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University Pedagogy: Soft Skills as an Asset for the Professionalization of the University Teaching Profession

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ABSTRACT: *The issue of integrating university graduates into the professional world is becoming increasingly important in a constantly evolving environment. Soft skills (cross-disciplinary professional competencies) are now considered a sine qua non for employability. However, developing these skills among future university graduates requires strong pedagogical support from highly qualified teachers who are capable of guiding students in their learning process and helping them apply their technical knowledge in complex and contextualized problem-solving situations. This study aims to determine how best to prepare new teachers to assist students in developing these essential skills. Teacher training, being directly implicated, represents a critical link in the professionalization of university teaching. Therefore, it should train educators who can evolve as professional trainers, adapt to the demands of higher education, and meet the changing and diverse needs of their students.*

KEYWORDS: professional development, university, hard skills, soft skills, teacher training

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1. Introduction

The human factor and the concept of transversal skill are central elements of any sustainable and effective social and economic growth. Thus, the integration of graduates, particularly those from higher education, into the professional environment remains one of the primary objectives of the university system. Adapting university education to meet the needs of employers, who are becoming increasingly demanding in terms of the professional skills required for various professions, ranks high among the reforms introduced in higher education (Berrouche & Berkane 2015; Miliani 2017; Sahraoui 2019; Bakouche 2022). This reform was intended to reorganize, innovate, and break away from traditional teaching practices that failed to meet both the needs and expectations of students and the demands of the job market.

Indeed, as in other countries, the implementation of the LMD (License-Master-Doctorate) system in Algerian universities faces several significant challenges, particularly regarding the massification and heterogeneity of student populations, their mobility and diversification, the integration of digital tools, the demand for quality teaching voiced by students, and addressing concerns about graduate employability. However, poor management observed in the application of this system (Miliani 2017) and the gap between the proclaimed goals of the reform and the reality on the ground have led to dysfunctions that impact the work of teachers and, consequently, the quality of education (Sahraoui 2019).

In this constantly evolving academic context, we focus on the training of new university teachers. We will examine how soft skills can enrich and energize teaching practice and how these skills can be effectively integrated into this framework. Specifically, we aim to answer the following questions: What are the challenges faced by new recruits, and how can they overcome them? Which soft skills are perceived as essential by new teachers, and how can they prepare them for the role of university teaching? To what extent is teacher-training necessary for the personal and professional development of new recruits in terms of the cross-disciplinary skills required to function as professional trainers?

2. Contextualization

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) is committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of university teaching and providing better support to students. This commitment is reflected in the establishment of a training program for newly recruited teachers in universities. This initiative follows the criticism directed at Algerian universities, particularly after the introduction of the LMD (License-Master-Doctorate) system (Miliani 2017; Benhouhou, de Bouzaréah-Alger, & Mohelleb 2022).

The Decree Number 932 of July 28, 2016, establishes the modalities for pedagogical support for teacher-researchers. The competency framework for newly recruited teacher-researchers outlines the main areas of training for new recruits. This framework aims to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the role of a teacher-researcher. According to the competency framework, new teachers must first have a deep mastery of disciplinary knowledge and proficiency in ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Moreover, the professional competencies required at the end of this training would allow new recruits in higher education to meet, among other things, the needs of students, demonstrate integrity, trust, and respect, be aware of the teacher-student pedagogical dialogue, and ensure a meaningful and cognitive environment in teaching. Overall, this framework serves as a management tool that inventories all the technical and transversal skills related to the role of a university teacher. The competencies described in the framework would facilitate the task of new teachers in supporting students in their learning, preparing them for scientific research, and enabling their readiness for integration into the constantly evolving job market (MESRS 2016).

In this professionalizing perspective of higher education, training organizations, the National Employment Agency (ANEM), and national companies have developed a national job reference framework called the Algerian Classification of Occupations/Jobs (referred to as NAME). This framework enables the identification of jobs by sector of activity and specifies the needs of companies in terms of the skills required by

employers. NAME document number 01501 defines the tasks of the university teaching profession and the required competencies.

According to Benhouhou and Mohelleb's analysis (REF), the defined tasks and specified competencies are vaguely determined, and even the assessment methods, described as "restrictive," need to be revised, clarified, and updated. It is insufficient to evaluate only students' knowledge to prepare them for entry into the job market.

