Psychological–Educational Preparation of Teachers in the Context of Current Challenges

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Abstract:

There is no doubt that the school environment, with all its components, plays a pivotal and essential role in the psychological development of the child as well as in his or her socialization. For this reason, the Ministry of National Education has hastened to introduce a series of reforms that have affected the educational process in its fundamental pillars—teacher, learner, and curriculum—while taking into consideration the specific characteristics of each.

This paper aims to present and analyze the reality of training in the Algerian educational system by presenting general definitions and objectives of training, with a focus on the stages of the development of pedagogical training in Algeria. It then elaborates on the role of psychological training in preparing the educational workforce and addresses contemporary trends in teacher education.

Keywords: psychological–educational preparation; teacher; current challenges.

1. Introduction:

School curricula are characterized by flexibility and constant dynamism, changing in accordance with evolving educational goals and the development of teaching–learning methods and strategies. This evolution has made it necessary to schedule training periods for teachers in order to develop their professional competencies. Training is considered the cornerstone of educational reform, particularly with regard to the psychological dimension.

For this reason, the Ministry of Education has devoted special attention to continuous professional development for teachers, as reflected in the ministerial decree issued on 24 August 2015, which defines the organization of preparatory pedagogical training during the probationary period for teaching staff, its duration, and the content of its programs.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to explore the mechanisms of teacher training, especially in its psychological dimension, within the framework of the new educational reforms and contemporary orientations in teacher preparation.

2. Definition of Training:

Before addressing the concept of training, it is necessary to refer to the concept of *educational reform*. Ahmad Hussein Al-Laqqani (1999) defines educational reform as:

"Re-examining the existing educational system, including the educational structure and its curricula, through evaluative studies followed by a development process in line with the requirements of the current stage and the future vision of the educational system. In this case, global trends and aspects of educational innovation become among the most important considerations." (quoted in Ben Gheddafa Sharifa, 2012, p. 388)

From this definition, it is clear that contemporary global trends are at the core of educational reform, and that teacher training is an integral part of these reforms.

It is also observed that the issue of preparing the educational workforce involves a set of terms and concepts that may appear similar on the surface but differ in meaning. Many educational references use these terms

interchangeably with the concept of training. In this context, Bishara Gabriel notes that educators and those working in the field of teacher preparation use multiple concepts such as *preparation (Préparation)*, *qualification (Qualification)*, *training (Training)*, and *formation (Formation)*.

> Linguistically, the term *training* refers to the introduction of a continuous series of changes and modifications according to a particular method or system in order to transform an existing initial state into a desirable and anticipated state, in line with a set of criteria and conditions agreed upon—at least relatively—by the active bodies within society. Training thus enables the individual to acquire cognitive patterns or functional performance forms that qualify him or her to carry out the required tasks
> (quoted in Sadaqawi Kamal, 2013, p. 22).

Training is also considered a creative process that results in fundamental changes and functions as a preventive corrective approach through processes of revision, refinement, and verification. Essentially, training represents a meaningful transformation, whereby an individual acquires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and a way of life that enables him or her to perform activities and tasks that were previously beyond his or her capability (Talouine Habib, 2002; quoted in Nasreddine Sheikh 2014, p. 175).

Researchers in education and training define *training* as a set of long- or short-term programs, courses, workshops, and other organized activities that culminate in certificates or academic qualifications. These programs aim to provide teachers with the cognitive, skill-based, and affective experiences necessary to raise their scientific level and improve their pedagogical and academic performance, both theoretically and practically. Training programs are generally designed to increase productive efficiency by addressing shortcomings or by providing those working in education with new knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enhance their experience and refine their technical competence, enabling teachers to develop their capabilities (Mustafa Abdel-Samee' et al., 2005).

It is evident that training is directly and fully responsible for the development of teachers and, consequently, for the educational process itself. Training within the educational process is not a repetitive, mechanical activity;

rather, it must involve creativity, renewal, and the ability to confront and solve problems and challenges (Sadaqawi Kamal, 2012, p. 7).

