

A Comprehensive Look Towards Distance Teaching Readiness: Teachers' Perspectives at Medea University

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Abstract:

Recently, distance teaching has gained prominence in modern education, but it is determined by teachers' readiness towards this venture. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to throw a glance at the distance teaching situation at Medea University. This was accomplished by exploring teachers' knowledge and operational competences towards distance teaching and how they contribute to their readiness. A total of 31 teachers from Medea University responded to a survey of 15 items scale. Teachers' online readiness was analysed with respect to their technological and pedagogical knowledge (TPK) as well as their technological and pedagogical practice (TPP). The results indicated that teachers are moderately ready to adopt this educational mode. This research suggests that teachers should receive continuous training on their technological and pedagogical knowledge and practice for a better implementation of the distance education system in the Algerian higher educational context.

Keywords: distance teaching; teachers; readiness; pedagogical and technological knowledge; pedagogical and technological practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The potential of technology usage in education is becoming increasingly compelling. This lies on the rapid expansion of distance education in higher education institutions. Arguably, addressing the interrelation between the success of teaching and learning and the online environment is fundamental. If this venture is adequately adopted, it ensures the development of the overall educational process. A true adaptation hinges on the crucial role played by teachers. In fact, distance education is an opportunity to examine instructor's role in the learning environment (Simonson et al., 2015).

Information quality, interaction and student motivation are directly influenced by instructors' ability to design well-structured distance courses (Phan & Dang, 2017). This necessitates teachers to be well prepared in order to manage virtual classrooms effectively. Crucially, teachers' theoretical knowledge and operational competences contribute to their readiness to teach distantly. Investigating these aspects will further elucidate distance teaching readiness.

Yet, the situation of the Algerian university in teaching at distance, as a case in point, is still emerging (Abdaoui & El Aggoune, 2023; Aouissi, 2024; Boudia & Bengueddach, 2023), raising several questions about university teachers' understanding of the e-teaching model, their readiness for this mode, and their sufficient competences to teach at distance. Concordantly, addressing such issues will enhance the educational process. This can guide educational institutions to create better systems for instructors adapting the online teaching methods.

Therefore, to this end, the present research work tries to provide a spindle eye on teachers' readiness to the process of distance teaching, through a case study of higher education teachers at Medea University via exploring the following questions:

- To what extent are teachers at Medea University ready to distance teaching?
- To what extent are teachers' TPK and TPP important to distance teaching readiness?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the following hypotheses are formed:

- Teachers at Medea University are moderately ready to adopt distance teaching.
- Teachers' TPK and TPP are of reasonable importance to their readiness to distance teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Distance Teaching

Defining distance teaching is not an easy process due to its overlap with related technological terms in education. Importantly, it forms an integral part of the of the broader distance education paradigm (Şimşek et al., 2010). Thus, the definition of distance education can be applied on distance teaching with much emphasis on teaching. Bušelić (2012) argues that this process focuses on merging teaching methods with technology to be delivered to physically distant students. Belhamissi and Tlemsani (2023) explain it thoroughly and define it as a set of educational methods employed in a situation where the learners are in different temporal and spatial settings of their teachers. In a nuanced manner, Keegan (2013) delineates it through structured interactions that may occur synchronously or asynchronously. These ways can be employed through a variety of technological media (Tatlıhoğlu, 2024). In the context of the topic of interest, distance teaching is defined as a collection of technological and pedagogical approaches executed by educators at distance.

A further significant aspect associated with distance teaching is the role of teachers within this process. This position is key in structuring and planning the course according to the students' needs and diversity while providing guidance (Isman & Dabaj, 2004), engaging them in activities, discussions, and decision-making processes, and providing evaluation as well as feedback. These activities require certain preparedness to realize an effective implementation of distance teaching.

2.2 Teachers' Readiness

Readiness is recognized as a significant criterion for the success of the

distance teaching process. It refers to the mental and physical preparation of instructors in their e-teaching experience (Borotis & Poulymenakou, 2004). This preparation is built upon adequate knowledge and skills of teachers to facilitate the learning process. The fact that teachers are ready to teach distantly improves students' engagement, academic motivation, and academic performance (Rafsanjani et al., 2022; Wei & Chou, 2020). Within the context of this study, readiness is considered as a multifaceted concept where teachers rely on their knowledge and skills to apply certain methodologies in order to include the learners in an effective educational process. Ultimately, this research classifies distance teaching readiness into cognitive and operational readiness relying on Nenko's (2020) classification. Contextually speaking, they refer to TPK and TPP respectively.