Similarly, our analysis of the NAME document indicates that the focus is primarily on fundamental and technical skills already acquired during the initial training of teachers. However, emotional, interpersonal, and behavioural skills related to "soft skills," which enable new recruits to handle complex situations, particularly in the initial phases of teaching, are not explicitly outlined. Teachers must develop these behavioural skills so that their students can acquire them in turn. This is the very principle of university pedagogy. Newly recruited university teachers are often exposed to conflict situations both inside and outside the classroom; they must manage the massification and heterogeneity of students and handle delicate situations such as stress, change, restoring order, managing interactions, group work, collaboration with colleagues, etc. Ongoing training, being theoretical and academic, does not guarantee the acquisition of these transversal skills, which are essential for the personal and professional development and fulfilment of future educators.

3. Professional Development: From the Developmental Perspective to the Professionalization Perspective

The concept of teacher's professional development has been a key topic in numerous scientific events and at the center of much scientific research for several decades (Perrenoud 2001; Wittorski & Demazière 2024). The meaning of this concept is, in fact, dependent on the theoretical approach adopted by the authors, whether developmental or professionalizing. Thus, the term is polysemous as it refers to a multitude of expressions. Researchers are far from unanimous on the content of the phases and aspects of professional development for teachers (Boutin 1999). Indeed, the concept of professional development sometimes refers to continuing education (Boucher & L'Hostie 1997). At other times, it refers to career development (Huberman, Grounauer, & Marti 1989), and in other instances, it determines professional growth (Anderson 1995).

If we adhere to the developmental theoretical perspective, which is based on Piaget's theory of the psychological development of the child, professional development relies on a succession of phases that combine consideration of both the interests of the employee and the organization. It is an evolving and active process correlated with personal development, involving substantial transformations and significant adjustments on the part of the teacher (Anderson 1995,). Therefore, the variations and crucial changes brought about by the actors form the basis of the reflection that considers professional development as the process through which "teachers develop within the social conditions of their lives and experiences, existing educational cultures, and contexts" (Raymond, Butt, & Townsend 1992, 143). Consequently, as individuals move from one stage to a more complex one, they experience changes in their behaviours, thoughts, functioning, and even in their way of acting due to their personal experiences (Hébert & Limoges 1988). In short, the developmental view revolves around two main principles: on one hand, the personal and professional development of the individual, and on the other, changes in behaviours and psychological aspects.

Furthermore, if one adopts the theoretical perspective based on professionalization, professional development emphasizes reflection, research, and professional growth through learning. To clarify this concept, it is necessary to first define the concept of a profession. Researchers specify that a profession refer to "an occupation that is intellectual in nature, based on rational knowledge, subjected to training with explicit procedures and possessing strong legitimacy" (Trousson 1993, 145). The profession is thus governed by intellectual and social dimensions since it involves scholarly knowledge, social recognition, and adherence to ethical standards. Therefore a profession "is learned through study and relies on scholarly knowledge that is taught in universities" (Bourdoncle 1993, 90). In this context, professions are characterized by four dimensions: "they possess a knowledge base, they serve the public interest, they have a code of ethics, and they are subject

to remuneration" (Wittorski 2008, 9). It is in this sense that researchers consider the professionalization of teachers to align with the rationalization of the teaching profession. "Regardless of location, the dynamics of teacher professionalization are somehow linked to the conceptions of teaching, the act of teaching, the knowledge acquired by teachers, and their place within educational systems" (Tardif, Gauthier, & Lessard 1998, 200).

In this framework, teacher training gains its full meaning through the rationalization of training via "the definition of training needs and objectives" (Springer 1996, 84). The ultimate goal is to prepare teachers to train learners, meet their expectations, and respond to the needs of a rapidly evolving society. In this theoretical professionalizing perspective, which relies on a solid understanding of the essential competencies for the teaching profession, professional development is thus based on learning, research, or reflection by the teacher on their own practices to improve their performance. In fact, the teacher is, considered a lifelong learner, developing their knowledge through their personal experiences. From this standpoint, professional development is defined as "a process through which the teacher and their colleagues reflect upon and renew their mission as agents of change, acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for effective professional practice" (Day 2002, 102). In this process of individual and collective learning, the teacher's engagement and participation in their own professional development are key factors in developing new competencies that enable them to design new practices within the framework of continuing education.

