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## Distance Learning in Algeria during the Covid 19 Era : Chalanges in Algerian Higher Educatioal System

### L'enseignement à distance en Algérie à l'ère du Covid19 : des défis dans le système d'enseignement supérieur algérien

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**Abstract :** *The present research paper serves to demonstrate the efficiency of E-learning on the continuity of lectures during the pandemic at University of Tlemcen. It mainly concentrates on two main objectives; first, it explains the theory of connectivism which led to the emergence of e-learning. Second, it tries to underline both advantages and disadvantages of the online learning. as it explores the effectiveness of this strategy on the continuity of lecture at the University of Tlemcen. Knowing that, Nearly all countries have closed their universities and students are asked to continue their studies via internet instead of exposing themselves to the danger of an infections virus and protecting the policy of quarantine. a mixed method was used to obtain significant answers to the research questions in order to confirm the hypotheses. The data collection will be interpreted. It will be interpreted qualitatively and qualitatively.*

**Keywords:** *E.learning, Algerian context, Algerian Learners, Corona Virus.*

**Résumé :** *Le présent travail sert à démontrer l'efficacité du E-learning sur la continuité des cours pendant la pandémie à l'Université de Tlemcen. Il se concentre principalement sur deux objectifs principaux; d'abord, il explique la théorie du connectivisme qui a conduit à l'émergence du e-learning. Deuxièmement, il essaie de souligner à la fois les avantages et les inconvénients de l'apprentissage en ligne. Car il explore l'efficacité de cette stratégie sur la continuité des cours à l'université de Tlemcen. Sachant cela, presque tous les pays ont fermé leurs universités et les étudiants sont invités à poursuivre leurs études via Internet au lieu de s'exposer au danger d'un virus d'infection et de protéger la politique de quarantaine. une méthode mixte a été utilisée pour obtenir des réponses significatives aux questions de recherche afin de confirmer les hypothèses. La collecte de données sera interprétée. Elle sera interprétée qualitativement et qualitativement.*

**Mots-clés :** *Enseignement a distance, Contexte Algérien, les étudiants Algériens, Corona Virus.*



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The Corona virus pandemic is a phenomenon that it is quite common during the last year; and it is heard everywhere countless times, COVID 19 or Corona virus; this unordinary virus that spreads suddenly all over the countries and the cities of the world, starting by China exactly the capital of this virus 'Wuhan' moving to Italy which was endangered by this virus too, until now, jumping to Iran and so on and so far to arrive to the third world countries particularly the Algerian country. This virus does not form a big threat for humanity by claiming their lives only, but with the global spread of this virus, the economy and all the other fields have been frozen for a pretty much period of time. Besides economy, the corona virus pandemic has affected the educational systems worldwide, leading to the wide spread closures of schools, universities, and colleges; so about approximately 1.816 billion learners have been affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. Thus, as part of the actual pandemic, it is highly remarkable that the latter has made the world to embrace the online classes as the best alternative, but the countries that have adopted this system long ago before now find it easier to adapt, while countries that this situation forced them to the approaches -like Algeria- do not find it as easier as others, and their online classes were and are not going as they should be in terms of teaching and learning, because of no proper means of deployment.

There are many arguing views concerning the usefulness of online learning, and to which extent is it or not contributing in the continuity of lectures, especially in the Algerian country and more precisely at the University of tlemcen, particularly, the English department. So, students as well as teachers as part of the actual educational system and members of the crisis of corona virus they were and -in fact- are forced to follow the wind of being part and shift to online classes as the best alternative studying and teaching via platforms, Websites, and networks due to this pandemic, and regarding the weakness of technology and the non availability of technological tools for everyone, many learners of English find it difficult to cope, yet others find it useful and effective carrying out their lectures online during the lockdown. The present research is investigating the effectiveness of online classes, or E-learning during the pandemic of Corona virus at the University of tlemcen precisely in the English department and detecting the main obstacles that English students as well as teachers were and are facing while shifting to online learning; the following questions has been raised:

- Is E-learning an effective strategy that provides Master students with the ability to fit with the current circumstances and help them to carry on their studies?
- What are the major obstacles that EFL teachers as well as learners may encounter during the process of online classes?

Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated;

- E-learning may serve in the continuity of lectures outside the educational environment.
- The bad flow of internet may be one among the difficulties that EFL students may encounter.

