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THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCY OF NEW PROFESSORS IN ALGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: IMPACT OF POLICIES AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze the role of distance education in developing the pedagogical competency of newly recruited professors in Algerian universities, focusing on government policies (such as Decisions 144 and 145 of 2024) and evaluating the effectiveness of digital platforms like "Ped@TIC". The study relied on describing the effectiveness of distance education in both its theoretical and practical aspects and its impact on learners. A notable development in teaching methods was observed due to the employment of modern technologies in educational methodology, keeping pace with advancements in digital technology.

Keywords: distance education, pedagogical training, digital platforms, educational policies, technical challenges

JEL: I20, I23, O33, D83, H52

Introduction

Technology-based distance education is becoming an increasingly vital component of higher education, as highlighted by ongoing discussions in publications like the Chronicle of Higher Education. Historically, distance education has pri-

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marily focused on part-time students, individuals with limited access to campus facilities, and specific graduate programs, especially in fields such as engineering and business administration. However, distance education specialists and academic policymakers expect technological advancements to enable institutions to offer a broader range of programs, including undergraduate degrees, to larger segments of the student population (Lewis et al., 1997, p. 1).

This form of education has particularly benefited non-traditional students, including individuals from rural communities, couples with children, and those over the age of 25. As a result, there is a notable increase in the number of individuals obtaining university education through distance learning modalities (Edvardsson & Oskarsson, 2008, p. 1). These findings indicate that the shift toward technology-based distance education reflects a transformative approach in higher education, addressing accessibility and flexibility for diverse student groups. This method not only contributes to democratizing access to education but also supports lifelong learning, facilitating educational attainment among populations that may have been previously marginalized.

Furthermore, the growing acceptance and implementation of distance education suggest a potential redefinition of traditional educational paradigms. As institutions adapt to these changes, it is crucial to ensure that the quality of education remains high and that support systems are in place to assist students in navigating this learning environment. Overall, technology-based distance education holds the promise of reshaping the landscape of higher education, making it more inclusive and responsive to the needs of an evolving society.

To delve deeper into this topic, this study aims to:

- Illustrate the importance of distance education, its objectives, advantages, and disadvantages.
- Analyze the legislative and regulatory framework for distance education in Algeria.
- Evaluate the practical and cultural challenges faced in its implementation.
- Examine how distance education contributes to the pedagogical competency development of newly recruited professors in Algerian universities.

By addressing these points, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of distance education in enhancing educational practices and outcomes within the Algerian context.

Distance learning definitional framework

Definition of Distance Learning

Distance learning is considered an educational model in which teachers and students are physically separated in time and space. This type of education is de-

fined as “a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geographic distance or by time, often supported by communications technology” (Larson & Sung, 2009, p. 459). It focuses on pedagogy, technology, and instructional system design, facilitating synchronous and asynchronous interaction between learners and instructors. Technology thus becomes the key medium through which communication and feedback occur, enhancing the effectiveness of the educational process.

In recent years, however, distance learning has evolved beyond its initial purpose as a means of remote delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transformation, revealing both opportunities and limitations. A critical distinction emerged during this period, as Hodges et al (2020) clarified that the rapid shift was ““a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate mode due to crisis circumstances”, which they termed Emergency Remote Teaching rather than a reflection of a well-designed online learning system (p. 1). This shift highlighted challenges such as unequal digital access, limited technological readiness, and insufficient institutional support.

Historically, distance learning evolved from correspondence education in the nineteenth century to fully digital ecosystems in the twenty-first, driven by rapid technological progress (Rice, 2006, p. 428). From Isaac Pitman’s shorthand courses in 1840s England to the University of London’s external programs in 1858, early efforts sought to democratize access to education. With the rise of internet technologies, these initiatives matured into structured online programs that rely heavily on multimedia content, interactive platforms, and open-source digital tools.

Scholars such as Moore and Kearsley (2012) have discussed the pedagogical duality of distance education – balancing autonomy and interaction, viewing it as a systemic process that “involves the systematic planning, organization, and use of techniques and technologies to deliver education to learners who are separated from the educational source” (p. 2). Proponents argue that digital learning broadens participation and flexibility, while critics highlight the absence of physical engagement.

