



Obstacles To Teaching In Algerian Universities And Ways To Overcome Them - Hadith And Its Sciences As A Case Study

Assia Alloui Professor lecture A, University of Batna 1, Faculty of Islamic Sciences (Algeria). E-mail Author: assia.alloui@univ-batna.dz¹

Received: 08/2023

Published: 12/2023

Abstract:

This article aims to shed light on the obstacles facing higher education in Algerian universities, especially in the field of Hadith and its sciences, by identifying the barriers that prevent both professors and students from achieving the goals of the educational system. The article also aims to explore effective strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Keywords: Higher Education, University, Prophetic Hadith, Barriers.

Introduction:

The university is considered to be the most important institution in society and plays a prominent role in the development and progress of nations. For this reason, advanced countries have paid great attention to higher education, providing all possible resources for its development, with the aim of training scholars and researchers in various fields. The Algerian university has undergone several reforms at different levels. However, the reality of the university faces challenges and difficulties that hinder the education system. Among these challenges are the obstacles encountered in teaching the subjects of Hadith and its sciences. During my teaching experience at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Batna, I observed that some students who were studying Hadith subjects found them difficult. In addition, some students preferred not to specialise in the field of Hadith studies. Furthermore, some classes lacked interaction between the professor and the students. Therefore, I wanted to address this issue in order to identify these obstacles and explore ways to overcome them.

Problem Statement:

The problem addressed in this article revolves around a fundamental question: What are the main obstacles to higher education in Algerian universities in general? and specifically in the teaching of Prophetic Hadith and its sciences?

This problem gives rise to subsidiary questions:

- What are the barriers and obstacles faced by university professors in their university teaching?

- What are the difficulties faced by university students in their academic pursuits, both in general and specifically in the field of Prophetic Hadith and its sciences?

- Do these obstacles stem from the nature of the subjects taught, or from the ineffective teaching methods used by the professors, or are there other reasons?

Furthermore, what are the proposed solutions to overcome these obstacles? And what are the effective ways to mitigate the challenges that prevent students and professors from acquiring scientific knowledge?

This article attempts to answer these different questions and to address these challenges in order to improve the level of education within the university in this era characterised by modern developments in all fields. These developments have had an impact on academic and educational performance, with the aim of producing creative students and useful members of society who contribute to the construction and development of the nation.

The importance of the subject:

It is important to address the challenges and difficulties that hinder university teaching in Algerian universities and to explore different solutions and approaches to overcome the obstacles that may face professors, students or the Algerian university.

Objectives of the theme:

The objectives of this theme are to identify the obstacles facing university teaching that affect the quality of higher education and to develop strategies and measures to mitigate these obstacles. The aim is to improve higher education in Algerian universities.

Methodology:

The descriptive methodology was used to describe the reality of the Algerian university and to highlight the obstacles I encountered during my teaching experience at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at the University of Batna, specifically in the subjects of Prophetic Hadith and its sciences.

The research plan:

The research plan consists of two sections and a conclusion.

Section 1: Obstacles to the teaching of Prophetic Hadith and its sciences in the reality of Algerian universities (Faculty of Islamic Sciences)

Subsection 1: Teaching obstacles related to the professor and his teaching methods

Subsection 2: Teaching obstacles specific to the students

Subsection 3: Teaching obstacles specific to the subject or course (Prophetic Hadith and its sciences)

Subsection 4: Other Obstacles (Current Higher Education System, Course Vocabulary or Curriculum, Examinations, etc.)

Section 2: Appropriate or Suggested Solutions for Overcoming the Obstacles in University Teaching of Prophetic Hadith and its Sciences

Subsection 1: Solutions related to the professor

Subsection 2: Solutions Concerning the Students

Subsection 3: Solutions Related to the Subject

Subsection 4: Other Solutions

In this article, I will briefly focus on the key elements without going into definitions related to teaching and its methods, teaching skills and teacher qualities, as well as Prophetic Hadith and its sciences, and others.