Furthermore, reflection in action and on action forms the foundation of professional development through research or reflection. Reflection is an intellectual exercise that not only allows for adjusting one's current work but also for analysing and revisiting past practices and actions. These mechanisms of reflection strengthen the practitioner's actions and offer the opportunity to benefit from their experience (Mailloux 2001, 130). Professional development, in this context, involves a process of continuous research conducted by the teachers on their own practice. It also involves a systematic analysis and a regular evaluation of their actions. In essence, professional development is centred on the learning process over time, optimizing continuing education, developing competencies and skills related to the teaching profession, ongoing research, and critical reflection on practice. Therefore, the concept of professionalization in the teaching profession directly challenges the processes and modalities of teacher training, breaking away from previous modelling-based training. The new paradigm of professionalizing training must include objectives related to building and developing professional competencies and essential skills for the practice of the profession and fostering a continuous reflective stance. Knowledge is no longer transmitted; rather, competencies are co-constructed in complex and contextualized situations. The objective is to develop the ability to adapt, act, and interact in these situations.

4. From Pedagogical Innovation: Toward the Notion of Soft Skills, Transversal Professional Competencies

Possessing advanced technical skills, or what are commonly referred to as "hard skills," is no longer a sufficient guarantee of performance. Hard skills encompass academic or technical competencies already acquired, either through initial training or in the course of one’s work. Employers' needs go well beyond the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) level of job seekers. Human and relational qualities, which fall under the category of soft skills, are the most sought after by employers, particularly those related to communication, autonomy, adaptability, innovation within organizations, and agility in various interpersonal and professional situations.

Soft skills represent an individual's ability to mobilize knowledge, technical expertise, and a set of behavioural competencies to achieve an expected result in a given professional context (Le Boterf 2008). Indeed, behavioural flexibility and personal and relational qualities are also powerful assets for success in social life; they are predictors of life success (Bel 2002). In the same vein, these 21st-century skills are now considered the primary criterion for recruitment (Cimatti 2016).

Le Boterf further clarifies that the notion of traditional competence would be "a weak concept for strong challenges" (Le Boterf 2006, 45). Indeed, the stakes are high for the social and professional world, where competitiveness is at its peak: innovation, performance, adaptation to changes and contexts, future projection,

employability, training, and the fulfillment of employees, etc. Thus, the human dimension is the intangible asset of a company.

In this perspective, the role of universities has changed. Ensuring closer ties between universities and the economic sector has become a necessity to facilitate the integration of graduates into the labour market. This change requires a break with traditional practices. A restructuring of university training is imperative to meet the demands of pedagogical innovation in higher education and the requirements of employers, which place the student at the center of the action. Consequently, the professionalization of the university teaching profession calls for a reassessment of the objectives assigned to the training of new teachers (Le Boterf 2006).

Indeed, the teacher's mission is no longer limited to transmitting knowledge and assessing it. The teacher's role has become more complex, as knowledge is now co-constructed with the involvement and initiation of students into action within contextualized problem situations. Therefore, the university teacher must possess transversal skills that enable them to motivate students, foster learning through interaction, manage and support learning processes, innovate in their teaching methods, integrate them within a professional framework, collaborate with colleagues, and encourage students to adopt a group mind-set (Daelle 2010).

These soft skills must be developed in newly recruited university teachers to enable them to act as professional trainers. New recruits must adopt a reflective stance on their pedagogical practices to ensure their professional development, guide their students in mobilizing technical expertise to solve complex situations, support them in their learning, and assess them not only in terms of hard skills but also in terms of soft skills. This teaching-learning method gives meaning to learning and allows future graduates to focus not just on obtaining diplomas, but rather on developing the transversal competencies necessary for their employability.

5. Data Collection Method

Our study is based on a methodological approach that utilizes qualitative research methods. We designed semi-structured interviews to address our research questions. This investigative tool was chosen to allow participants to express themselves freely and provide clarifications and explanations regarding their responses. The aim of the interview guide we developed was first to establish an overview of the difficulties encountered by new teachers, particularly concerning the teacher-student relationship, and then to identify the soft skills perceived as essential for the practice of university teaching. We subsequently directed the questions towards the role that teacher training can play in preparing professional trainers by integrating soft skills into the training content. Our sample consists of twenty-five newly recruited teachers from six Algerian universities. Our survey targeted teachers of institutional Arabic and those teaching foreign languages, specifically English, French, and Spanish. Given that our survey coincided with the end of the exam period and the time for grading papers, the participants were invited to take part in our study through various communication channels: Google Meet, WhatsApp, and by telephone.