2.2.1. Cognitive Readiness

Cognitive readiness refers to teachers' knowledge and understanding of the distance teaching methodologies, principles and technologies (Madanat et al., 2024). Particularly, they need to know how to use various digital platforms such as Zoom or emails and learning management systems like Moodle in their courses. They are also in need of knowing how to incorporate digital tools like virtual whiteboards and discussion forums to ensure an effective distance teaching. This knowledge helps them manage accurate online courses and facilitate an effective and a continuous interactive communication in their virtual classroom. It can be realized through the use of multimedia resources (video, audio, and text materials) that support diverse learning styles. Moreover, their understanding can be extended to the importance of knowing how to choose appropriate teaching methods, manage group discussions online, and assess learners' development through online quizzes and assignments. Nonetheless, many educators reported a lack of this knowledge, which hinders their ability to switch effectively to online teaching (Nenko, 2020).

2.2.2. Operational Readiness

Operational readiness pertains to the instructor's ability to practically implement the aforementioned knowledge in their distance-oriented teaching efficiently. Beyond theoretical knowledge, their capacity to adapt certain technological and pedagogical strategies is vital for their readiness. In fact,

utilizing learning management systems contribute to teachers' role as facilitators in online education, rather than just lecturers, notably, leading to greater independence of students in their learning process. Considering the distance teaching milieu, instructors are obliged to coordinate the distinct facets of the course together, namely learning objectives, activities management, assignments, assessment, and learning outcomes. Additionally, they have to be aware of the significance of strong organizational and time management skills (Ventayen, 2018), along with the use of active teaching methods. However, the transition to distance teaching highlighted a gap that still prevails in online teaching practical competences, affecting the quality of distance teaching (Nenko, 2020).

2.3 Teachers' Readiness towards Distance Teaching

Considerable number of studies on perceived readiness for teaching have been tackled previously in the literature. Eslaminejad et al. (2010) assessed instructors' readiness in e-learning in continuing medical education programs. Falling into the context of this study, this readiness encompasses both technical and pedagogical aspects which are based on teachers' knowledge and skills indicting the relation between the two variables. Moreover, Panol et al. (2021) investigated the readiness level of secondary school teachers on online teaching. Findings revealed that both teachers' technical and pedagogical readiness levels on online teaching were key dimensions of readiness. In parallel, Mahinay et al. (2022) tackled the issue of knowledge and skills in practice emphasizing actual performances of teachers. The findings showed that the participants are ready for online teaching. They have full readiness regarding teachers' knowledge but partial in teachers' skills. In a different setting, a study conducted by Madanat et al. (2024) in Jordan assessed English language educators perceived readiness for virtual learning environment in the post-pandemic era. Using descriptive analysis, the study aims to explore how teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge is transferred to concrete practice in order to shape their readiness. The results demonstrated a moderate familiarity and competency in online learning, thereby a moderate level of readiness for online teaching. Similarly,

in Indonesia, Suryanti et al. (2021) examined teachers' readiness for online teaching through monitoring the completeness of the content of courses and assessing teacher confidence in technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) dimension. TPK was rated as the most important for online teaching readiness addressing the importance of technology and pedagogy within the university's learning management system. Likewise, Scherer et al. (2021) explored teachers' readiness for online teaching and learning during the period of Covid. They identified teacher profiles based on a set of key dimensions of readiness namely TPACK.

Although these studies provided a substantial contribution through research results but some limitations could open up several possibilities for further research. This article responds to calls for more investigation concerning the actual knowledge and skills of teachers' readiness (Panol et al., 2021). Moreover, teachers' readiness to distance teaching needs to be addressed in different contexts rather than covid, as the sudden transition to this mode of teaching at that period is different from the current distance teaching settings. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' readiness. Additionally, exploring the field of distance education would be a valuable line of study to pursue due to the fact that it is ongoing practice and teachers' readiness is an evolving concept.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research method was adopted using a cross-sectional survey. It was used to gather information at one point in time to convey perceptions, beliefs, habits, or characteristics of the respondents (Creswell, 2012). In this context, researchers administered questionnaires to collect data about teachers' knowledge and skills as key dimensions of readiness to distance teaching.