Section 1: Obstacles to Teaching Prophetic Hadith and its Sciences in the Reality of Algerian Universities (Faculty of Islamic Sciences)

Subsection 1: Obstacles to teaching related to the professor and his teaching methods

1. The use of traditional teaching methods in theoretical lectures that rely solely on lecturing and recitation, which can lead to a significant amount of concepts and knowledge being provided by the professor alone. This creates an atmosphere of boredom, monotony and passivity in the classroom. Students may lose concentration, become distracted, yawn, ask to leave, or engage in side conversations, resulting in a lack of interest in studying and learning.

2. Loss of enthusiasm by the professor themselves after teaching the same subject repeatedly for many years. This can have a negative impact on their teaching style and performance. It can also lead to outdated programmes, old, repetitive lessons and a lack of integration with current events and developments.

3. The professor's lack of familiarity with effective teaching methods and modern approaches that make the student an active participant in the learning process¹. This includes a lack of teaching experience and knowledge of innovative teaching techniques.

Please note that this is only the first part of the research plan, which focuses on barriers related to the professor and his/her teaching methods.

¹- Dr Zaid Al Huwaidi (Dar Al Kitab Al Jamei, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, 1430 H - 2009 CE) discusses effective teaching techniques from page 26 to page 34.

- The professor's lack of expertise in the subject matter, especially in the field of Hadith sciences². If someone lacks knowledge of a subject, he cannot teach it effectively. This is particularly problematic in the complex field of Hadith sciences, which has various branches, numerous topics, interconnections and difficulties.
- The professor's failure to use teaching aids such as the blackboard as a basic tool, as well as transparencies³, computers and others.
- The focus on definitions and Hadith rules, while neglecting to provide illustrative theoretical examples in the explanations. This includes a lack of practical examples related to people's lives⁴ or relevant practical applications. Understanding and comprehending Hadith and its sciences often requires visual aids, such as drawing the chain of narrators on the blackboard, to explain various terms such as uniqueness, multiple testimonies, continuous chains, evidence, defects, transmission and discontinuity. Such visual aids are necessary to clarify the meaning of these concepts, to enhance understanding, and to consolidate students' knowledge.
- The lack of a gradual progression in the delivery of the material, starting with the simplest knowledge and gradually moving on to more difficult concepts, in order to avoid confusion or misuse of the material⁵.
- Students who are accustomed to mere memorisation, recitation and passive listening, refusing to ask questions or seek clarification on the subject.

Second requirement: Teaching barriers related to the students:

- Weak educational skills of students⁶ in terms of cultural, intellectual, linguistic, grammatical and scientific background, as those who excel tend to choose fields such as medicine and pharmacy.

²- The difficulties faced by students in the Hadith Sciences course, their causes and remedies are discussed by Abdulaziz Shaker, Hamdan Al Kubaisi, on page 267. (Published as part of Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, an international scientific seminar held on 10 April 2003, corresponding to 8 Safar 1424 H, under the patronage of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, His Excellency Juma Majid, College of Arabic Studies, Dubai).

³- Effective teaching skills, as mentioned in the previous reference, highlight the importance of educational resources from page 111 to page 113.

⁴- The difficulty of understanding hadith sciences, its causes and remedies are elaborated by Dr Saleh Yousuf Matoq on page 236. (Published as part of Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, an international scientific seminar held on 10 April 2003, corresponding to 8 Safar 1424 H, under the patronage of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, His Excellency Juma Majid, College of Arabic Studies, Dubai).

⁵- The causes of the decline in Hadith teaching are discussed by Dr Zain Al-Abidin Bala Faraj on page 316. (Published as part of Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, an international scientific seminar held on 10 April 2003, corresponding to 8 Safar 1424 H, under the patronage of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, His Excellency Juma Majid, College of Arabic Studies, Dubai).

⁶- The difficulties faced by students in understanding Hadith and its sciences are addressed by Ali Naif Bqai on page 345. (Published as part of Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, the aforementioned international scholarly seminar).