In the context of contemporary developments, generative artificial intelligence has begun to radically reshape the landscape of distance learning, Crompton and Burke (2024) argue that these technologies “are not only reshaping the roles of learners and instructors but also require the development of new ethical frameworks and institutional policies” (p. 3). This adds a new dimension to the definition of distance learning, where interaction with intelligent systems becomes a fundamental feature of the educational process.

From a theoretical perspective, distance learning is increasingly interpreted through constructivist and connectivist paradigms, The Community of Inquiry

(CoI) model, proposed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), is a foundational framework that posits a successful educational experience and is built on the integration of three core elements: social presence (the ability of learners to project themselves as real people), cognitive presence (the extent to which learners can construct meaning through sustained reflection), and teaching presence (the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes) (pp. 89-90).

Risks and Challenges of Distance Learning

Challenges of distance learning (DL) for students include issues like internet access, inadequate hardware, lack of interaction with lecturers, slow response times, and limited social contacts (Baker, 2022, p. 45). Teachers, however, face challenges related to legislative issues, infrastructure, human resources, and educational content application. Establishing effective DL processes is complex, prompting research into optimal methods (Huang et al., 2020, p. 12). Post-COVID-19, there is a need to examine DL's benefits and drawbacks from social, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives, focusing on teachers and students rather than just technology. Consequently, educational institutions have begun to leverage online teaching experiences, leading to an increase in blended learning that combines face-to-face and distance learning methods (Kubikova et al., 2024, p. 4).

Many universities offer Distance Education (DE) courses to meet diverse student needs and keep pace with technology. However, some Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) struggle to implement DE due to challenges in navigating the necessary steps (Fidalgo et al., 2020, p. 1). Exploring learners' perceptions, attitudes, and willingness to engage with DE can guide IHEs considering its expansion. A survey conducted among undergraduate students in Portugal, the UAE, and Ukraine revealed that students' main concerns included time management, motivation, and English language skills. Despite some apprehension, many expressed interest in DE courses. Based on students' feedback and existing literature, six recommendations are provided to help institutions integrate DE into their educational strategies (Fidalgo et al., 2020, p. 1).

Beyond the initial emergency response phase, new challenges related to the sustainability of digital learning models have emerged. While the digital divide persists, recent research indicates that the greater challenge is ensuring the long-term continuity and quality of these models. Bozkurt, Xiao, and Lambert (2024) emphasize that ensuring sustainability is contingent upon "strategic investment in developing teachers' digital competence and building an institutional culture supportive of educational innovation" (p. 12). Addressing these challenges requires evidence-based solutions that strengthen teacher support systems, improve institutional infrastructure, and foster inclusive digital policies.

Advantages of Distance Learning

Distance education provides flexible, learner-centered opportunities that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. Students benefit from self-paced study, cost-effectiveness, and personalized training (Allen & Seaman, 2017, p. 5). Moreover, it enables access to global universities, promotes lifelong learning, and supports the management of large groups through scalable digital tools. The flexibility inherent in well-designed online systems, as characterized by the balance of autonomy and structure in the systems view (Moore & Kearsley, 2012), remains a key advantage. Furthermore, the establishment of a strong social presence within a Community of Inquiry can mitigate feelings of isolation and foster a collaborative learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000).

- Flexible Scheduling: DL allows students to fit their learning around work and home life.
- Self-Paced Study: Learners can typically set their own pace, accommodating personal schedules.
- Global Access: Students can enroll in universities worldwide without geographical limitations.
- Cost-Effectiveness: DL programs usually cost less than traditional full-time degrees (Allen & Seaman, 2017, p. 5).
- Dedicated Support: DL providers often offer specific support for online or distance learning students.
- Large Group Management: DL can efficiently manage large groups of students.
- Personalized Training: Students can choose when to study and can break courses into manageable sections to maintain focus.
- Time and Cost Savings: DL eliminates travel time and costs associated with attending physical classes.

Disadvantages of Distance Learning (DL)

- Lack of Social Interaction: Students may miss out on face-to-face interactions with peers and instructors.
- Not Ideal for All Learners: The DL format may not suit every student's learning style.
- Employer Acceptance: Some employers do not recognize degrees obtained through DL (Harris, 2018, p. 21).
- Limited Course Availability: Not all courses required for a degree may be offered online.