3.2 Participants

A non-probability sampling was employed in this study as the participants represent some characteristics that are important for investigation (Creswell, 2012). The chosen members had a previous background and experience in distance teaching. They were identified by

each other through the snowball technique where the researcher asked participants to identify others to become members of the sample. The participating candidates consisted of 31 university teachers from several departments at Medea University.

3.3 Instrument

The questionnaire design drew inspiration from established scales and previous research in the field. However, it needed a modification to have a direct bearing on this topic. Some notions need to be adopted to the cultural manner of universities and teachers as this technological venture is shaped differently according to the context. The survey included 15 items written in plain language taking into consideration the English level of the participants. They were measured via a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). The questionnaire comprised of three major parts. The first one included asking about the frequency of using distance teaching and a direct question about teachers' readiness. The second one tackled the TPK that teachers possess on distance teaching. The last part involved the participants' TPP in distance teaching. Data were collected through Google form and sent via institutional and personal emails. After development, the questionnaire was piloted by four respondents to check clarity of the language used and to ensure its reliability in the local context.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this section, the collected responses were analysed to understand teachers' readiness towards distance teaching at Medea University through the lens of TPK and TPP. The data were analysed quantitatively using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to generate descriptive accurate statistics. The survey was tested for reliability (internal consistency) through calculating Cronbach's alpha value. This was followed by calculating descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations).

3.4.1 Cronbach's Alpha Test

Reliability is the measure of internal consistency of the constructs in

the study. It is classified into different levels. If Alpha is 0.90 and above, the internal consistency is very high. If it is 0.80 - 0.89, it reflects strong internal consistency, while 0.70 - 0.79 suggests acceptable internal consistency. Therefore, the results revealed that teachers' technological and pedagogical knowledge of distance teaching with six items ($\alpha = .744$) was acceptably reliable whereas the skills of distance teaching with seven items ($\alpha = .903$) were found excellently reliable. The next table summarizes reliability results.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

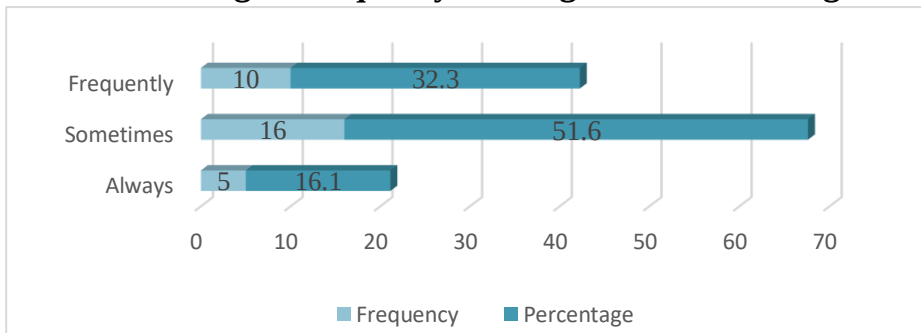
Construct	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
TPK of Distance teaching	.744	6
TPP of Distance teaching	.903	7

4. Findings

4.1 Frequency of Using Distance Teaching

According to the following figure, teachers' practices in this approach are not the same. 51.6% of teachers claimed that they sometimes teach distantly, 32.3% of them claimed they frequently did, and 16.1% stated that they always use this approach. These results can be explained by the fact that the virtual situation at Medea University is still in its infancy. The utilization of distance courses is occasional not usual.

Fig 1. Frequency of using distance teaching



4.2 Teachers Readiness to Distance Teaching

As shown in table two, the percentage of unreadiness is fully absent paving the way to a considerate-level of readiness with 48.4%. This is followed by the second level with teachers being extremely ready with 41.9%. A low number of the participants (9.7%) showed a moderate readiness to distance teaching. This suggests that teachers perceive this venture positively and they are embracing this world progressively.