- Weak understanding of Hadith among students.
- Students who forget the purpose that led them to study Islamic Sharia, especially in the field of Islamic knowledge.
- Students struggling with the difficulty of understanding the criteria and principles related to Hadith and its sciences.
- Students' absence from lectures, which negatively affects their academic performance and understanding of the material.
- Some students' lack of interest or inclination to study Hadith and its sciences, often citing the difficulty of the subject or other reasons. (For example, at the Master's level, I noticed that the majority of theses for students of Quran and Hadith Sciences focused on Quranic exegesis. Later, the specialisation of Hadith and its sciences was separated from the specialisation of Quranic sciences, which led to a continuous decrease in the number of students pursuing the study of Hadith).
- Students who rely only on the lectures of the professor in their studies, without expanding their knowledge by consulting other sources such as books, programmes and others.
- Students who lack the ability to analyse, compare, deduce and critique (I noticed that when I programmed training or exams for them and included questions that required them to analyse and critique a text, I found that they were unable to do so).

Third requirement: The difficulty of Hadith sciences: As Al-Dhahabi said, "I have told you that the knowledge of Hadith is difficult, so where is the knowledge of Hadith? And where are its people? I hardly see them except in books or under the ground..."⁷

- The branching of topics in Hadith sciences and the diversity of its topics and their precision: It requires a deep understanding to master it, along with extensive learning, practice, revision and dedication. For this reason, the number of those who have studied it has always been small.
- The dryness of the material in the science of Hadith terminology:⁸ This is specific to some books, especially summaries and poems, and the works of later scholars, as they lack explanations and details. They also contain many technical terms, some of which have similar names but different definitions⁹, such as "maktu" (severed) and "munqati" (disconnected).

⁷ - Reminder for Preservation (Hyderabad, India, 3rd edition, 1375 H - 1900 CE), volume 1/4.

⁸ - The difficulties faced by students in understanding the curriculum of Hadith and its sciences are discussed by Ali Naif Bqaai on page 338. (Published as part of Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, the above reference).

⁹ - The same reference, page 339.

- The vastness of this subject (especially the science of Hadith terminology) and the multitude of differences within it, such as the differences among scholars in defining terms like "shadh" (anomalous), "hasan" (good), "mursal" (with omitted narrators), and others¹⁰.
- The interrelationship of hadith sciences with other subjects¹¹, such as grammar, language, principles of jurisprudence, exegesis and others, with which students need to be familiar.
- The overlaps and interdependencies between the various branches of Hadith sciences, such as criticism and evaluation, authentication, verification of chains of narration, and the science of transmission.
- The difficulty of understanding the ancient books classified under Hadith and its sciences due to lack of proper organisation, multiple obscure subdivisions and lack of explanations, especially in branches such as the science of transmission and others.

Fourth requirement : Other obstacles (The current prevailing university education system, the vocabulary of the subject or the programme prescribed for each scale in each year or specialisation, examinations...)

- The inefficiency of the current university education system (LMD)¹², which is not adapted to the curricula of Islamic and Sharia sciences, especially Hadith sciences. The reduction of teaching hours for some subjects is inadequate and hinders students' understanding of the material. For example, in this educational system, certain hadith scales have been eliminated from programmes and courses.
- The vocabulary used in some courses related to Hadith and its sciences lacks precision and objectivity and contains problems and errors. For example, short branches are made into titles of large theoretical sessions that are considered only a small element of the main subject.
- The repetition of certain scales with the same vocabulary at the undergraduate level and the repetition of the same scales with the same programmed topics at the master's level, within the specialities of Hadith and its sciences.
- Lack of coordination between the lecturer and the applied professor, whether in the curriculum or course content, or in the teaching method, or in the evaluation of students (exams).

¹⁰- The same reference.

¹¹- The same reference, pages 341-342.

¹²- Algeria adopted the higher education system (LMD) as a result of the joint declaration made by 29 European countries on 19 June 1999 in the Italian city of Bologna. This declaration is embodied in the document of the Bologna Decree. For further details see "Pedagogical Training Needs of University Teachers under the LMD System" by Dr Mohamed Abdelaziz - University of Oran ([source link](<https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/45/15/6/178110>)).