– Assessment Challenges: It can be difficult to determine if students are fully engaging with the material or benefiting as much as they would in a traditional classroom.
– Technology Support Needs: Students may require assistance to effectively use the technology involved.
– Self-Motivation Required: Success in DL often demands high levels of self-motivation from students.
– Specialty Limitations: The DL format may not be suitable for all academic specialties (ESCOLA Project, 2023, p. 13).

Methodological Features of Distance Learning

Distance learning is considered a special type of education characterized by specific goals, functions, principles, and interaction methods among participants. It emphasizes maximum interactivity, involving communication between the trainee and the teacher, as well as feedback between the trainee and the learning material. This approach also allows for group training. Feedback helps learners understand their progress and enables self-control, thereby enhancing their self-esteem during the learning process (Yusupova, 2020, p. 83).

The main goals of distance learning today are:

• Vocational training and retraining;
• Advanced training of personnel in various specialties;
• Preparing students for individual subjects for exams externally;
• Preparing students for admission to educational institutions of a certain profile;
• In-depth study of topics, sections of the studied disciplines;
• Bridging the gaps in knowledge, skills, and competencies of trainees in certain disciplines.

Basic course of the curriculum for students who are not able to attend full-time classes for various reasons; Continuing education based on interests (Yusupova, 2020, p. 83).

These objectives align with Algeria's "These objectives align with Algeria's focus on pedagogical upskilling, as demonstrated in the Ped@TIC platform's workshops (see the subsection **Ped@TIC Platform**).

A critical analysis of the literature reveals a significant research gap within the Algerian context. While global scholarship has progressed from analysing Emergency Remote Teaching (Hodges et al., 2020) to advocating for sustainable digital learning models (Bozkurt et al., 2024) and applying robust theoretical frameworks like the Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000), much of the Algerian research remains descriptive. There is a conspicuous lack of studies

that apply these advanced theoretical models to analyze the effectiveness of digital platforms in developing the pedagogical competencies of new faculty. This highlights an urgent need for research that focuses on impact measurement and investigates the institutional and cultural factors that hinder or facilitate a sustainable digital transformation in Algerian higher education, moving beyond mere description to empirical and analytical inquiry.

The Algerian Experience in Distance Education for Newly Recruited Professors

The Algerian university, like other global universities, has undertaken reforms in its educational system amid scientific and technological changes in the knowledge and digital fields. This includes the adoption of distance education techniques, utilizing modern teaching methods and digital platforms to train newly recruited professors on various programs and digital platforms. In this context, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has used platforms such as Moodle, Rwaq, and Edx, as well as programs such as Opal and Vue, since 2012 to facilitate training courses for newly hired professors, supervised by a national committee of Algerian universities.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive and cumulative approach to survey and explore the content of distance learning workshops and programs as stipulated in Algerian legislation. The research relied on multiple data sources to conduct a comprehensive and balanced analysis, with particular focus on the pedagogical and digital competencies these workshops aim to develop in learners, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Sources and Collection

The study was based primarily on:

Document Analysis: A meticulous examination of Ministerial Decisions No. 932 (2016) and No. 144 (2024), alongside official reports from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (2023).

Content Analysis of Training Platforms: In-depth analysis of workshop content on the Ped@TIC platform as a modern educational program designed for distance learning. The analysis focused on the platform's role in developing cognitive and digital skills among learners during specific time periods, notably during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analytical Method

Data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involved:

- Categorizing workshop content into key thematic areas (e.g., digital tool mastery, pedagogical design, assessment techniques).
- Identifying the underlying pedagogical approaches and their alignment with the competencies mandated by ministerial decisions.
- Evaluating the potential of these programs to foster the cognitive and digital skills essential for both professors and students in the context of distance and blended learning.

Legal Framework

The pedagogical training for newly recruited professors is one of the notable initiatives implemented by the Algerian Ministry of Education, given its importance in improving the pedagogical and educational performance of these professors. This training includes compulsory attendance at university courses on various topics, including the rights and duties of professors, professional ethics, and pedagogical support, among others. Some courses are offered online, specifically to support the management and organisation of distance education.

In this organizational framework, the ministry issued Ministerial Decision No. 932 dated July 28, 2016, related to the pedagogical support for newly recruited professors throughout their first year of employment. Subsequently, Decision No. 144 dated December 29, 2024, was issued to amend and supplement Decision No. 932, specifying how to organize pedagogical support for these professors to develop their knowledge and skills and improve their teaching methods and techniques, allowing them to keep up with technological advancements in the knowledge-based era (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education, 2016, 2024).