The purpose behind doing this research work is to give a solid background on the subject of the usefulness of online learning in Algeria. More precisely, investigating the effectiveness of shifting to online classes during the pandemic and what difficulties they encounter during this process. Comparing this situation with other countries since all the Universities are doing so, hence, it is evident that schools and Universities are different case since the teaching and learning there, is a lot more involved; That all may still be true,

but the new reality is that COVID 19 is increasingly and with a number that exceeds the expectations dominating not only the collective head spaces, but numerous other things that among them the safe continuity of the studies in the academic environment.

## 1. Connectivism Theory

In the last two decades, technology has developed new ways of communication and even for learning. In a digital age the rate of technological change shows no sign of slowing down. Technology is leading to massive changes in the way we communicate and relate to each other, and increasingly the way we learn.

Yet our educational institutions we are largely built for another age, based in industrial rather than a digital era “in the era of almost total connectivity, of an acquisitive social media, universities must find ways of learning more permeable and fluid path toward open source content and student”. Kamentez (2010, p. 130). Thus educational institutions and educators are faced with a massive challenge of change especially during this pandemic period that reinforce the kind of learning which connects learners not only face-to-face but also online. This kind of learning is connectivism, and nowadays amount of spontaneous knowledge exchange is taking place through ICT. According to Downes, connectivist “is the thesis that knowledge is distributed across a network of connections, intuitive nodes, and therefore, learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those nodes connected into networks” (2012, p. 9).

## 2. E-learning

E- Learning has no precise definition among researchers and practitioners; it is commonly referred to getting access to education using technology and internet. According to Friesen (2009), a discipline is situated in the intersection of education, teaching, and learning information communication technologies (ICT). It is a distance education as an opposite of tradition four-wall classrooms education, when dealing with e-learning as teaching using ICT it is almost about new and innovation method and pedagogies, as opposite to didactic pedagogies. Moreover, Rodrigues et al. define online learning as: “an innovation web-based system on digital technologies and other forms of education materials whose primary goal is to provide students with a personalized, learner-centered, open, enjoyable, and interactive learning environment supporting and enhancing the learning process”. (p. 95) Additionally, Aparicio et al. claim that: “e-learning concept was not the first term to be used there are 23 concepts that belong to the use of computers for learning purposes for instance, online learning, m-learning, MOOC, virtual learning, distance learning, distance education, learning management systems” (p. 200).

### 2.1. Advantages of E-learning

The concept of e-learning has several advantages, it is considered among the best methods of education, Marc et al. state that e-learning focuses on the needs of individual learners. It enhances the efficacy of knowledge and qualifications via ease of access to a huge amount of information. Besides, it always takes into consideration the individual learners differences. Some learners for instance, prefer to concentrate on certain parts of the course, while others are prepared to review the entire course. Furthermore, the use of e-learning allows self-pacing. It is flexible when issues of time and place are taken into consideration; every student has the luxury of choosing the place and the time that suit

him/her. According to Smedly (2010) the adoption of e-learning provides the institution as well as their students or learners the much flexibility of time and place of delivery or receipt of according to learning information.

**2.2. Disadvantages of E-learning**

E-Learning is not the same as attending real classes, simply because there is no face to face interaction. Moreover, there is a lack of input from trainers, learning materials can become outdated and may contain errors even from the beginning. The main advantages and disadvantages of this type of distance learning can be shown in the table below

**Table 1:** the main advantages and disadvantages of e-learning.

Advantages of e-learning	Disadvantages of e-learning
Restricted time or location.	Lack of motivation and no face to face interaction.
Technology helps in reaching students all over the world.	Lack of technical skills.
Elimination of printed lectures.	Focus more on theory rather than practice.

**3. E-learning at the University of Tlemcen**

Distance learning at this University has started on April, 2020 as a reaction of the lockdown. The closure of universities and schools in Algeria was imposed by the ministry on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the thing that pushed universities to take the decision of relying on e-learning as the only solution in order to carry on lessons without wasting time.

The first step which was taken is when the technicians created Moodle Platform particular to the University of tlemcen. Subsequently, teachers began to share lessons with their students in MP. The most common tool which nearly all the teachers relied on is sharing lectures in form of PDF and there are some teachers who preferred explaining lectures in zoom meetings. Thereafter, teachers were obliged to do tests in order to evaluate their students, on one hand, some of the teachers propose to receive the answers in e-mails, on the other hand, the others have chosen to rely on Google Classroom.