- Difficulty in understanding exam questions related to Hadith and its sciences, with some relying solely on memorisation.

- Non-use of interactive methods among the students and between the students and the professor in the practical session of the Hadith and its Sciences course. The absence of interactive methods reduces competition, creative thinking, analysis and criticism among students¹³. The negative role of the professor in a lesson without guidance and correction contributes to a sense of laziness and boredom in the class. This is due to the lack of participation (discussion, dialogue, questioning) or attention from the audience.

Second topic: Appropriate or proposed solutions to overcome the challenges of teaching Hadith and its sciences at the university level.

First Requirement: Solutions related to the professor:

- Using effective modern teaching methods¹⁴ and acquiring pedagogical skills by organising training courses on modern technologies and their use in teaching Hadith and its sciences in general and specifically.

- Creating excitement and curiosity among the students during the lesson.

- Pre-planning the theoretical or practical lesson in the form of questions and answering them¹⁵ (identifying the main ideas and the core concept of the topic, determining the main objective, the secondary objectives to be achieved and taking notes after the session).

- Testing the students' level of concentration and attention, as they sometimes need elements of fun and entertainment¹⁶ (by mentioning a short exciting story, a proverb or a joke) to avoid boredom and monotony during the session, especially when teaching certain subjects in Hadith and its sciences (such as the science of narration, the science of narrators, etc.).

- Asking questions or doing written exercises to increase attention, encourage participation and dialogue to develop their creative thinking, both in oral questions and targeted written exercises¹⁷ (and allowing sufficient time for oral or written answers).

¹³- In the field of Sharia sciences, between traditional methods and teaching strategies, see "Teaching and Creative Training" by Dr Latifa bint Siraj Qamara (Safa Printing, Mecca, 1429 H), pages 99-102 and beyond, and "Teaching and Creative Training" by Tariq Al-Suwaidan, 4th edition, International Group Printing, Intellectual Innovation Company, 2014, pages 15-17.

¹⁴- The Issue of Understanding and Comprehension in the Subject of Hadith Sciences" by Al-Maki ibn Ahmed Aqla'ina, page 258 (Published in Hadith Sciences: Reality and Perspectives, the previous reference).

¹⁵- In the field of Sharia Sciences, between traditional methods and teaching strategies, see Dr Latifa bint Siraj Qamara, pages 153-157, and "Effective Teaching Skills" by Dr Zaid Al Huwaidi (Dar Al Kitab Al Jamei, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, 1430 H, 2009 CE), pages 73-76.

¹⁶- See "Teaching and Creative Training", the previous reference, pages 70-73.

¹⁷- For more details, see "Teaching and Creative Training", page 86, "Effective Teaching Skills", pages 92-98, and in the field of Sharia Sciences between traditional methods and teaching strategies, pages 72-75.

- Exercises are used to review information previously received, to stimulate thinking and learning, to test levels of recall, to revitalise the session and bring it back to life, and to comment on responses. This applies to both theoretical and practical sessions.

- Using effective methods and phrases to present ideas and concepts in Hadith and its sciences.

- Re-explaining the key elements of the topic and summarising what has been studied in the previous session to attempt to recall and review for better understanding.

- Provide a variety of theoretical, practical and applied examples of Hadith terms and topics, especially those related to practical or daily life situations of students.

Renewal of teaching methods, curricula and resources, as well as revitalisation of the content of old materials related to Hadith and its sciences.

- The use of modern and effective visual aids appropriate to the subject¹⁸ such as slides, computer presentations, large transparencies, charts and others, as they help explain and simplify difficult concepts, add variety to the teacher's speech and discourse, contribute to memory retention, thinking and comprehension, save time and help organise ideas.

- Taking breaks during discussions and topics (not speaking continuously for more than twenty minutes) to prepare the listener's mind and avoid boredom.

- Encouraging students to prepare for the next lesson by directing them to relevant sources and books (e.g. giving them questions or enquiries to research and answer in the next session).

- Developing students' skills in cooperative work¹⁹ and enhancing the necessary competencies for scientific work through teamwork (especially in practical sessions), such as guided projects and presentations²⁰ assigned to students.