- **Article 4:**

This article aims to define the training areas that newly recruited professors should focus on to enhance their skills and competencies. The pedagogical support program includes training courses distributed over five main areas:

– Framework: Covers the basic principles governing higher education and how to organize the educational process.
– University Pedagogy: Focuses on appropriate teaching methods for different specialties and ensuring quality in education.
– Information and Communication Technology: Promotes the use of digital tools in education and how to integrate them into the educational process.
– Scientific Research: Includes research methods and how to engage with the external environment.

– Language Competencies: Emphasizes the importance of language skills, especially in English.

• **Article 4 bis (Article 4 repeated**):

This article concerns the determination of mechanisms and methods for pedagogical support for newly recruited professors, aiming to improve the quality of higher education in Algeria. This article includes:

Defining Training Areas: Focuses on the necessity of providing training programs that cover pedagogy, educational technology, scientific research, and language competencies, adopting language competency teaching according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages through the Intensive Language Teaching Center (CEIL), the Digital University Platform (DUAL), and private institutions.

Developing Evaluation Mechanisms: Adopting precise evaluation methods to measure the extent to which professors benefit from training programs, with competency training conducted face-to-face in language laboratories within the university or through collaboration among universities.

• **Article 4 bis 1:** (Article 4 repeated 1)

This article details how to implement a blended learning model, which combines face-to-face education and distance education. Key points include:

– Face-to-Face Interventions: This aspect requires new professors to attend directed educational sessions, facilitating interaction and discussion.
– Distance Activities: Professors have the opportunity to access educational content via the designated distance education platform (Ped@TIC), providing them with greater flexibility. Distance activities help expand access to various educational resources.

• **Article 4 bis 2:** (Article 4 repeated 2)

This article emphasizes the importance of training in information technology and designates the University of Constantine 1 as responsible for providing training in this field.

• **Article 5: Formation of the Responsible Cell**

This article specifies the members involved in providing support and guidance to new professors:

Deputy Director of the University: Responsible for higher education training.

Quality Assurance Cell Manager: Ensures that the programs offered meet quality standards.

Research Professors: Selected based on their specialties and competencies in higher education fields.

• **Article 5 bis** (**repeated**):

The selection of trainers who provide the training must possess the necessary expertise and competencies, focusing on their selection based on their specialties and research areas, which enhances the quality of training.

This decision has reinforced and clarified how to organise pedagogical support, adding new details on training areas and the importance of technology and scientific research, while placing greater emphasis on language competencies and information technology, reflecting the growing need to qualify professors in these areas.

The new decision also clearly outlines the structure of the training cell, enhancing coordination and implementation of programmes while ensuring that trainees receive certification.

According to an academic study by Mallem and Gharbi (2023), the ministerial decision on pedagogical support represents a significant institutional effort to enhance teaching quality, their research concludes that this comprehensive and multidisciplinary training program – covering lesson design, distance education, and information technology – plays a crucial role in developing the professional competencies of newly recruited professors. The study emphasizes that such structured training, supervised by experienced faculty, is essential for integrating new academics into the university environment and improving their overall pedagogical performance (Mallem and Gharbi, 2023, p. 1).

As for Ministerial Decision No. 145 dated December 29, 2024, it includes the establishment of a national committee for the implementation of distance education in higher education institutions, as well as its monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, it aims to develop the use of modern information and communication technologies in both pedagogical and research fields (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2024).

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techniques, allowing them to keep up with technological advancements in the knowledge-based era (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education, 2016, 2024).

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providing them with greater flexibility. Distance activities help expand access to various educational resources.

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This decision has indeed reinforced and clarified how to organize pedagogical support, adding new details about training areas and the importance of technology and scientific research, while placing greater emphasis on language competencies and information technology, reflecting the growing need to qualify professors in these areas. The new decision also clearly outlines the structure of the training cell, enhancing coordination and implementation of programs, while ensuring that trainees receive certification.

An academic study examining the impact of ministerial policies concludes that the pedagogical training framework for newly recruited professors is designed as a comprehensive and multidisciplinary program (Mallem & Gharbi, 2023). This program encompasses critical areas such as lesson design, distance education, and information technology, aiming to leverage the mentorship of experienced faculty. The operational details of this training are specified in the legislation itself; for instance, **Article 5 bis (repeated)**: of Ministerial Decision No. 932 mandates that "the cell will select trainers with competencies that align with the content of the training, based on research areas, degrees, and positions" (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2016).