**4. Methodology**

This research is conducted within the descriptive case study research design. The case study approach allows a researcher to explore data in depth within a specific context. In most circumstances, a case study technique chooses a small geographical region or a small number of persons to analyze. It is an exploration, as well as a description which depends on both methods of research quantitative and qualitative i.e. mixed method in which the research study will investigate and test the extent to which E-learning was effective and contributed in the continuity of lectures as a delivery and a digital device of learning and training for EFL students. Thus, the present study is investigating the case study of Master 2 students at the University of Tlemcen basing the data collection on the classroom observation tool as well as the questionnaire.

**5. Sample Population**

The sample population that is under study i.e. the broader group of people to whom the results of this research work will apply is The English Department of Tlemcen University and the group of individuals who participated in this investigation are EFL students from a

specialties of Didactics who are about 50 learners as well as seven (07) EFL teachers from the same department and who had an experience with E-learning during the Corona Virus pandemic..

## 6. Data analysis

As a way of analyzing university student's behavior towards E-learning and classroom learning, a set of classroom observations and the questionnaires were scheduled to obtain a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, the analysis of questions is carried out in two sections, the first one is the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire and the second one is for the students' questionnaire. This part insists on presenting a set of both quantitative and qualitative results from each questionnaire in an attempt to approach exactness and objectivity.

### 6.1. Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis

This questionnaire has been submitted to eight EFL teachers in BBU. Furthermore, it seeks to know teachers' attitudes towards the use of e-learning at BBU.

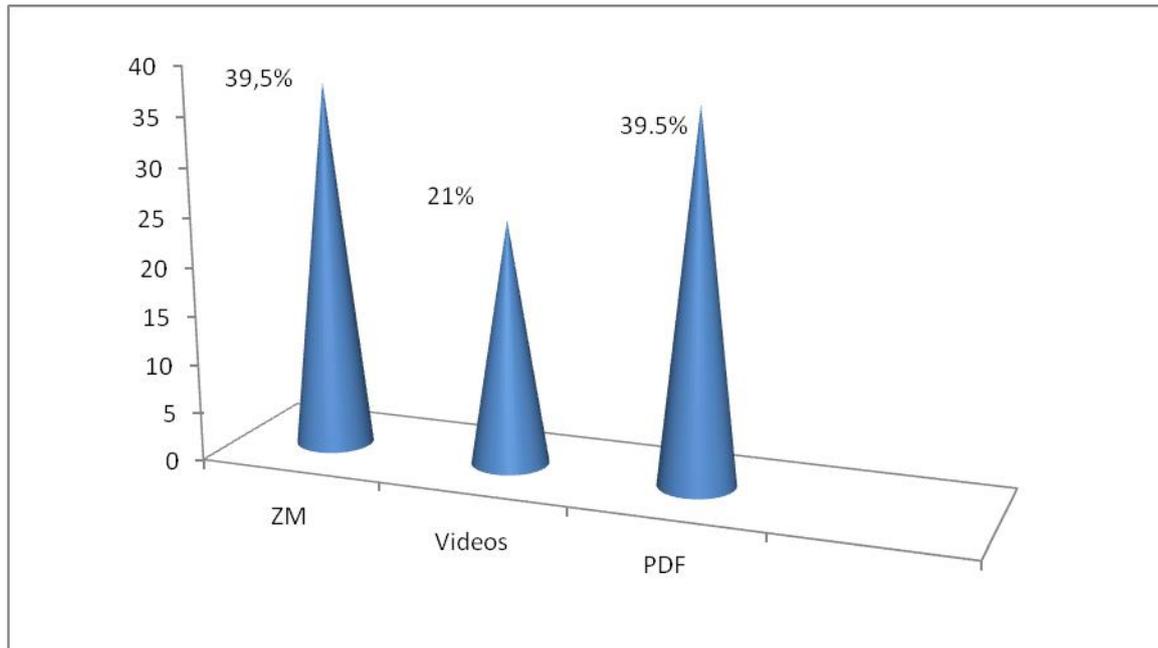
*Question One:* is devoted to recognize how teachers describe the design of "Moodle Platform". The following table shows the percentage as well as the number of teachers concerning the description of MP as there was no answer which states that MP is perfect.

**Table 2 :** The design of Moodle Platform.

Response	Number	Percentage
Good	5	71.42%
Bad	2	28.57%

*Question Two* seeks to realize if there are difficulties faced by teachers in accessing MP, and if so, what are those problems. (49%) of teachers did not face any problem in accessing to MP. On the other hand, (51%) of teachers have faced problems of the bad flow of internet and the non-availability of the site most of time.

