned understandings of attitudes, the use of technology in the classroom is, to a great extent, determined by teachers' attitudes towards technology (Kumar, Rose, & D'Silva, 2008. These attitudes Atkins & Vasu (2000), argue, exercise a significance influence on the use of computers(technology)along teaching practices. Therefore, establishing a positive attitude in teachers towards technology would undoubtedly contribute to developing quality in education. Despite the tight link outlined above, the use of technology among teachers remains questioned and chastised with regard to various variables other than teachers' attitudes (see the coming sections) Plair, 2008, p.70 avers : *"Despite a steady wave of how-to workshops and some longer-duration seminars, infusing technology into curriculum and teaching practices remains elusive for many teachers."* (Plair, 2008, p.70). Following the same argument, Ertmer (2005) adds that teachers are at ease using technology for individual needs, but its integration in the classroom, she argues, would be questioned!

E-Learning and Quality Education

Indeed, technology has metamorphosed education to certain extremes that had been unthinkable prior to its emancipation. Technology has transformed teaching/learning practices in relation to the content of the processes and the locus they happen to take place in. Nowadays, e-learning substitutes traditional classes as it redefines the concepts of time and place. E-learning develops many boons that can be explored by both teachers and learners, and as such enhances quality education. It does so since it allows flexibility of learning and facilitates access to information resources, and most importantly, it contributes to develop innovative and easy ways of learning , interacting, sharing resources and knowledge among the users .

Understandings of e-learning

E-learning (electronic learning), as a concept had been defined differently by different scholars. (Golden et al., 2006) outlines it as *"instructional content or learning experience delivered or enabled by electronic technologies"*. Other understandings differed in relations to how inclusive or excluding they are. While the latter sees e-learning as the delivery of the content via Internet, the former (inclusive) underscores its interactive qualities and identifies the following elements as part of it: the use of the internet, intranets/extranets, audio- and video-tape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM. Followin this line of thought, Luskin says that the "e" should be interpreted to mean exciting, energetic, enthusiastic, emotional, extended, excellent, and educational in addition to "electronic" that is a traditional national interpretation.



The Significance of E-learning

The significance of e-learning can be identified in relation different advantages. To begin with, it has transformed teacher-centered learning into student-centered processes of instruction. In addition to this, it surpasses the frontiers of the traditional classrooms and as such allows learning to take place anytime and anywhere via virtual learning environment (VLE) (Okhovati, Sharifpoor Ghahestani, Islami Nejad, Hamzezadeh Marzooni, & Motamed Jahroomi, 2005). In addition to this, e-learning is believed to enhance interaction and collaboration between the teacher and the learners. It also develops learners' interest in the subject to be learnt. (Moore & Kearsley, 2004) argue that studies have shown that learners who receive online courses are more likely to connect to the subjects more than those who are instructed in a traditional way. The speed of learning is another quality that is distinguishing in e-learning. Jennifer Salopek in "Training and Development Magazine," suggests that e-learning courses progress up to 50 percent faster as compared to traditional courses.

The Aim of the Study

This study explores quality education I higher education. It acknowledges the fact that quality is not any easy target to be reached and that it outlines may aspects and elements that need to be take into consideration. For validity and reliability, this study limits its scope to quality education and technology and e-learning. It suggests the quality education in Algerian universities is obstructed by various hurdles such as traditional teaching practices, attitudes towards technology and e-learning. It also showcases the cursory understandings teachers develop towards technology-based concepts.

Methodological Framework

Tools:

To investigate the status quo of quality education at the Algerian universities and teachers' perceptions of it in relation to the significance of technology and e-learning in particular, questionnaire had been administered to twenty teachers of different subjects. This methodological tool targeted three main aspects which directly influence quality education: teaching practices,



technology and pedagogical beliefs, and perceptions of e-learning.

Participants:

The participants in this study are twenty university teachers from the University of Abd Elhamid Ibn Badis (Mostaganem). These teachers represent both sexes (males and females) though, females outnumbered the male category given the fact most of the teachers are female teachers. The interviewed teachers represent different age categories (26-40) and different teaching experiences. They teach different subjects including the following ones: *phonetics phonology , morphosyntax, oral-expression, child psychology, educational psychology, esp , french, research methodology, history, grammar, written expression, linguistics, academic writing, translation, semantics, didactics, intercultural studies*, among others .

Results:

Section One: Teaching Practices and Quality Education

The first section- entitled *teaching practices*- of the questionnaire comprises various questions whose common purpose is to identify the main features of teachers' teaching practices and to see whether or no they enhance quality education, the pursuit of higher education in the 21st century.