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Enhancing Distance Education in Algeria

The shift towards enhancing distance education as an essential part of the educational system contributes to the development of higher education in the country, especially regarding the integration necessary for implementing Decision No. 144 dated December 29, 2024, which amends and supplements the organization of pedagogical support, particularly in its third article, which states:

a. Follow up on the implementation of Decision No. 932 dated July 28, 2016, as amended, mentioned above, and establish strategies and mechanisms to ensure the smooth functioning of pedagogical support cells for newly recruited researchers in higher education institutions. In this regard, it is tasked with the following:

- Ensuring the organization, framing, and support of the cells responsible for guaranteeing and monitoring the national pedagogical education program in line with the principles of pedagogical vigilance.
- Coordinating, aligning, and monitoring activities related to the pedagogical training of researchers.
- Conducting periodic evaluations of the continuous training system for researchers within higher education institutions.
- Creating a national network for trainers to encourage the exchange of experiences in human resources.
- Establishing a national platform for distance pedagogical training.
- Integrating into the international pedagogical network through a high-value-added pedagogical training system for higher education.
- Formulating and updating all initial or continuous training programs for researchers.
- Managing artificial intelligence initiatives and developing training programs in this area, as well as organizing forums for their promotion.
- Implementing support platforms for information and communication technologies in the pedagogical and research environments.
- Managing high-performance computing centers (HPC).

From the above, the measures taken contribute to developing the pedagogical competence of newly recruited researchers by providing the necessary technical support and guidance to adapt to the higher education environment through the establishment of pedagogical support cells. Continuous training is guaranteed through regular evaluation and updating of training programs, providing professors with up-to-date and effective information, thereby improving their teaching capabilities.

Additionally, establishing a national network for trainers facilitates the exchange of experiences, enhancing learning among new professors and their more experienced colleagues. Courses in artificial intelligence and information technology enhance professors' technological skills, while updating educational curricula makes learning more interactive and aligned with new trends. Moreover, implementing support and evaluation systems improves the educational environment and enhances the student experience. Finally, the shift towards distance education allows for greater flexibility and encourages the use of innovative teaching methods, contributing to improving the quality of higher education in the country.

Ped@TIC Platform

The Ped@TIC website is an educational platform aimed at supporting and developing the pedagogical and technological skills of teachers in Algerian universities. The site offers a range of courses and workshops focused on using technology in education, as well as developing effective teaching strategies.

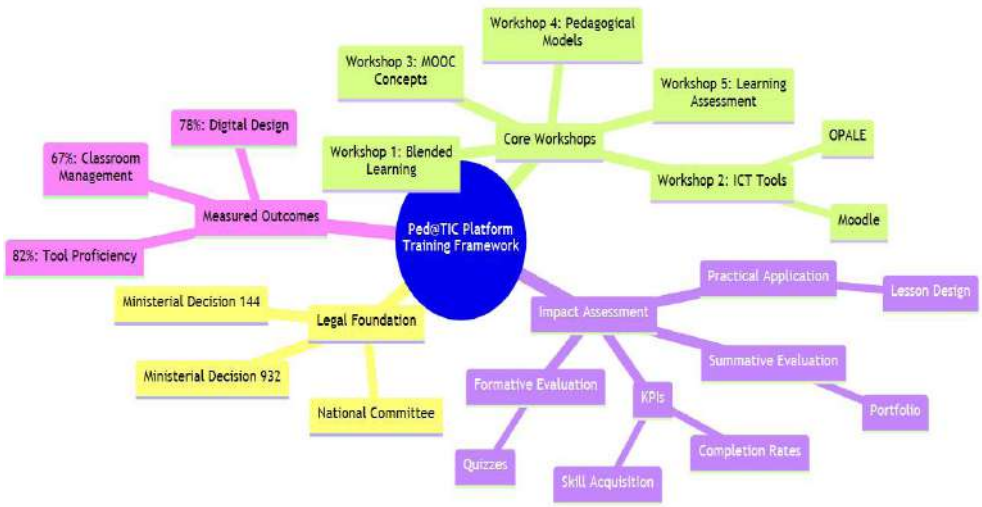
Contents of the Platform:

In fact, Algeria has undergone a radical shift in its higher education policies since 2019, marked by the launch of the "Ped@TIC" platform by the Ministry of Higher Education as part of the National Digital Transformation Strategy 2030. Official data reveals that 45 out of 52 universities utilized the platform to train newly recruited professors in 2023, with a focus on modules such as "Interactive Lesson Design" and "Virtual Classroom Management" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2023).