Table 2. Teachers’ readiness to distance teaching

Frequency	Percentage %	Questionnaire Likert Scale	Interpretation of Readiness
13	41.9	Strongly Agree	Extremely ready
15	48.4	Agree	Ready
3	9.7	Neutral	Moderately ready
0	0	Disagree	Not ready
0	0	Strongly Disagree	Not ready at all

4.3 Technological and Pedagogical Knowledge Analysis

Table 3 shows some descriptive statistics for the construct of the cognitive knowledge of teachers’ readiness. As represented, all indicators registered remarkable agreement and strong agreement. The highest level represents item 4 about the variety of content delivery formats with 64.5%. A similar level of strong agreement was observed in having knowledge about the accessibility to the distance learning and teaching materials with 54.8%. Followed by the benefits of using distance educational systems and the importance of communication in distance courses with more than 40%. While less than 40% is given to the knowledge of learner autonomy and the useful outcomes of such courses leaving the way to less than 26% of neutrality. The relatively agreement is of no obstruction to disagreement in all items with a low level between 3.2% and 9.7%. Moreover, the overall

mean centrals around 3.97- 4.55 with standard deviation=.948 - .506, respectively. This suggests that teachers have a moderate to a high level of knowledge about the distance teaching operation, thereby having a respectable readiness.

Table 3. Technological and pedagogical knowledge analysis

Statements	Percentages (%)					Mean	SD
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1.I am aware of the benefits of using distance educational systems (e.g., Moodle, Google Drive, Dropbox, google forms) in my distance courses	41.9	48.4	6.5	3.2	0	4.29	.739
2. I am aware of the importance of communicating with students effectively in distance courses	41.9	45.2	3.2	9.7	0	4.19	.910
3.I know that it is important to Make learning accessible and inclusive to all students	54.8	45.2	0	0	0	4.55	.506
4.I am knowledgeable about content delivery in various formats (text, video, audio), taking into consideration the different learning styles	32.3	64.5	0	3.2	0	4.26	.631
5.I am aware that learners are encouraged to take charge of their own learning.	38.7	35.5	22.6	3.2	0	4.10	.870
6.I am aware of the useful outcomes of the distance course	35.5	32.3	25.8	6.5	0	3.97	.948

4.4 Technological and Pedagogical Practice Analysis

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the practical readiness of university teachers in Medea. This aspect is investigated through seven variables involving defining the objectives of distance courses, communicating in distance, managing their time, supporting the sense of community, encouraging students’ discussion, uploading lesson online, and assessing students online. The highest level of agreement with 45.2% is their skill in using distance teleconferencing technologies to communicate and interact with their students. In the other items, instructors agree that they have the concerned practical skills between 35.5% and 41.9%. Furthermore, as the table represents, the column of being neutral deserves attention. Though it ranges between 9.7% and 22.9%, it reveals teachers’ concerns about their skills in following the distance approach. Nevertheless, the results show that low level of disagreement is noticed with less than 10%. Collectively, the mean values with 3.97- 4.32 (SD=1.080- .720) suggest that the majority of instructors agreed that they moderately master the distance teaching operation. Thus, the state of their readiness was more or less at a moderate level

Table 4. Technological and pedagogical practice analysis

Statements	Percentages (%)					Mean	SD
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1.I am able to define the objectives of a distant course that are based on students’ learning outcomes	35.5	41.9	22.6	0	0	4.13	.763
2.I can use distance teleconferencing technologies to communicate and interact	45.2	41.9	12.9	0	0	4.32	.702

with my students (e.g., zoom, google meet, ...etc)							
3. I am able to employ activities that encourage students to speak up and discuss their thoughts	41.9	41.9	9.7	6.5	0	4.19	.873
4.I am able to manage my time well (dealing with students on such issues as deadlines)	41.9	38.7	12.9	6.5	0	4.16	.898
5.I can give pair and group activities by means of distance learning	35.5	41.9	9.7	9.7	3.2	3.97	1.08
6.I can upload my lessons in google classroom, Telegram, YouTube etc.	41.9	41.9	9.7	6.5	0	4.19	.873
7.I can create my own online assessments in the form of written tests, quizzes, oral question to test student's achievement.	41.9	38.7	12.9	6.5	0	4.16	.898

5. Discussion

The main purpose of the study is to explore teachers' readiness at Medea University. The results indicate that teachers are moderately ready validating the first hypothesis that assumes moderate readiness to adopt distance teaching. This is in line with related studies (Cobanoglu & Çobanoğlu, 2021). The issue can be related to the frequency of using this frame. As shown in figure 1, the partial use (51.6%) can be explained by the fact that the virtual situation at Medea university is still in its infancy and the utilization of distance courses is occasional not usual. The process can be automatically implemented as it was the case during Covid-19. In other events, teachers can be occupied with professional and administrative commitments, ultimately, adopting this mode of teaching.

