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A personalized Reflection on Online Education in Morocco: Pedagogical Gains and Pittfalls

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Abstract

This paper aspires to provide a reflection, inspired from personal experience, on online education at the university level in Morocco. The data has been gathered by means of recently published literature on online education to enable the researcher to be at a better position to critically evaluate concepts, methodologies and teaching approaches in tandem with online education. The use of information technology to publicly promote the renewal and revival of education in general and teaching in particular is a blatant epistemological marker of our education model's progress in terms of digitalization and computerization of educational resources via different robust national programs, such as MARWAN (2002), GENIE (2005), NAFIDA (2008), INJAZ (2009) and LAWHATI (2015). In fact, this has given rise to emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data (BD) and the Internet of Things (IOT). In this regard, it must be noted that the current Moroccan education system exhibits diversified online education trends both in form and content, and thus this new paradigm of learning abundantly introduces various types of intelligent education systems and platforms that emerge on a perpetual basis. Owing to this conscious online shift, both the class content and the learning context of students can be tracked and monitored at any time, which is directly conducive to fathoming out the individualization and differentiation of students in a timely manner.

1. INTRODUCTION

The new world's scientific and technological revolution and industrial changes have made the dissemination of knowledge almost always rapid and accessible to a myriad of people across the globe. The online teaching mode combines both the advantages of the traditional teaching mode and the network teaching mode so as to create a strong learning atmosphere, and simultaneously build a classroom that can adapt to the needs of the modern era. The newly developed teaching model enriches students' learning content and provides students with more updated scientific and technological information. This mixed teaching model not only fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of students to learn independently, but also provides a direction for teachers to realize the diversification of the teaching methods they employ. Such a model can also create a real context, which provides students with learning opportunities. Furthermore, the use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning contexts. Jonassen (2004) reported that both students and teachers need to learn to trust technology for a better technological performance as well as enhance the uptake and reduce resistance to technology. According to Daniels (2002), ICTs have become, within a very short time, one of the basic

building blocks of modern society. Today, a plethora of countries consider adopting ICT and mastering its skills and techniques as part of the essence of modern education. In the same vein, Bachiri and Sahbli stated "in actuality, both teachers and learners are called upon to computerize and digitalize their educational input/output via various online platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Classroom, Moodle, and so forth" (2020, p. 241). From the perspective of using online educational resources, it is indeed necessary to increase communication and interaction between students in order to make up for the lack of interactivity in online education. However, when conducting online education and promoting active interaction among classes using online education resources, there must be a consistent educational logic to prevent various management regulations from conflicting.

In the Moroccan model, it is necessary to combine the reality of education and teaching, and use online education resources appropriately. Bachiri advised that "ICT in higher education can solely be effective and productive when lessons are consciously designed in congruency with learners' needs and multiple intelligences" (2020, p. 32). As a supplement to offline education, it is necessary to overall control the time that students use electronic resources to learn. In the early days of online teaching, a plethora of schools have found many operational problems and practical difficulties. For instance, live broadcasts are on-demand and digital resources are prone to network congestion during peak hours. More importantly, the lack of adaptability, and self-discipline of students have largely affected the teaching-learning processes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the rapid development of Internet, big data and artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, education, Internet, and information have inextricably become interrelated. Such an interrelation has perpetually promoted the modernization of higher education. As a matter of fact, online teaching not only puts forward new requirements for the readiness of teachers and students, but also for the school organization. This is to say the management style puts forward new requirements for faculty members and students in terms of duties and tasks (curriculum design, lesson planning, assessment and evaluation, and so forth.). One should know that the core elements of educational resources are quality of teachers and teaching resources, which undeniably crates a strong learning setting that motivates and assist students with their learning. Learning resource needs and teaching objectives and content are closely related and they both need to match the learners' personal characteristics. The individualized teaching of students should be student-centered, and hence entail students' individual differences, such as specialized academic or professional needs and/or interests. In the process of personalized teaching, teachers can distribute preview materials and knowledge resources to students in the form of micro-class videos or audios.

Individualized training and teaching of students in accordance with their aptitude is the development direction of online learning. Students have a more autonomous and personalized learning experience and can be flexible and accessible. Teachers can extensively explore network shared resources, adjust the teaching content flexibly and change the teaching mode. Moroccan universities can accurately conduct scientific analysis and evaluation of the teaching process and teaching quality, and understand the learning dynamics of students and the teaching characteristics of teachers. As a result, online teaching has become the implementation of personalized learning that constantly includes personal features of students in order to make the learning experience far more pleasurable and fruitful.