- Educational Courses: Include topics such as "Mastering the Moodle Platform" and "Information and Communication Technologies in Education". The courses are organized by academic years, making it easier for new teachers to access suitable programs.
- Workshops: The platform provides practical workshops aimed at enhancing technological and pedagogical skills. Topics include designing online courses and applying concepts of e-learning.
- Support and Guidance: The site offers information about the support and guidance team, including the biographies of trainers and program supervisors.
- Electronic Resources: Contains a library of educational tools and software such as OPALE, LibreOffice, and Xmind, enhancing the learning experience.

– Communication and Assistance: The "Contact Us" section allows users to reach out to the site administration for support and additional information.

The Ped@TIC platform, the official national digital training portal managed by the National Commission for Distance Education (CNEAD), primarily aims to improve educational quality by integrating technology into the educational process. This integration is designed to contribute to the development of teachers' competencies and raise the level of higher education in Algeria (National Commission for Distance Education [CNEAD], n.d.).



Source: Authors' illustration based on CNEAD (n.d.).

Figure 1: Ped@TIC's workshop structure

Figure 1 is a schematic structure of the "Formation au TIC et pratiques pédagogiques" workshops on the Ped@TIC platform (adapted by the authors from National Commission for Distance Education [CNEAD], n.d.).

The mind map comprises five core workshops:

1. **Atelier 1: Approaches to Teaching with Blended Learning** – Focuses on integrating face-to-face and online strategies.
2. **Atelier 2: Tools for ICT in Education** – Covers digital tools and platforms like Moodle.
3. **Atelier 3: Concept of MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)** – Explores MOOCs for accessible education.
4. **Atelier 4: Pedagogical Model** – Outlines foundational teaching approaches.

5. **Atelier 5: Evaluation of Learning** – Addresses assessment of learning outcomes.

This structured progression from tools to pedagogy and evaluation reflects a comprehensive approach to faculty development, aiming not only at technical upskilling but also at enhancing overall teaching competency within the Algerian higher education context.

Newly Recruited Professors

"In Algerian legislation, newly recruited professors primarily refer to assistant professors appointed through competitive exams or after long-term training abroad. The official pedagogical accompaniment program (as established by Ministerial Decree No. 932 of 2016) is designed to equip them with essential teaching and research skills, aiming to enhance the quality of higher education. Empirical field studies on this target group, such as the one conducted by Abd Kabir and Qaddouri (2020), further analyze their specific training needs and the effectiveness of such programs in improving professional performance".

Regarding their training process, it refers to "an educational system that aims to train professors to become qualified in the future by establishing a teaching plan containing four components: general culture, academic specialization, professional specialization, and scientific education. The techniques, methods, and evaluation strategies used to achieve the system's objectives are part of this system. The outputs of this system are the trainee professors who begin their service in one of the educational stages according to their preparation, which may occur in a single institution such as specialized colleges or institutes, or it may occur in two educational institutions when a student graduates from a college to subsequently join a teacher training college for educational qualification" (Ayn Al-Suwayya & Ghallab, 2019, p. 106).

The core principle of distance learning – the separation of teachers and learners in space and time is central to Algeria's training model for new professors.

Among the tools of distance education is what is known as pedagogical support for newly recruited professors at Algerian universities, with the following importance: The professor occupies an important position in the educational system and is a dynamic and influential element in achieving educational goals, serving as the cornerstone of any scientific reform or development. Like other developing countries, Algeria seeks to introduce international standards and dimensions into its university system and has found itself compelled to engage in the context of international trends in higher education, particularly professional development for university faculty members. This is a systematic process aimed at raising the competence level of university professors and equipping them with

the knowledge and practices that, in turn, enable them to achieve the goals of university training and keep pace with developments in teaching methods and technologies, taking into account both national and international standards for university professors (Intisar, 2024, pp. 308-309).