Though teachers have no negative perception towards the distance process at all, they are still conservative due to two pivotal notions. The first

accounts for the institutional support that is either absent or scarce in most faculties. Substantially, the role of institutions in shaping instructors' readiness is of no negligence; it guides them through their journey (Madanat et al., 2024; Tutyandari & Purnamaningwulan, 2023). The second is pointed to the availability of technological resources. This is consistent with research conducted by Deacon et al. (2022) who concluded with the readiness of the faculty members for online teaching, emphasizing the crucial role of improvement particularly in the technological knowledge and internet access.

Regarding TPK, the findings showed that the participants have a moderate strong readiness concerning the technological and pedagogical knowledge with no more than 65%. A similar pattern of results was obtained in the study of Suryanti et al. (2021). The positive knowledge that educators have about communication, the various forms of delivering courses, and the accessibility of learning refers to the fact that the virtual system is deeply incorporated in their real daily life. Palero and Mutya (2022) argue that the experience and familiarity with technology remarkably shape teachers' readiness for online education modality. However, some concerns are to be taken into consideration about learner autonomy and the useful outcomes of distance teaching (26% of neutrality). This hesitation can be elucidated to the level of acceptance, understanding, and motivation of learners towards distance education. Previous experiences of teachers might be relatively negative due to the low engagement of students and low outcomes.

In TPP, instructors' readiness to the technological and pedagogical practice doesn't exceed 45% revealing that their readiness is below the medium-level. Contrary to Martin et al. (2019) and Panol et al. (2021) who demonstrate that teachers have the adequate and sufficient technological and pedagogical skills. More likely, teachers are relatively capable of using distance teleconferencing technologies to communicate and interact with their students. This is pointed out by Palero and Mutya's study (2022) that correlates good communication skills to the high level of readiness towards distance education. In practice, emails, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook are all tools that teachers master well. This encourages students' engagement

in the learning process and develop humanized relationships with their teachers.

The findings of TPP also disclose that Medea University teachers are slightly less capable (35.5% and 41.9%) in the other dimensions particularly managing their time and assessing students online. These percentages suggest that teachers are diligently coping with this framework to develop a successful and an effective distance class as well as supporting the on-going life learning process. Similarly, prior research has examined time management and distance assessment exhibiting their importance in teachers' readiness. Allocating specific time for course design and assignment grading is essential to provide students with timely feedback. It is also vital to utilize evaluation tools such as assignments, quizzes, and tests in order to assess if students fulfilled the expected course outcomes in an online setting (Martin et al., 2019). In this way, students get motivated and endeavour to improve in a timely manner. As a result, it can be easily deduced that the second hypothesis, which states that teachers' TPK and TPP are of reasonable importance to their readiness to distance teaching, is fully proved.

6. CONCLUSION

This study centers on teachers' readiness toward distance teaching at Medea University. It was measured cognitively and operationally, meaning that assessing their TPK and TPP. The descriptive analysis shows that instructors deemed moderately ready given the frequency of using distance teaching. In a narrower vein, TPK makes teachers' readiness moderately strong, while TPP keeps readiness at a moderately weak level.

Despite the useful results to the field of educational technology, there were some limitations. First, the sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. The number of participants may not give a thorough insight into the issue in concern. It's possible that a larger sample may give nuanced patterns. Second, cross-sectional research has been applied in this study representing the subset at one specific point of time. This may affect the variety of results. Hence, a longitudinal follow-up measurement is suggested in the future that observes the changes and developments of teachers' readiness.

In conclusion, this study opens the door for future research that may

provide new insights into teachers' readiness. Given the evolving nature of education and technology, it's pivotal to consider a broader range of factors that might impact readiness across different contexts. It can be implied that this study can provide teachers with meaningful and valuable insights that may guide them in enhancing their students' competences. It can also be a reference for institutions and to develop training programs and support systems to better equip educators for the challenges of modern teaching.

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