From the above, it becomes clear that definitions of training include several elements such as cognitive, skill-based, and behavioral preparation. Training takes two forms: theoretical training and practical training. The most important general objectives of training can be summarized as follows: The overall aim of the training process is to improve the level of education through direct training of administrative and pedagogical staff, thereby contributing to the development of the educational institution and the improvement of its outcomes. The general objectives of professional teacher training may be summarized in the following points:

- Enabling the teacher to understand the nature of the educational process in the country, its goals, educational systems and their problems in general, teaching methods, and the effective use of instructional aids in particular.
- Enabling the teacher to understand the child he or she teaches and the different stages of development (physical, cognitive, emotional, and social).
- Enabling the teacher to understand society, its problems, and its needs.
- Keeping teachers informed of developments and innovations in the field of education and teaching (Turki, 1990, p. 421).

Casse (1994) indicates that the aim of training or improving the level of teachers is to achieve the most accurate possible diagnosis of the situation from which pedagogical action emerges, assuming that:

a) Pedagogical action requires improvement.
b) Pedagogical action must be implemented in a sound and appropriate manner.

quoted in Bousaada (Qassem, 2011, p. 304)

3. Development of Pedagogical and Administrative Training in Algeria:

The training and improvement of pedagogical and administrative staff constitute an independent and central component of educational reform programs. The main stages through which teacher training in Algeria has passed, in chronological order, can be summarized as follows:

3.1 Exceptional Training (1962–1970):

This period followed independence. An Educational Reform Committee was established and tasked with drawing up a comprehensive educational plan to restructure the educational system. During this time, direct recruitment of teachers was used despite the fact that many recruits lacked essential foundations in teaching.

3.2 Initial Training:

Initial training extended from the 1970s to the mid-1990s and took place in technological institutes of education, which were responsible for training teachers for secondary, middle, and primary education. These institutes could also undertake the task of developing and improving the level of practicing teachers. Training in these institutes was divided into:

- First training phase: a two-year program for primary school teachers before they entered the profession.
- Continuous training phase: one year of additional training for graduates of technological institutes.

The continuous training phase begins from the date of tenure until retirement and consists of internships, seminars, and pedagogical research circles (Hassouni Mohamed Abdel-Ghani, 2013, p. 22).

3.3 Training in Higher Teacher Training Schools (from 1998):

After the various changes and reforms in the field of teacher training in Algeria, the President of the Republic decided in 1997 to establish the Higher Council for Education, which transferred all categories of teachers to the university, specifically to Higher Teacher Training Schools (Écoles Normales Supérieures), starting in 1999.

As for the duration of training, the system adopted was as follows:

- A primary school teacher receives three years of training.
- A middle school teacher receives four years of training.
- A secondary school teacher remains in the school for five years.

These measures were introduced to deepen and consolidate training for different teachers at all levels. Extending the duration of training is currently practiced in most educational systems worldwide. With regard to training content, Algeria adopted the *concurrent model*, which offers academic and professional (pedagogical) training in the same institution and at the same time, within a unified program.

3.4 Teacher Training Under the New Reforms (from 2002 to the Present):

On 30 April 2002, the Council of Government approved a number of measures related to the training and improvement of teachers and educational managers. These measures include:

First: Regarding initial training for teachers and instructors:

- Ensuring one year of pedagogical training at Higher Teacher Training Schools for general-education graduates who have been recruited through competitive examinations.
- Working to establish competitive examinations that meet the requirements of pedagogical reform.
- Continuing to train technical-education teachers for five years after the Baccalaureate at the Higher School for Technical Education Teachers in order to meet staffing needs after the compulsory education stage.

Second: Regarding in-service training:

A national plan is to be implemented to improve and raise the level of teachers, taking into account diverse modes of intervention and the possibility of training through various forms such as pursuing university studies, distance education or training via modern technologies, intensive residential training courses, and alternating (block-release) training. Priority in this upgrading plan is given to primary school teachers, basic education teachers, and vocational education teachers who are younger and more in need of training. This is to be done in consultation with social partners, and by establishing mechanisms for incentives and promotion linked to improving teachers' performance.