Second requirement: Student-related solutions

- Selecting students who are inclined to study Islamic and Sharia sciences in general, and Hadith and its sciences in particular, through specialised bodies and committees, and increasing the admission rate for students, for example, those who wish to enter a university specialising in Islamic sciences.

¹⁸- The skill of using educational resources and its importance is discussed by Dr. Zaid Al Huwaidi in his book "Effective Teaching Skills," pages 106-113. Dr. Latifa bint Siraj Qamara also addressed this in her book "Sharia Sciences between Traditional Methods and Teaching Strategies," specifically in the section on learning resources, pages 167-206.

¹⁹- In the same reference, "Sharia Sciences between Traditional Methods and Teaching Strategies," pages 105-103.

²⁰- Also, in the same reference, pages 118-119.

- To allow students to express their opinions, ideas and questions freely, with propriety and discipline, and to encourage them to think creatively²¹ and to invite them to participate actively and diversely in teaching.

- Encouraging students to learn Islamic and Sharia sciences, especially the sciences of Hadith, and emphasising the importance of these sciences and the nation's need for them, and organising competitions in this field to stimulate innovative scientific competition.

Third requirement: Subject-related solutions

- Selecting appropriate programmes and courses for the subject (there are several subjects within the field of Hadith and its sciences, such as textual criticism, the science of narration, the methodologies of Hadith scholars, Hadith authentication, analytical Hadith studies, thematic Hadith studies, etc.) through a committee of specialised professors, by holding workshops for planning, reviewing and refining.

- The need to renew the curriculum of writing books on Hadith and its sciences and to make them easier for students by incorporating several practical models and increasing the number of illustrative examples in them.

Fourth requirement: Other solutions

- The need for coordination between theoretical lectures and practical sessions through regular meetings between the lecturing professor and the applied professor.

- Organising regular seminars, conferences and meetings to study the obstacles and problems related to the teaching of Islamic sciences in general and Hadith and its sciences in particular, to find solutions to them, and to try to implement the suggestions and recommendations within the educational institution.

- Conducting specialised training courses for university professors by experts and scholars from various fields to train them in effective and modern teaching skills and strategies in order to improve the quality of higher education, develop its curricula and methods (such as critical thinking, creative thinking, cooperative learning, self-directed learning, role-playing, brainstorming, problem solving, guided discovery, practical presentations, mastery learning, concept mapping²², etc.) and acquire skills such as planning and conducting lessons: mental preparation, diversification of stimuli, etc.

- Clarity of explanation and use of standard Arabic language, ability to formulate questions, classroom or class management skills, and encouraging thinking and creativity, followed by evaluation.

²¹- Effective Teaching Skills," pages 188-193.

²²- In "Sharia Sciences between Traditional Methods and Teaching Strategies", from page 97 onwards, discussions on these skills and teaching methods are presented. Similarly, in the book "Effective Teaching Skills" by Dr Zaid Al Huwaidi, starting from page 147 and beyond, these topics are elaborated.

- Assigning the teaching of Hadith and its sciences to specialists in the field.
- Increasing the number of credit hours allocated to Hadith and its sciences courses in the semesters designated for students of this specialisation.
- Establishing specialized committees composed of experts in the field to develop terminology specific to Hadith and its sciences in order to avoid inconsistencies in subjects or repetition of materials and programs in Sharia sciences in general and Hadith sciences in particular.
- Activate the role of the library and reading in accessing important sources to gain experience and develop skills in research, analysis, summary, deduction, comparison and critical thinking. Provide dedicated classrooms for teaching subjects such as Hadith graduation, as they require the presence of a large number of books and sources during the lesson.