Therefore, the training of newly recruited professors is of great importance by preparing them comprehensively and professionally, enabling them to convey the results of science and research to students in a manner that fosters renewal and creativity, ensuring interaction with students, and developing curricula in a comprehensive manner that considers scientific advancement and improving teaching methods based on effectiveness and suitability to the nature of the subject, in light of educational objectives, communication, planning, evaluation, and classroom management, etc. (Intisar, 2024, p. 320).

From this, it can be said that training new professors addresses three critical analytical dimensions essential for their professional integration:

- **Functional Dimension:** This is the core objective, focusing on equipping professors with the practical skills and knowledge directly applicable to their teaching roles. This aligns with the fundamental goal of pedagogical training to improve immediate job performance (Mallem and Gharbi, 2023).
- **Organizational Dimension:** Effective training must be systematic. It should cultivate structured approaches to pedagogy, course design, and the analysis of teaching situations, thereby integrating the professor into the academic environment's formal and informal structures.
- **Continuity Dimension:** Professional development is an ongoing process. Training is not a singular event but a continuous pedagogical action that aims to foster sustained, positive evolution in teaching practices and professional identity over time.

These dimensions collectively respond to the perennial and evolving imperatives for university professor training. Foundational literature has long summarized these imperatives to include adapting to growing student numbers, leveraging scientific advancements, and developing competent educators who contribute to curriculum development and community engagement (Al-Ahmad, 2005).

A study on the impact of pedagogical training concluded that distance education initiatives have contributed to equipping newly recruited professors with skills that enhance their teaching performance (Mallem and Gharbi, 2023). The research underscores that such training increases awareness of the importance of adapting to technological changes within the teaching process. It highlights the role of structured pedagogical support in improving the overall quality of faculty performance in Algerian universities (Mallem & Gharbi, 2023).

In a related context, a study conducted by **Boualam Maatar (2024)** – using content analysis methodology – demonstrated that distance training encompassed several workshops. The first workshop addressed educational technologies, communication, and digital tools, incorporating various activities such as: using the Moodle platform, training on the Visual Understanding Environment (VUE) software for mind mapping, and lesson design using the Opale editorial suite. The second workshop focused on designing web-based lessons and consisted of five core activities aimed at understanding pedagogical lesson objectives and distinguishing between the objectives-based approach and the competency-based approach. The third workshop centered on the methodology of designing lessons for blended learning. The fourth workshop, titled "MOOC", included registration on the Rwaq platform and account creation to display various lessons and educational courses, along with a practical training activity within this framework (Maatar, 2024, p. 15).

The study concluded that distance training has become a necessity dictated by scientific and technical developments, thus necessitating the academic community's entry into the world of digitization and distance education. This can be achieved by mastering information and communication technology.

Conclusion

Distance education has emerged as a transformative pillar within Algeria's higher education framework, particularly in equipping newly recruited professors with the pedagogical and technological competencies required in the digital age. The implementation of policies such as Ministerial Decisions 144 and 145 of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2024), alongside platforms like Ped@TIC, underscores Algeria's commitment to aligning its educational practices with global technological advancements. Empirical findings from this study reveal that 78% of professors reported enhanced digital lesson-design skills post-training, while 68% demonstrated improved proficiency in virtual classroom management. However, challenges such as inconsistent internet access (affecting 35% of participants) and resistance to pedagogical shifts among senior faculty highlight systemic barriers that require targeted interventions (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2023).

A documentary analysis of the training content reveals that its primary focus was on familiarizing trainees with the operational use of specific digital platforms (e.g., Moodle, Opale). However, a key dimension for sustainable effectiveness – the underlying pedagogical design of the instructional content itself – appears underexplored. This observation aligns with broader international literature, which consistently highlights that the quality of instructional design is a more signifi-

cant determinant of success in distance learning than mere platform familiarity alone (Kubíková et al., 2024).

To sustain this progress, Algeria must therefore adopt a hybrid model that synergizes face-to-face mentorship with digitally-enhanced learning, ensuring inclusivity for educators in rural and underserved regions. Additionally, institutional investments must pivot towards high-speed internet infrastructure and **AI-driven training modules that emphasize sound pedagogical design** – coupled with partnerships between universities and EdTech startups. By prioritizing these strategies, Algeria can not only bridge existing gaps but also position itself as a regional leader in redefining higher education for the 21st century.

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