*Question Three* is to know the Materials used by the teachers in order to transmit their lectures. The graph below presents the different instruments utilized and their percentage:



**Figure 2:** Tools used by teachers to transfer lectures.

*Question Four* aims at knowing if teachers have posted any types of assessments or tasks in order to evaluate their students. The percentage of is (100%) for the answer yes, in other words, all teachers have posted works. However, only (52%) of teachers have received the works from their students, and the rest did not receive works from all their students.

*Question five* it seeks to know the effectiveness of e-learning on the continuity of lecture from the teachers' perspectives. The answers of this question are (48%) for yes and (52%) for no. According to teachers, e-learning is effective because it can serve the continuity of lectures without wasting time. On the opposite, there are teachers who think that e-learning is not useful and enough to carry on lessons because of the bad quality of internet, lack of competence in addition to the low motivation.

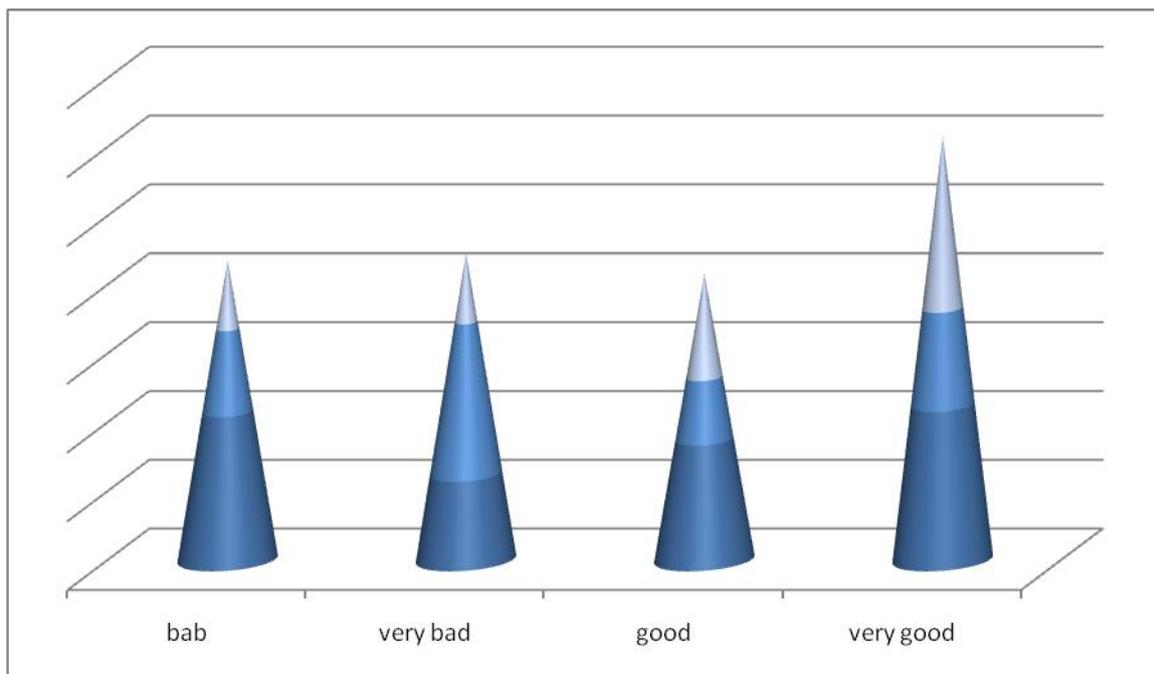
## 6.2. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

*Question One* is to know how many students have Smartphone; the results show that (90%) of the whole sample own Smartphone while the others (10%) do not have.

*Question Two* aims to mark how many students have Pc; the outcomes show that (83%) have Pc whilst the rest (27%) do not own it.

*Question Three:* shows the number of students who have internet at home, it is found that (80 %) are having internet at home and (20) do not have any connection.

*Question Four* describes the quality of internet; the figure below shows the quality of internet for students who have connection at home:



**Figure 3: Quality of Internet.**

*Question Five* is devoted to know how students describe the design of Moodle Platform. The following table shows the percentage as well as the number of students concerning the description of MP:

**Table 3: The design of Moodle Platform according to students.**

Response	Number	Percentage
Good	9	18%
Bad	41	82%

*Question Six:* its objective is to know if teachers reply to students when they contact them; 95.6 of students answer by yes and (4.4%) answer by no.