To accompany the implementation of new curricula, the Ministry prepared an information and training plan for all stakeholders—inspectors, teachers, instructors, and school principals—to support the implementation of the curricula of the first and second years of primary education and the first year of middle school. This took into account the preparation and mobilization of the inspection corps and communication and training operations by providing sufficient information about these curricula.

In fact, the huge increase in the number of pupils as a result of the democratization of education has generated a very large need for teachers, especially at the primary and middle levels. These two stages were the first to be affected by the strong pressure of rising student numbers, which continued to increase after the generalization of the "primary school for all" project. Moreover extending compulsory education to nine years in the early 1980s, with the launch of the basic school for all, obliged the Ministry of National Education to meet this growing need for teachers up to the mid-1990s by recruiting a large number of teachers with weak qualifications, some of whom did not even benefit from the necessary initial training (quoted in Belkacem Belguidoum, 2013, p. 148).

4. The Role of Psychological–Educational Training in Preparing the Educational Workforce:

If teacher training is the cornerstone of modern educational reforms, psychological training is the foundation on which the success or failure of the entire reform system rests. In this context, Daniel Calin, in an article entitled *"What Psychological Training for Teachers?"*, analyzes training needs and stresses that primary needs revolve around understanding relational and interactional phenomena. This implies approval of training in social psychology, as teachers are in urgent need of clarifications provided by psychology.

It is not sufficient to know how to establish a relationship with a child or an adolescent; rather, the challenge is how to transform this initial relationship into a pedagogical one. The main difficulty in teaching is not managing the relationship but constructing it, and this is what pedagogical training provides. The core of pedagogical training is enabling teachers to regulate their emotions and attitudes (quoted in Abdel-Haq Zawawi, 2013, p. 147).

The teacher's role is no longer limited to transmitting knowledge and experiences; it now extends to exercising leadership and building the student's personality according to sound scientific principles. This is evidenced by the findings of the study conducted by Fadila Hanach and Ali Fares (2013), which showed the significance of primary school teachers' attitudes toward the importance of the pedagogical training program at the

Higher Teachers' School. The researchers interpret these results as evidence that primary school teachers feel an urgent need for this type of training.

Similarly, the study by Medhat Ahmed Al-Nimr (1990), entitled *"An Analytical Study of the Professional Value of the Elements of Educational Preparation for Science Teachers at the Faculty of Education over Ten Years"*, revealed that students at Faculties of Education clearly recognize the importance and value of educational courses, which reflect the role of training in building the personality of the effective teacher.

Bate (1982) found that the use of psychology in the school environment helps energize and organize school life, intensifying the educational process and promoting learning among students. These results are consistent with those of Ali Kazem and Khawla Al-Maamari (2004), who found that students' attitudes were positive and that they expressed satisfaction with the content of pedagogical training programs. This type of training helps teachers to know *what* they teach and *how* they teach—questions that find their answers in the study of psychology and educational sciences. In this regard, Tabachnick (1991) affirms that studying psychology courses allows teachers to understand their students' expectations and needs and to use teaching strategies more effectively than colleagues who have not studied psychology (Shaker Al-Muhamid, 2007, p. 349).

Results of some studies have also shown a positive relationship between the amount of educational and psychological information acquired by student-teachers during their study period and their attitudes toward the teaching profession. This is confirmed by Rolf's (1969) study, which examined the effect of studying educational and psychological subjects on the educational attitudes of student-teachers during their preparation for teaching, and concluded that these subjects have a clear effect on student-teachers' attitudes (quoted in Fadila Hanach & Ali Fares, 2013, p. 142).