5.1. Difficulties in the Practice of University Teaching

Newly recruited teachers in higher education undergo an online training program that lasts for one year before their confirmation as teacher-researchers. This pedagogical support has a dual objective: to introduce new recruits first to the field of educational technologies and then to various mechanisms of university pedagogy, whether for in-person or hybrid teaching. All the teachers interviewed reported facing difficulties in managing time, stress, and the coordination of multiple activities simultaneously, while lacking the skills needed to handle such situations on emotional, technical, and behavioural levels. Informant No. 3 states:

"As a new recruit at the university, the first difficulty I had to face was how to manage time, stress, and the five workshops of the online training, plus another mandatory in-person training. The online training is loaded with activities, all with tight deadlines, in addition to preparing lessons, teaching both in-person and online, supervising students, evaluating student work, preparing exams, grading papers, and dealing with student concerns and issues, etc. The first year was particularly difficult for all of us."

Our informants also indicated that, at first, they feel uneasy about speaking, especially when facing a large number of students in the lecture hall. This apprehension increases, particularly when they are assigned modules outside their specialty. Other teachers explained that managing large lecture halls represents a challenge because they have to manage the attention and participation of a large number of students, as well as the heterogeneity of the audience (differences in levels, backgrounds, expectations, needs, etc.). Informant No. 5 states:

"At the beginning, facing the students in the lecture hall was a major difficulty for me, especially since the students were numerous and diverse. I had to control the noise, maintain order, organize interactions, and above all, capture the attention of the many students. On top of that, I was assigned to teach a lecture course on a subject that was not within my specialty, so I had to prepare the lessons thoroughly and try to meet the students' expectations. Therefore, managing personal pressure and stress was paramount!"

Others describe the students' level as "low." This presents another challenge, as our informants noted that students often enter university with a basic level that is insufficient for university studies. The academic training in foreign languages at the university level differs from that in secondary education; university teachers are expected to deliver specialized content that is unrelated to improving students' proficiency levels. Consequently, they are required to adapt and adjust their pedagogical methods according to the level and needs of their students. Informant No. 2 explains:

"The students coming from secondary school have a low level; they are unable to formulate a complete and correct sentence. After conducting a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the year, I found that I had to go back to their initial level and set objectives to improve it. Managing this situation is a real problem for me; I have learned on my own over time how to overcome these difficulties, and I am still learning."

Thus, managing these challenging situations goes beyond book knowledge and mastery of technical knowledge. Many teachers resort to improvisation and confirm the necessity of developing, In addition to hard skills, transversal skills that enable them to effectively manage a diverse and heterogeneous student body.

5.2. Revealing Soft Skills: Toward a New Pedagogical Vision

5.2.1. Which Interpersonal and Behavioural Skills Are Considered Essential by New Recruits in Higher Education?

In a constantly evolving university environment, newly recruited teacher-researchers in higher education unanimously agree on the importance of interpersonal and behavioural skills in their interactions with students. Our informants affirm that while technical skills, known as the "core of the profession," are crucial, they are not enough to ensure quality teaching. The significance of soft skills is felt from the very first contact with students. Informant No. 8 explains that these skills are essential for creating a calm, effective, and interactive learning environment:

"For me, the first contact with my students was worrisome because I knew it would define the future of my relationships with them. Therefore, it required a certain behavioural stance and specific skills such as self-confidence and public speaking. It was also necessary to have communication skills to promote exchange and interaction and to ensure the well-being of the student. Empathy is also essential for creating connections with my students, etc. These skills are learned in the field and not through academic training, but I am aware of their importance because teaching and learning happen through exchange and interaction."

All the teachers interviewed demonstrated a solid understanding of soft skills and recognized their importance in higher education. They stated that these skills complement the fundamental competencies, also known as "hard skills." Teacher No. 19 comments:

"Managing stress, self-confidence, managing the lecture hall, controlling interactions, communication, and resilience were challenges for me; I learned to overcome these difficulties on the job. In reality, technical knowledge is essential for ensuring expertise in a specialty; however, transversal skills are equally important and complement them."

The teachers are aware of the role of soft skills in improving their performance and, consequently, the success of their students. Additionally, our informants emphasized the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and collaboration. They explained that these skills are crucial for group work, managing conflicts, and fostering the professional development of the teacher-researcher. Informant No. 25 explains:

"We have to find ways to manage other relational and behavioural difficulties since we need to integrate into both pedagogical and administrative teams. We need to create communication channels with colleagues to share and receive information, participate in meetings, discuss expectations, adapt to the institution's functioning, exchange courses and information, get involved in projects, etc. Therefore, the ability to integrate with colleagues is very important for the professional development of a teacher."