2.1.Curriculum Assessment

Curriculum assessment is one of the important elements of teaching management. It is an instrumental means to test the quality of teaching, and assess students' mastery of the

knowledge they have learned. The same is true for the online assessment of online courses. It is an evaluation method for students' knowledge and technical mastery of online courses. Additionally, it is an essential basis for evaluating the effectiveness of online courses. Online assessment will reflect the quality of teachers' online teaching to a certain extent. At the same time, it becomes an important reference for the coordination and completion of various tasks during the course teaching management process. In fact, among the most important concerns identified in the literature are the participation rates in online assessments (Adams & Umbach 2012). Indeed, most studies on the subject indicate a lower participation rate in online course evaluations than in paper evaluations (Gamliel & Davidovitz 2005).

Burton et al. (2012) did a meta-analysis of research on the subject. They identified 16 studies that compared the results of online assessments to those of paper assessments. A total of 14 studies found no significant difference between the two assessment modes and studies found slightly more positive results in favor of online assessment. In their own study, Burton et al. (2012) also found more positive results in favor of online assessment as was the case with that of Nowell et al. (2010). Morrison (2013) also obtains similar results. Finally, Linse (2012) analyzed and compared the distribution curves of responses from online assessments to those of paper assessments. The author concludes that the curves are similar with a long tail in the weak part of the spectrum and a spike in the very positive section. The research results, therefore, do not support that online assessment negatively skews course ratings.

In a world of ubiquitous technology, students are increasingly asking for online course assessment. Accessibility (Crews & Curtis 2011) is one of the two most frequently mentioned reasons, the second being environmental considerations. Online assessment has several accessibility benefits. First, the evaluation forms are available at all times during the evaluation period, which offers the possibility for students to complete the form in class or at any other time at their own pace (Crews & Curtis 2011). It also offers the possibility of evaluating a course even in case of absence on the day of the evaluation. Online assessment also offers the possibility of electronically adapting online assessment to specific needs (visual, auditory, learning difficulties, etc.) and of granting an extended response time not only to students with disabilities (Crews & Curtis 2011), but also to all students who appreciate being able to take the necessary time to complete the assessment. Many students also appreciate being able to complete the form in an environment free from peer pressure. In effect, students like to independently complete activities assigned by the teacher's online teaching platform, such as completing the teacher's self-made video learning, quizzes, homework assignments, etc., and master relevant course elements. Through the online teaching platform, teachers can see students' completion status and related data, and give feedback in time (Moodle for example), and appropriately explain what students do not understand during the offline classroom teaching process. Students can also communicate with teachers through Q&A discussions on the platform, leave messages, or through discussion groups. Teachers can also publish discussion topics from time to time in the discussion group as needed, and participate in the discussion appropriately, and give timely guidance.

2.2.Shortcoming of Online Education: Assessment

If online tests are conducted, students should be prevented from cheating. Online education has its advantages, such as breaking through time and space constraints and sharing educational resources. But there are also disadvantages, such as individualization and poor interactivity, and there may be problems in the assessment and evaluation processes. Online education cannot ensure that students will study courses and take relevant

exams in person. Therefore, online education has higher requirements for students' autonomous learning ability, including management ability.

In actuality, some teachers think that this problem can be solved by improving technical means, such as face recognition of students. Face recognition can be performed in class, but then how can it be performed when submitting homework? Some teachers believe that students love to learn. Therefore, they have high hopes for online education that emphasizes students' self-learning, and believe that students can use online education resources to study hard. However, this statement is not absolutely always valid because there are students who do not study hard, but just want to get grades to validate modules. Furthermore, it is a relatively common phenomenon to translate traditional offline classrooms into online, for the difference is uneven. Most students are not used to online learning, which can result in half-hearted participation.

2.3. Virtual Learning Limitations

Precisely, the limitations regarding connectivity and access to network among students and teachers should focus on thinking and resizing virtual learning environments from and to these scenarios. It is true that interactivity is an important criterion regarding the quality of the teaching Web and/or platforms, but by itself it does not guarantee the function of reinforcing the message. It is not about giving up interactivity as the possibility of connection between other people, but about working in both environments, with alternatives for collaboration. Faced with this requirement, tools have been developed to promote alternative ways on the concept so that teachers can create their courses in Web format to later be incorporated into servers or distributed on CD-ROM or other information storage devices.

In essence, virtual learning environments work through the set of synchronous and asynchronous interaction environments, where a curricular program is developed among which the knowledge environment is recognized at the levels of collaboration, consultation, experimentation and management. Undoubtedly, the knowledge environment is the component to be developed for scenarios of low connectivity, since it allows, based on the program and digitized curricular content, the access of students to information presented in an attractive fashion and with a pedagogical focus. Additionally, teaching staff should receive appropriate pedagogical support during course design, development and delivery. However, the roles of each person involved in an online course should be well-defined while ensuring respect for professional autonomy teaching, while limiting to a large extent the fragmentation of the teaching task.