In a related context, after analyzing the training guide issued in the summer of 2017—which operationalized the ministerial decree of 24 August 2015 defining the organization of preparatory pedagogical training during the probationary period for teaching staff, its duration, and program content—it was found that this training period aims at successful professional pedagogical accompaniment for novice teachers to develop their professional

competencies in three main areas: professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional participation. The guide includes the following components:

- First axis: School legislation (rights and duties of staff, professional ethics and conduct).
- Second axis: Psychology including two aspects: learners' developmental stages and educational psychology, its foundations and impact on teaching practice.
- Third axis: Organization of schooling and curricula, focusing on levels and stages of schooling and the theoretical foundations of curricula.
- Fourth axis: Instruction (didactics), comprising basic concepts and terminology, teaching and learning strategies, teaching methods, types of learning situations, and the competence-based approach.
- Fifth axis: Pedagogical management, covering yearly planning, classroom management, teachers' tools and working documents, and finally assessment and pedagogical remediation (concept of assessment, its types and tools, and different forms of remediation).
- Sixth axis: Information and communication technology, integrating ICT in teaching through the use of computers, file management, the production of documents containing text and images, internet research, and the use of email as a tool for communication, information exchange, assessment, and educational technology.

The training guide aims to:

- Ensure good and effective pedagogical supervision of teachers before they start teaching in classrooms.
- Provide novice teachers entering the profession for the first time with the tools necessary to face the challenges of teaching.
- Develop the professional skills of new teachers.
- Develop and reinforce professional values that support teachers' behavior.
- Enable teachers to provide effective education to their students.

- Equip teachers with effective working tools that enable them to carry out their tasks in classrooms away from traditional methods based solely on content and lecturing.
- Promote the use of active pedagogical methods in which the teacher is a central actor in the educational process.
- Help new teachers perform their roles efficiently and build their self-confidence.
- Improve and update the subject-matter knowledge of new teachers and provide them with modern teaching methods.
- Make them aware of state plans and orientations and of societal problems, and sensitize them to their professional duty and ethical commitment.
- Change teachers' negative attitudes toward the profession.
- Encourage self-directed learning and lifelong learning.
- Provide teachers with the opportunity to test and apply educational theories in the classroom, thereby linking theory with practice.
- Help teachers solve the educational problems they encounter (The New Guide for the Trainee Teacher in Preparatory Pedagogical Training, 2017).

It is apparent that the Ministry of National Education has paid considerable attention to the psychological training of teachers and sought to introduce modules in psychology and educational sciences as part of the axes of the ministerial decree, dedicating two weekly sessions focusing on developmental psychology and educational psychology. The psychological program for teachers focuses on the developmental characteristics of primary school children and the characteristics of adolescence for middle school students, as well as the procedures that can be undertaken to nurture and develop children's growth characteristics at different educational stages, including:

- Ensuring that writing on the board and in textbooks is large and clear.
- Clarifying the objectives of teaching Arabic to pupils and making them aware of the value of what they learn.
- Training pupils in silent reading and rapid comprehension.

- Gradually improving pupils' language, since linguistic development occurs alongside physical and cognitive development.
- Ensuring that classroom language is simple, correct, and worthy of imitation.
- Paying attention to balanced nutrition at school and adhering to health conditions.
- Basing teaching in early years on children's senses by encouraging observation and activity.
- Providing opportunities for children to express their physical activity through play, with appropriate spaces and times.
- Using teaching aids as much as possible so that children can touch and see them.
- Strengthening pupils' relationship with the library at this stage.
- Reinforcing social tendencies such as cooperation and respect for others.
- Using familiar vocabulary from pupils' environments and gradually introducing new words.
- Linking teaching to real-life phenomena or objects in the environment.
- Exploiting children's hobbies and skills to help develop imagination.
- Training children to think and discover relationships between things.
- Making play activities, especially physical play, an entry point to teaching children.
- Continuing to use language games and various forms of activities, focusing on communicative exercises that develop linguistic creativity and reducing stereotypical drills.
- Providing activities that help pupils learn through hands-on practice, play, and group work, while considering their needs.
- Providing a social climate that satisfies the child's need for care, acceptance, and affection from peers.
- Designing a variety of activities that allow movement, running, and free play, with suitable equipment.
- Ensuring that suggested topics are appropriate to the child's level of mental maturity.