*Question Seven:* it aims to see if students have received all the lectures posted by teachers. (71.1%) have received all the lectures, (22.2%) have not received all of them, and the others affirm that they receive most of the lectures when teachers send them via e-mail otherwise, they could not access to MP. The obstacles that prevent students not to receive all the lectures can be due to internet, the bad design of MP, and lack of materials.

*Question Eight* looks on the students' point of view regarding e-learning and if it is useful or not; (66%) of students think that it is not effective and the rest (40%) view that it contributes and serve the continuity of lecture. Accordingly, e-learning is effective and useful to carry on lessons because it facilitates the learning process and it is used without wasting time and no efforts. On the other hand, there are other who believes that it is not effective to continue lectures because of the lack of materials, no organization, the bad design of internet and the bad flow of internet.

## 6.2. Observation Analysis

The observed study was undertaken Online by Master Two EFL learners and EFL teachers of the University of Tlemcen in order to check the effectiveness of online meetings in the continuity of lectures as well as to compare knowledge transferred traditionally and technologically. The attached table described the criterion that has been observed in online meetings, more specifically “Zoom chatroom” and “google meet”. Findings obtained by the observation method reveal that there are many factors that interrupted the meetings. The First obstacle faced by students and teachers is the bad’ internet flow that causes several cuts during the sessions. This leads to chain of thoughts’ disruption and absence of focus besides the loss of information. The second factor is the lack of ICT for all students; just few of students’ promotion could attend. Thus, opportunity to understand the lectures is not provided for everyone. The third factors is the bad conditions and the lack of educational atmosphere during the meetings, not everyone have a quite and an appropriate setting in order to focus clearly on lecture’ objectives nor teacher’s instructions that most of time causes many embarrassments. Moving now to the advantages of this method, It was observed that students who attended the meetings were highly motivated and eager to experience this modern method. In addition to deeper teacher-student relationship that was not highly implemented in traditional classrooms.

**Table 4:** Analysis of Observational Method.

	Number of students	Interruption	Observation
Session 01	11	Internet and weak connexion	Highly motivated students High participation ratio
Session 02	11	Bad conditions	
Session 03	16	Absence of educational settings	

## 7. The Main Findings

E-learning is the only solution and the safest one during the pandemic, it serves on the continuity of lectures without wasting time, it requires studying with no efforts and it aims to facilitate the process of learning/ teaching. However, there are many students who do not have the materials in order to participate and integrate in such a strategy of learning. Additionally, PDFs are not enough to understand lectures posted by teachers and studying using this form of learning means studying with low motivation. Moreover, internet in Algeria is really bad in quality and “Moodle Platform” is of a bad design.

### Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that e-learning is the safest and the only solution to continue in the process of studying. In addition, it is an efficient way to deliver lessons to student. Besides, it is flexible because it enables the teacher and the student to set their own learning pace. In the other hand, it has also a negative side and disadvantages. The bad

design of “Moodle Platfor”m is considered as the basic problem in which students are encounter. Furthermore, the bad flow of internet is another major concern; students without reliable, fast internet cause a huge problem. Moreover, not all the students have Smartphone, which create an obstacle to the learner. This e-learning lacks a sort of interaction.

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**Appendix1: Teachers’Questionnaire**

This survey is dedicated to the teachers of the English department of tlemcen University. It is conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of the online learning on the continuity of lectures.

1. How could you describe the design of Moodle platform?

- Perfect
- Good
- Bad

2. Have you found difficulties in accessing Moodle platform?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what kind of problems?

.....  
 .....

3. On which tool of the following you rely more?

- Zoom Meeting
- Videos
- PDF

4. Have you posted assessments or tasks?

- Yes
- No

If yes, have you received the works of all students?

- Yes
- No

5. According to you, is E-learning effective to carry on lessons at BELHADJ Bouchaib University?

- Yes
- No

Explain.

.....

.....

**Appendix1: Students' Questionnaire**

Dear students,

This survey has been designed for the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of the online learning on the continuity of lectures during the pandemic at the University of tlemcenb (the English department). You are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

1. Do you have smartphone?

Yes

No

2. Do you have PC?

Yes

No

3. Do you have internet at home?

Yes

No

4. How could you describe your internet quality?

Very good

Good

Bad

Very bad

5. How do you evaluate Moodle Platform?

Perfect

Good

Bad

6. Do your teachers reply when you contact them?

Yes

No

7. Have you received all the lectures sent by your teachers?

Yes

No

If no, what does prevent you?

.....  
.....

8. According to you, is e-learning useful to carry on lectures in you university?

Yes

No

Explain.

.....  
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