Conclusion:

Praise be to Allah who has guided me to complete this article, which reveals the main obstacles related to university teaching in Algerian universities, especially in the field of teaching Prophetic Hadith and its sciences, and the solutions capable of removing these obstacles. I have come to the following conclusions:

- The obstacles facing the teaching of Prophetic Hadith and its sciences at the university level vary between obstacles related to the professor and his teaching methods, obstacles related to the students, and obstacles related to the subject itself. Some obstacles can be attributed to the prevailing higher education system and other factors.
- One of the most important obstacles related to the professor is their lack of familiarity with effective teaching methods and modern techniques, or their lack of specialisation in the subject they teach (Prophetic Hadith and its sciences). In addition, some professors do not use teaching aids for clarification and explanation, and they fail to provide real-life and practical examples in their lessons.
- One of the major obstacles related to the students is their low academic level and limited understanding of the Prophetic Hadith. Some students also have poor attendance, lack of interest or inclination to study Prophetic Hadith and its sciences, and inability to analyse, deduce and critically evaluate. Their limited knowledge base results in their reluctance to read Hadith books and sources.
- Regarding the subject matter or the course itself, one of the major obstacles is the difficulty of this field of study, the diversity of Hadith sciences, the complexity of its issues and accuracy, and the numerous differences among Hadith scholars. Furthermore, understanding ancient hadith books and compilations that lack explanatory examples can be challenging.

- One of the main obstacles:

- The current educational system in Algerian universities (LMD) is not adapted to the teaching curriculum of Islamic sciences, especially Prophetic Hadith, due to the reduction of credit hours for some courses. In addition, the vocabulary used in some of the materials related to Hadith and its sciences lacks accuracy and objectivity and contains some problems and errors.

- Lack of coordination between lecturing professors and applied professors.

- Difficulty in understanding examination questions related to Hadith and its sciences, with some questions relying solely on memorisation.

- Insufficient use of interactive methods among students and between students and professors.

- Proposed solutions to overcome the obstacles faced by professors in teaching Hadith and its sciences at the university level:

- Use modern and effective teaching methods and acquire pedagogical skills.

- Renewing teaching methods, curricula and resources, as well as revitalising the content of old materials related to Hadith and its sciences.

- Use modern and effective methods of illustration appropriate to the subject.

- Develop students' skills in cooperative work and cultivate the necessary competencies for scientific work.

- Propose solutions to overcome the obstacles faced by students in the teaching of Hadith and its sciences at the university level:

- Select students who are inclined to study Islamic sciences in general and Hadith and its sciences in particular.

- Allow students to express their opinions and ideas freely and encourage them to think creatively and participate actively in class.

- Encourage students to study Islamic and Sharia sciences, especially Hadith, and organise competitions in this field to stimulate innovative scientific competition.

- Propose solutions to overcome other obstacles facing the teaching of Hadith and its sciences at the university level, related to the prevailing system and others:

- Organising regular seminars, conferences and meetings to study the obstacles and challenges facing the teaching of Islamic sciences at the university level in general and Hadith and its sciences in particular, and to find solutions to them and try to implement them in the university institution.

- To organise specialised training courses for university professors, conducted by experts and scholars from various fields, to train them in effective and modern teaching skills and strategies to improve the quality of higher education.
- To entrust the teaching of Hadith and its sciences to specialists in the field.
- Developing specialised vocabulary related to the standards of Hadith and its sciences through specialised coordinating committees.
- Activate the role of the library and reading in accessing important sources to gain experience and develop research, analysis, summary, deduction, comparison and critical thinking skills.

List of references and sources:

- "Teaching and Creative Training" by Tariq Al-Suwaidan, 4th edition, International Group Printing, Intellectual Creativity Company, 2014.
- (Memoirs of the Memorisers) by Al-Dhahabi (Hyderabad, India, 3rd edition, 1375 AH/1900 CE).
- "The Current State and Future Prospects of Hadith Sciences" by Jumaa Al-Majid, an international scientific conference held on 10 April 2003 under the patronage of the President of the Board of Trustees of the College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dubai.
- "Effective Teaching Skills" by Dr Zaid Al-Hawaidi, University Book House, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, 1430 AH/2009 CE.
- "Sharia Sciences Materials: Between Traditional Approaches and Teaching Strategies" by Latifa bint Suraaj Qamrah, Safa Printing Press, Makkah Mukarramah, 1429 AH.