- Fulfilling children's psychological needs, such as the need for love, esteem, and belonging.
- Training pupils to regulate and control their emotions.
- Encouraging pupils to read and engage in self-study by providing a range of scientific and social stories and books.
- Diversifying linguistic activities in class and in textbooks to extend collective linguistic practice.
- Providing children with sound social experiences and teaching them how to behave in different social situations.
- Encouraging pupils to express their ideas in small groups.
- Developing pupils' oral expression skills, as they are the natural prelude to written expression.
- Focusing on speaking and listening skills, as they precede reading and writing skills.
- Avoiding the provocation of pupils for mere entertainment and refraining from discrimination in treatment.
- Instilling habits of bodily care and personal hygiene.
- Not responding to the child by giving in to demands made through crying.

Psychological training for teachers also means preparing and equipping them psychologically, as they cannot perform their tasks unless they possess certain qualities and characteristics, including:

A strong personality: that is, being characterized by objectivity, justice, fairness, firmness, cooperation, love and compassion, patience and deliberation, adherence to principles and consistency in decisions, being a good role model, honesty and dedication to work, self-reliance, self-control and emotional regulation, emotional stability, respect for young and old, respect for time and order, and care for cleanliness and appearance. When teachers possess these psychological traits, this is positively reflected on their students, and they are able to fully perform their role (quoted in Nasreddine Sheikh, 2014, p. 180).

In a similar vein, the study by Khawla Junaidi and Aisha Ben Habib, entitled *"Training of Primary Education Teachers and Its Impact on Their Job Performance"*, conducted on a sample of 80 male and female teachers in

the Wilaya of Djelfa, showed that pedagogical, psychological, and cognitive training contributes significantly to improving teachers' job performance**.**

5. Contemporary Trends in Teacher Education:

These trends have emerged against the backdrop of new global methods, orientations, and strategies, especially after the information revolution, which has imposed reforms at the level of educational systems. Some of these trends focus on the teacher's instructional behavior, while others focus on teaching competencies and skills. Among the most important of these trends are the following:

5.1 Teacher Training in Light of the Competency Concept:

This is one of the most important modern approaches to teacher education. New teaching skills have emerged, linked to the use of modern technology in the educational field, such as the use of computers and the internet. This has led to the reconsideration of teacher training programs in order to enable teachers to master new skills and competencies before entering the profession.

The competencies to be developed in the teacher's personality and performance are classified by "Fredrick" as follows:

- **Cognitive competencies:** consisting of cognitive operations, mental abilities, awareness, and thinking skills necessary for performing competency-related tasks.
- **Practical (performance) competencies:** including performance behaviors that consist of observable actions and movements, such as manual skills, verbal and non-verbal skills, including reading, writing, discussion, drawing, using devices, using teaching aids, lesson planning, assembling and operating equipment, and preparing questions.
- **Affective competencies:** encompassing a set of attitudes, values, ethical principles, and positive dispositions related to performing competency tasks, including commitment, self-confidence, honesty, and conscientiousness, as well as care and accuracy in execution and application (quoted in Lakhdar Chelali, 2009, p. 56).

5.2 Teacher Training in Light of the Individual Model:

Proponents of individualization in this field consider the learner as the starting point in teacher education programs. From this perspective, teacher preparation programs address the needs of university students enrolled in teacher education, as well as the needs of school students whom they will teach after graduation. Some advocates of individualization believe that the teacher plays three main roles:

Teacher as a natural scientist,

Teacher as an artist,

Teacher as a researcher.

As a natural scientist, the teacher is concerned with observing students' behavior. As an artist, the teacher is expected to understand students' psychology. As a researcher, the teacher must be interested in studying what happens in the classroom in order to use that knowledge to improve future performance.

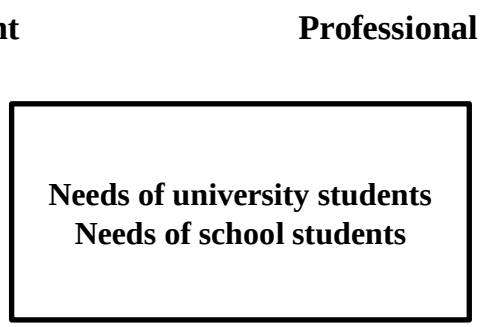


Figure 01: Teacher training in light of the individual model **(Abdallah, 2004, p. 50).**

5.3 Skills-Based Teacher Education:

This approach emerged in the 1970s. Its main idea is that teacher competence, performance, and training before and during service form the basis of effective teaching. Effective teaching can be analyzed into a set of teaching skills. The more the student-teacher masters these skills in Faculties of Education, the more likely he or she will become a successful teacher.