Quest 1: Teaching materials:

To begin with, quality education requires updated teaching materials, approaches and methods of teaching and innovation, among many other pedagogical tools. As to the teaching materials, the interviewed teachers mentioned the following ones : *Worksheets, games, authentic materials, books, data show, laptop, visual aids, board, handouts, , articles, audios, videos, dictionaries, memoires, pen, documents, textbooks , PowerPoint, ,templates ,sites on the web a personal computer* . The stated tools showcase that teachers rely on the available tools at hand, most of the time is traditional. A teacher claims that stating that they use: '*Traditional ones such as pen and board and sometimes, some handouts.*'

Quest 2 : teaching approaches, methods and techniques

What approaches, methods and techniques do teachers use at the university? The interviewed



teachers provided the following feedback to the questions:, *group work, pair work. CBA, demonstration method, classroom discussion, hybrid teaching, eclectic method, peer-correction, students' obligatory participation on the board, the direct method, interrogation, learner technique, deliver the lesson then give activities delivering the lecture then asking for participation communicative, learner-centered. Eclectic Active learning, Sometimes visual aids, Technology use is infused through traditional way of teaching (the ppp lesson practice), thematic , stylistic, holistic approaches, e-learning, a mixture of different techniques.*

Quest 3: Objectives/Goals of teaching

What objectives and goals do teachers at the university set and aspire to achieve? Are these objectives centered on quality as the end of learning? The following data had been retrieved from teachers' feedback: *The use of the acquired knowledge in effective real situations, make sure that students get the message I would like to transmit, to make students able to write coherent paragraphs and essays, develop critical thinking, engaging the learners in the learning process, to teach students concepts and give them the possibility of developing their skills, critical awareness and discourse skills, having my students understand the lecture, it depends on what I teach, both learning and pedagogical goals, understanding, full integration of students , practice over theory, to discover the rules of language, teach analytic thinking, how to write correct sentences, teaching concept , how to analyze , synthesize these concepts, to help students acquire knowledge as much as possible in a flexible way.*

Quest 4: Innovation in Teaching

Innovation is believed to be among the salient features of quality education. The teachers had been asked whether or not they are innovative in their teaching practices. They claimed the following answers : *I asked my students to download materials, I use videos from youtube, I develop my own way of teaching, challenges like reading and writing , mostly by adding a touch of individual replies, ' game and pair –work in answering activities but no technology involved 'Im afraid ,bringing books to my learners and using songs sometimes, adapt teaching strategies, techniques to current requirements, by introducing some games , I try to implement some creative techniques/methods to improve the teaching/learning process, excerpts from newspapers, articles, newspapers, books, sometimes, I use new ways to practice and consolidate understanding of a structure , digital story telling would be the innovation to be used , by using computer-mediated communication , again, depending on the module you teach you can use new strategies techniques activities, It depends on the subject matters; yet, my students are always asked to be involved in their learning mainly through debates and discussions.*

Quest 5: Traditional vs. Updated Teaching Practices



The next questions aims at identifying teachers' awareness about their teaching practices as either traditional or updated (technology based). Their answers had been displayed as follows: *I use both because they are complementary, traditional, Both because, sometimes, the datashow and other technology tools aren't available in all rooms, traditional, Not a conventional lecture, rather through question/answer, I always try to find a new creative way updated way to teach the content matter, I give room to individualized learning, engage learners, motivate learning and encourage communication between me and the students, propose topics to the students most of the time but also ask them to propose their own topics, rather updated especially when it comes to the content, I would say traditional since updating them needs materials and novel means, both of them traditional in terms of material, yet updated in terms lesson plan, updated, traditional, I use videos from youtube/ I develop my own style of teaching, both, honestly more traditional in the sense that students can follow; but with autonomous students I prefer modern, It has to be in the realm of the students' aptitude and engagement, rather traditional, both in the case of written expression I use traditional method, In history I use the updated one!*

Section Two: Technology, teachers' pedagogical beliefs and Quality Education

The aim of this section is to identify teachers' beliefs and attitudes as to the use of *technology in teaching English language. By the same token, it attempts to portray teachers' familiarity with certain key concepts in relation to technology use such as information communication technology, technology integration, technology education, information culture, information technology*

Quest 1: Teachers' Understandings of Information Communication Technology.