2.4.Sociability limitations

Online learning is a form of non-campus education. Students are far away from the campus, unable to gain a strong campus academic atmosphere. Additionally, teachers and students are in a state of quasi-separation, unable to meet the teacher for further exploration, development, exemplification, and elaboration (assistance during office hours for example). Therefore, it is difficult to arouse students' enthusiasm and pride their progress, which is detrimental to their growth. Moreover, online learning lacks usual communication between teachers and students. Hence, students will inevitably have a sense of isolation and loneliness, which are extremely negative to the physical and mental development of students.

2.5.Virtual Learning gains

Learning resources for online learning are usually uniformly and meticulously prepared by teachers. At the beginning of the curriculum design, it is considered to be suitable for a huge number of learning groups, and it tends to be standardized. The pre-recording of online learning can ensure that the educators strive for perfection, and enhance the standard and normativeness. Standardization makes the audience of courses far bigger than offline

learning, laying the foundation for good scalability. The online learning platforms all have higher requirements for standardization. When the number of learners on each online learning platform is much higher than that of ordinary schools, the number of courses of the same kind is much less. This is because offline learning is limited by time and space, and multiple teachers have to teach the same course.

In online learning, multiple educators can collaborate with each other to conduct research on any emerging problems. Each educator's teaching focus is reduced, so that each part of the course can enjoy more time and energy. In this way, the overall quality of the course is improved, repetitive work is saved, and teachers can have more time and energy to do deeper research. The advantage of standardization is that the granularity of learning resources is finer, and the learning resources of each part can be easily and quickly combined and optimized. The use of digitization in online learning makes control of learning resources manageable to use. Teachers can modify a certain part of the teaching resources while maintaining most of the overall content unchanged, and can also facilitate recovery, which is not available in offline learning. Offline learning greatly depends on the teaching performance of the teacher, and even each teacher, which makes the quality of teaching fluctuates greatly, and only a small number of learners can enjoy high-quality teaching resources. In brief, online learning standardizes learning resources, making it easier to promote online learning in the market, just as the quality of industrial products is more stable than manual products.

Furthermore, online learning gets rid of the time and space constraints, so that we can obtain online learning resources from all over the world anytime, anywhere. And because of the low cost of expansion, usually low or even free, it is also open to learners who have financial difficulties and cannot learn offline. Online learning makes the acquisition of learning resources easier and more convenient than ever. Open access allows learners to freely choose the courses they want to learn, which is of great significance for giving full play to the enthusiasm of learners. Moreover, learners can compare by themselves and screen out courses that suit them. In the past, the evaluation system of learners made the choices of learners more reasonable.

It must be noted that digital online learning costs are very low, so that the original expensive top private university courses can also be studied at low cost. This allows many learners to learn many excellent courses around the world without leaving their homes. The benefits of open access do not stop there. Open access has made more people studying the same course, showing a trend of agglomeration. As a result, there will be more high-quality learners' learning guidance and learning experiences on the Internet. The output of these learners is more in line with the learning path of other learners, and may be more acceptable than teachers. In doing so, the high-quality course attracts a large number of learners, and a large number of learners produce relevant high-quality learning resources.

3. CONCLUSION

With the advantages of rich content, strong personalization, flexible course time, easy sharing, and high learning efficiency, the emergence and development of online education has become an important connotation and distinctive feature of education modernization. In this personalized reflection, there was more emphasis toward the importance of online education in Morocco. As a matter of fact, the availability of such a mode of teaching/learning has greatly benefited both teachers and students, direct stakeholders, with many thriving opportunities with a few emerging pitfalls, such as standardization, differentiation and internet infrastructure problems. Other than this, online learning has allowed the majority of students to enjoy high-quality learning resources mostly for free. The lowering of the learning threshold is of great significance to the promotion of courses. Learners from all over the world can study a variety of courses without leaving home. Time

is very flexible and this is very important for self-study or corporate training after work. The easy-to-use online learning platform allows learners to better integrate into their learning. Abundant videos, audios, and images give learners a good learning experience and are very helpful for enhancing the learning effect. Such resources undoubtedly improve the enthusiasm of learners. In traditional offline learning, there are usually only texts, that is, blackboards or books, which are not as diverse as online learning resources. When preparing online learning resources, teachers can fully collect relevant multimedia resources and display them in online learning to help learners learn more and reach higher.

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