

Facing the Global –

Ambivalent Coping Strategies in the Algerian Academic Field

This thesis in sociology and education sciences, thematically in the field of higher education studies, addresses the following main research question: Which implications does the degree of the Algerian higher education system nationalisation as well as internationalisation orientation have on institutional development as well as individual practices?

The theoretical and conceptual framework is three-fold, namely, Castells' functions of the university, Lüscher's ambivalences, and Bourdieu's forms of capital. The thesis' underlying hypotheses are as follows: There are system limitations related to a lack of institutional autonomy; research is a new social field; Algerian academics' agency is reflected in conducting research, on an individual level, by employing adaptation strategies; as well as, personal internationalisation experiences such as stays abroad correspond to successfully engaging in research as an expression of embodied cultural capital, and serve as a means of differentiation in national academia.

The thesis is empirically based on 15 semi-structured interviews with professors at Algerian universities and research institutes, analysed with qualitative content analysis. The thesis has found that Algerian academics are confronted with a situation of personal oscillation in engaging in research, induced by an ambivalent environment in a nationally-oriented institution due to a prevailing political and ideological outset of the higher education system versus the necessary international dimension of research. Algerian professors employ different coping strategies to deal with this setting, which can be subsumed under three categories of research engagement/prioritisation, minimum/no research, or alternatives in academia. Each of these strategies is an expression of underlying behavioural reasons on the micro, meso and macro levels. The motivation to obtain, and accumulate, cultural capital as a means of local differentiation is decisive in academics' choice of engaging in and pursuing, research. The findings have a broader impact on on-going and future university reforms and associated higher education policy shifts in African and Arab contexts from the background of transforming societies' transition into knowledge economies trend.

Keywords: Algeria, higher education, ambivalences, academic freedom, internationalisation