Furthermore, the teachers highlighted an essential point related to the development of transversal skills in students. This point should represent the backbone of the teaching-learning process at the university level, as the ultimate goal of higher education is to support students in their learning and to prepare future graduates for professional integration. Teacher No. 15 clarifies:

"Supporting students goes beyond traditional language teaching; it is important to develop self-confidence in our students, which aligns with, for example, public speaking. These two transversal and transferable skills can be fostered through oral presentations, for instance. In this sense, students should be encouraged to work in groups while simultaneously developing autonomy and self-assessment, managing stress and time. We should also work on communication and negotiation skills through debates in a foreign language, developing students' critical thinking. Proposing interdisciplinary projects where learners apply foreign languages in different contexts, etc. The development of these skills is invaluable in the academic and professional paths of future university graduates."

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, was frequently mentioned by the teachers. They emphasized that digital competence is now the foundation of a teacher's activity, particularly in the context of hybrid teaching. Informant No. 9 states:

"E-learning—oh, at first, it was complicated, complex! It took me a lot of time to adapt. A new mode of working was imposed on us by the administration, with both remote and in-person work simultaneously. We have to prepare lessons, use the editorial chain, generate multiple versions, upload the courses online on Moodle, give instructions to students, encourage them to interact on the platform via communication spaces like chat and discussion forums, use collaboration platforms, etc. These tools are at the heart of a teacher's practice, and so digital competence has become essential for both teachers and students."

In essence, the complexity of the university teaching profession involves not only the transmission of technical skills but also the transversal skills that enable university teachers to enhance their performance, innovate in their teaching practices to meet modern pedagogical requirements, guide students in their learning, and prepare them for the socio-professional world.

5.2.2. When Transversal Digital Competence (Smart Skills) Becomes a Key Factor in Pedagogical Innovation in the 21st Century.

The COVID-19 health crisis has disrupted teaching modalities in higher education, leading to a paradigm shift toward distance learning, which has now become essential. Our informants unanimously expressed the need to develop both digital and behavioural skills to meet the demands of pedagogical innovation, although they often lack the necessary skills to perform these tasks. In this context, it is important to recall that an online training program for teachers was launched via the PPEDATIC platform, targeting newly recruited higher education instructors. This techno-pedagogical support initiative, titled "ICT and Pedagogical Practices," was introduced by the authorities to comply with Order No. 932 of July 28, 2016. The program aims to help new teacher-researchers develop skills in educational technologies to provide quality pedagogical support to students, whether for in-person or distance learning. Describing this training, Informant No. 1 confirms:

"Personally, I encountered difficulties at the beginning of my recruitment on several levels, and then I had to register on the platform and complete several activities within set deadlines. However, despite these

difficulties, the distance-learning program allowed me to develop skills, particularly in mastering editorial chains to produce educational documents, structuring a course for hybrid teaching, and using platforms like Moodle, Edx, etc. For me, it was very useful."

In this vein, Informant No. 14 explains that the smart skills developed were a true benefit:

"The PEDATIC training taught me many things I didn't know, such as using software to generate WEB, PRINT, and SCORM versions of my course content, designing a pedagogical scenario, producing educational videos, and mastering the tools for creating a course on Moodle and Edx. What I learned from this training allowed me to move away from all the old practices and adopt creative teaching methods that are interesting and, above all, interactive for students."

Informant No. 18 states that the PEDATIC training was indispensable and that smart skills are now the cornerstone of pedagogical innovation in the digital age:

"The digital skills I developed through online training have been very useful because I was able to create educational videos for my students, master course design using OPALE software, and become proficient with Moodle and Edx platforms. I learned how to plan a course for hybrid teaching and acquired knowledge on various evaluation processes and the necessity of supporting students online. Therefore, I think it is time to reconsider traditional teaching practices. We can no longer teach the so-called Internet Generation (Net Generation) or Generation Z, who were born with digital technology, and soon Generation Alpha, who are entirely born into the digital age and will spend their entire lives in technology, with old traditional methods. I am entirely in favour of digitalizing higher education."

All the informants testified that despite the difficulty of learning through the PEDATIC platform, the "ICT and Pedagogical Practices" training enabled them to understand the mechanisms of pedagogical innovation in universities, plan a course for hybrid teaching, and support online learners. According to our informants, this training provided new recruits with the fundamental steps to integrate ICT into their pedagogical practices, ensuring quality hybrid teaching that meets the demands of higher education in the digital era.