As to information communication technology, teachers defined it as: *'Internet /tele-collaboration, computers, It is a subject that deals with technology in our teaching/learning, The use of computer and other electronic equipment as computer network, all the tools that help you teach effectively, all networking components allowing people to interact via digital world, devices systems applications tools and devices used in technology and computer /phones, video conferencing, tools that can be used while teaching, the technologies that provide access to information through the use of applications, systems, networking, etc, all the technological tools that are available, It refers to the technology that refers to having access to information, electronic and digital tools including smart tablets, phones, boards etc, all that is related to computer and digital technologies, it is the use of technology in the educational context such as the Internet and laptops. As to information communication technologies, they use, the following ones had been mentioned: 'Computer /smart phones, Microsoft office 2016, sometimes the computer, Internet, Projector, In the moment nothing/none of these! Projector /computerDaashow Audio devices internet, mobile gadget, computer etc. Personal phone, computers, projectors Interne networks Laptop, smartphone, tablet, internet. site webs, computer lap top to provide a lecture.*



Quest 2: Teachers' Understandings of Technology Education

To the concept of technology education, they stated: *Ict literacy know how to manipulate high tech tools to do installations software , learn about new technologies and their usage ! It is the study of technology mainly the practice of technology. It is a field of study that explores the effective ways to use and integrate in the teaching process. Whereby students take classes about the use of technology To supplement teaching with the use of certain materials Is the training to use different ict tools Instruct how to use technology appropriately It is technology integration into teaching Technology education is initiating the students to education. Educational technology The study of technology Teaching with the use of technological tools To integrate ict Teaching/learning by using technology for academic purposes To provide awareness about how to use technology in the learning process.*

Quest 3: Teachers' Understandings of Technology Integration

As to technology integrations, they stated: *Know how to use technologies for learning and teaching purposes ! It is the use of technology in the learning process Its applying a method /technique on how to integrate them The use of technology tools in education To embrace technology The use of icts in class The use or adaptation of technological means in a field of study or profession. Incorporating technology (material approaches) in learning Wise integration of tech The use of technology tools with the students No idea. To save time , to arise learners' interest. Means the use of technology in teaching learning. The effective use of it in any field. It is to integrate and make use of technological tools in the educational context.*

Section Tree: E-learning in higher education and Quality Education:

Quest 1: Teachers' Understandings of Distance Learning

The two main concepts teachers had been asked to distinguish one from another were distance learning and e-learning . They define distance learning as : *Learning online or offline /correspondance without going physically to the institution Learning remotely Learners receive lessons in their mail boxes usually have to sit for an exam in person. To learn without necessarily join in any institution Online learning / outside campus Learning that takes place in conventional way, not in classrooms, but through the internet. Learning remotely rather than face to face contact in class The fact of studying from one place without necessarily being in a classroom. Learners have the opportunity to access different platforms that we call mooc to learn wherever they are through their mobile phone or computers Learning/teaching sessions or classroom lessons uploaded on a platform in which the teacher either explains the lesson virtually or provides explanation No face-to face contact Learning at home without going to school ! Indirect via computers Learning in distance using the Internet Learning via net It is a kind of learning which does not take place in the classroom*

Quest 2: Teachers' Understandings of e- Learning



The interviewed teachers define e-learning as: *It is online learning / it is via a computer or a digital device ! Learning online via internet ! Learning that is conducted on the internet ! Learning based on the use of technological tools ! Learn thanks to the net ! Using electronic technologies to access education Same Learning via internet using technologies to access educational curriculum outside class Studying via icts This is a new approach in learning /teaching which applied through different methods including distance learning . Learning with the help of electronic resources Electronic learning through internet. I assume the same as e-learning ! Electronic learning using computer technologies in learning It is the learning that needs Internet*

Quest 3 : the Importance of e-learning for English teaching

Teachers have identified the importance of e-learning in teaching English as a foreign language as follows : *It improves learning through improving the quality of understanding and explaining the course ! It does not It helps involving and engaging the students more. Through pictures, audiovisual practice. By offering a huge number of articles, reviews , etc. Much more accessible and shortens distances It is very effective for it allows learners to be free and more interested for it is manageable It makes more vivid The availability of source , the diversity of sources as well Learning via digital books, and platforms where teacher and student real life interaction is absent , i think. Saving time ! Faster and more varied Materials to be used are clearly portrayed and visualised e-learning has left no geographical barriers , easy access to materials, flexible space, immediate feedback It might help students who are in need of a specific education and cannot really afford*

Quest 4: The significance of e-learning for quality Education

How does e-learning enhance quality education ! teachers provided the following answers : *It helps , it helps students to improve their potential ! It does not Because of the profuse amount of information students can become experts in the subject matter ! Facilitates concepts /lessons etc. /It is appealing to the requirements of 21st century Motivation and interaction, interactivity , flexibility , adaptability , manageable especially time , disponibility The students are more independent ! Fast retention of the information ; still these information may fade quickly. It makes everything accessible ! I don't know never tried it ! Information is easily accessed and it saves time It might help students who are not always available (workers...).*

Discussion

Conclusion

Bibliography

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