This approach aims to raise the level of performance skills among student-teachers. To ensure the success of this program, the following are necessary:

- Identifying the skills necessary for teachers in the field, in light of the goals of schools and educational institutions.
- Incorporating these skills into teacher preparation programs.
- Linking preparation programs in universities with the goals of schools in which teachers are expected to work.
- Linking pre-service preparation programs with in-service training programs that teachers receive after appointment and during practice.
- Establishing criteria for evaluating the performance level and skills of student-teachers (Zein Al-Abidine Abdel-Hafid & Rabee' Abzouzi, p. 189).

5.4 Teacher Training Through Micro-Teaching:

Micro-teaching is a multi-dimensional process in which the teacher plays several roles: leader of classroom discussion, expert in teaching media, diagnostician of learning, counselor for students, lesson planner, and guardian of classroom and school discipline. In addition to playing these roles, the student-teacher gains experience in lesson planning and time management. Since a micro-lesson is allocated a short time, it must be planned very carefully; otherwise, its objectives cannot be achieved.

During this short teaching time, the teacher becomes aware of the need for effective planning and, with the help of supervisors, improves planning of objectives, strategies, and assessment. Through micro-teaching, the student-teacher thus gains experience in basic planning processes, enabling him or her to apply them later in other teaching situations (quoted in Lakhdar Chelali, 2009, p. 59).

5.5 Teacher Training in Light of the Functional Model:

There is no doubt that competencies are part of the functions performed by teachers. However, it is a serious mistake to accept the view that teacher education programs should focus exclusively on competencies, since teachers perform other functions beyond them. Teachers need theoretical insight in all their work and also play a role in developing in students the values upheld by society.

Therefore, the correct approach to designing teacher education programs lies in identifying all the functions performed by teachers and not focusing on one dimension at the expense of others.

5.6 Teacher Training in Light of the Systems Approach:

The systems approach is a method for addressing complex human problems in order to reach the best logical and effective solutions at the lowest possible cost. It is based on the concept of a "system", defined as a set of interrelated parts that work together to achieve a specific goal according to a predetermined plan.

An integrated program designed according to this approach consists of four main components:

- Inputs: including all elements entering the system to achieve one or more specific goals, such as objectives, content, methods, activities, students, teaching staff, libraries, facilities, the educational environment, and others.
- Processes: the interactions among input elements that aim at obtaining desired outputs. In teacher preparation, these include the teaching processes carried out by faculty members, their interaction and relationships with students, student activities, tests, and various assessment methods.
- Outputs: the final results achieved by the system as a consequence of the interactions among inputs and processes. In teacher education, the primary output is the attainment of a competent, skilled teacher who meets desired specifications identified in the objectives.
- Feedback: the analysis of outputs in light of the system's objectives to determine the extent to which they have been achieved and to identify strengths and weaknesses in different parts of the system (Mohammad Abdel-Samee' & Hawala Mohammad, 2005, p. 28).

It should be noted that, given the continuous dynamism of educational systems worldwide, contemporary trends in teacher education are not limited to those previously mentioned. Other programs have emerged, such as self-learning programs, distance learning programs, programs based on the regulation of mental activity, and integrative systems, among others. All of these innovations contribute to the development of teacher education systems and help strengthen a sensitive sector that concerns the future of coming generations**.**

6- Conclusion:

Educational reforms and curriculum renewal will not bear fruit unless they are linked to the pedagogical and psychological training of teachers through supporting and developing training programs that are consistent with global challenges and that enhance teachers' behaviors cognitively, behaviorally, socially, and professionally. It is also important not to overlook the nature of the trainer or the person delivering the program to teachers, because designing an effective program requires the involvement of specialists to ensure that the outcomes are sound both scientifically and practically.

Furthermore, this topic should be supported by field studies in order to examine the actual reality and propose effective solutions in this field**.**

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