5.3. Integrating Soft Skills into the Continuing Education of University Teachers: A Crucial Challenge for the Professionalization of the Teaching Profession

The training dedicated to newly recruited teachers plays a fundamental role in preparing new hires in higher education for a constantly evolving profession. In this context, the informants confirm that the current program is not grounded in practical experience; rather, it is focused on academic and technical aspects. The majority of university teachers we interviewed are aware of the challenges they need to address to meet the demands of contemporary university teaching. Informant No. 9 explains:

"Methods based on compartmentalization, mere transmission of knowledge, and the reproduction of course content in exams are now outdated and doomed to failure. Students are changing, and teaching practices must change as well. Teacher training must support new teachers in adapting to these changes, particularly in developing teaching methods and behavioural skills that enable them to manage both learning and their professional development. Personally, I didn't learn these things in training; it was through experience and exchange with colleagues that I developed several transversal skills."

The university is not just a place for academic learning but rather a bridge that should ensure students' transition to the professional world in the best possible conditions. Thus, the university's goal is to equip future graduates not only with technical skills but also with transversal skills that facilitate their professional integration. Therefore, teacher training is directly involved in providing strong pedagogical support. These relational and behavioural skills are now the most sought-after by employers. Informant No. 4 elaborates:

"Degrees are important, but they are no longer enough to ensure professional integration. Employers are increasingly demanding in terms of human, behavioural, and relational skills. Job interviews are focused on evaluating candidates not on their theoretical and academic knowledge, but on their ability to manage conflict situations, communication skills, flexibility, stress management, teamwork, etc., through behavioural questions.

Some recruiters sometimes use psychological tests to evaluate adaptability to change, responsibility, creativity, and to measure leadership skills, for example. Therefore, the emphasis on soft skills demonstrates their importance not only in the university curriculum and professional integration but also in socio-professional integration and long-term success. The stakes are high and require a reconfiguration of teacher training to ensure the development of these skills in future higher education graduates."

In this sense, Informant No. 8 highlights the importance of targeted training that incorporates subjects that promote the development of soft skills to ensure quality support for students:

"Teacher training is absolutely crucial in terms of interpersonal skills because these skills directly impact daily pedagogical practices. For example, in addition to technical skills, I would have preferred the training to include modules aimed at developing communication techniques, modules that promote professional adaptability and resilience, modules that develop the ability to manage stress and critical thinking, group work, etc. A specific training program that offers activities, workshops, role-playing, and simulations of situations, etc., that genuinely develop skills as important as technical skills. It is in this way that teacher training will enable teachers to develop these skills in students and provide them with quality support."

Our informants raised a fundamental point concerning the continuous aspect of teacher training to stay up to date with technological advancements, pedagogical approaches, and scientific research. Informant No. 4 explains:

"Starting from the principle that nothing is static, everything changes and evolves; generations change, so teaching methods must follow this constant evolution. For example, hybrid teaching forces teachers to change their teaching methods, master technological tools, and modify evaluation methods. The needs and expectations of students are also evolving; knowledge and pedagogical approaches naturally change as well, so teachers must learn throughout their lives. This is why teacher training must be continuous over time."

The training of university teachers represents a crucial link in ensuring quality education. It must be capable of developing and effectively evaluating these human, behavioural, and transversal skills to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. In the face of the rise of artificial intelligence, the human nature of soft skills makes them the most sought-after, valuable, and prized in today's job market.

6. Conclusion

The recognition of the importance of soft skills and smart skills highlights their significance, particularly in helping new recruits in higher education meet the evolving demands and needs of the sector. Today's jobs are at risk of disappearing, new ones will emerge, and others are undergoing rapid transformation. Therefore, valuing human capital has become essential to confront digital transformation and the development of artificial intelligence. The concept of "posture" has become as important as expertise, particularly in relation to all collaborators.

Beyond the transmission of technical and academic knowledge, continuing education must be able to prepare new recruits in higher education to *Adapt, Act, * and *Interact* in their professional roles. This framework should prepare future educators to adopt a continuous reflective stance and to conduct themselves as professional trainers. Such support requires strong pedagogical guidance in terms of soft skills and smart skills. Thus, developing adaptability, listening, integration, reflexivity, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills in newly recruited university teachers should be among the objectives of ongoing teacher training.

In conclusion, the continuing education of teachers represents the crucial link in the professionalization of the teaching profession. The pedagogical action of the teacher has become increasingly complex; it is no longer limited to mastering theoretical knowledge or practices but compels the teacher to develop transversal skills that enable them to *Act* in complex situations. This support system must be reconfigured to address significant challenges and ensure the quality of education, which requires highly qualified guidance not only in technical competencies but also in soft skills that represent sustainable human capital.

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