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## Transforming Learning in Algerian Higher Education: The Impact of UFMC Training on Technology Integration

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### Abstract

As technology continues to evolve rapidly, many educational platforms have emerged online, offering open access to their users. The pandemic prompted Algerian higher authorities to implement time-sensitive plans to save the academic year and the university's structured training program. Consequently, blended learning became the primary mode of instruction, increasing online delivery while reducing onsite teaching. Simultaneously, the University of Constantine implemented an online training 'UMFC' to help newly recruited teachers improve their skills in technology-mediated instruction. These acquired skills were quickly applied to enhance blended learning for graduate students at all Algerian universities. Students reported challenges in balancing mixed-mode instruction with in-person interaction, though both methods were recognized for their flexibility. In conclusion, UFMC training should be provided to all teachers and learners to improve student engagement and increase the adaptability of online platforms in the EFL context.

*Keywords: Technological facilities; On-line platform; UFMC training; Technology mediated instruction.*

### 1. Introduction

The role of teachers as facilitators in EFL learning is both organizational and personal, as it is necessary to ensure the full inclusion of all learners regardless of their background and familiarity with MOOC platforms. Teachers undergoing virtual training need to adapt not only to the context of the learning environment but also to the diversity of learners familiar with online higher education. In this context, their responsibilities involve designing and incorporating innovative learning strategies; creating suitable materials; evaluating the learning process; motivating learners; and reflecting continuously on their teaching practices. Adopting online platforms as flexible course providers is a positive step in foreign language teaching. Extensive training for newly recruited teachers at university shifted the focus toward learner-centered approaches rather than traditional, teacher-centered approaches. The shift from theory to practice was straightforward due to the online instructions provided by the UFMC training program. Each online workshop introduced specific skills and tasks for teachers to learn and apply. Through the smooth transition of tasks, teachers help their learners understand how each online platform functions to serve their educational needs. In this context, the steps adopted are systematically detailed to streamline educational practices, identify the types of assessment, design pedagogical tasks, and generate course objectives.

### 1.2 Multi-model learning

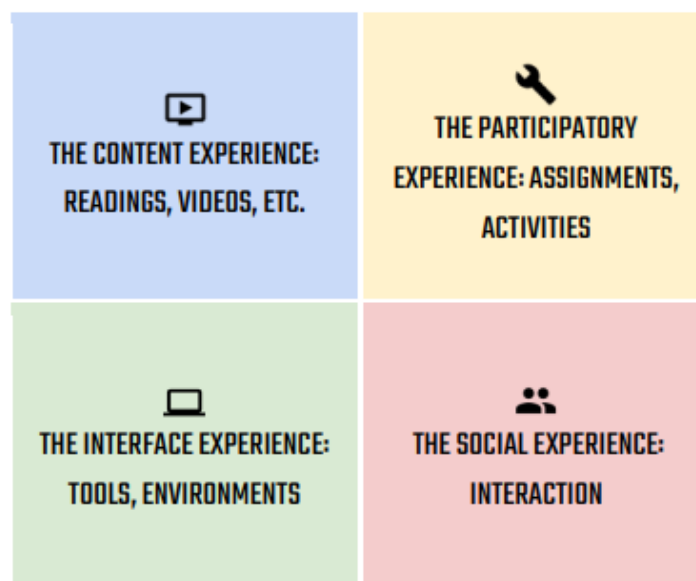
The creation of cooperative learning spaces that enhances collaboration is indispensable in online higher education. To achieve an inclusive collaborative approach, it is necessary to surpass the inclusion of interactive environments in the planning of virtual classrooms. In this regard, professors emphasize the importance of designing a space that inspires self-assured learners

*Faculty involved in [online learning] find themselves acting as a combination of content experts, learning process design experts, process implementation managers, motivators, mentors, and interpreters. In short, technology can leverage faculty time, but it cannot replace human contact without significant quality losses. (Massy 2002, 16)*

Learners of the 21st century heavily rely on technology, including smartphones, laptops, and various virtual applications and platforms. These digital tools have become integral parts of their lives. It is clear that newer generations, often referred to as 'Millennials' or 'Gen Z', exhibit characteristics that may not fully align with the demands of the modern world. This became evident after the COVID-19 pandemic, which uncovered many gaps and pitfalls in digital literacy and virtual learning. As a result, the adopted blended approach was insufficient in addressing students' needs and interests, and this is due to inadequate training for online course providers (Boudehane and Zouragui, 2021; Alyoussef, 2023; Ameer et al., 2024).

Since the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019, many teachers have begun posting their lectures through Social Media platforms such as Meta, YouTube, Google Classroom, Zoom, and JitsiMeet. Algerian universities refused to use social media or apps as educational learning systems; they have quickly integrated formal educational platforms such as Moodle and Edx to proceed in their online teaching. The new situation required teachers to upload lectures, replacing onsite learning with asynchronous online teaching (Sarnou and Sarnou, 2021). This sudden transition disrupted the learning process, largely due to both teachers' and students' limited knowledge of online platforms. Consequently, teachers and students have developed differing attitudes between acceptance and refusal (Indriana and Widiastuti, 2021; Bin Herzallah, 2021; Ghounane and Rebahi, 2023).

To ensure continuous learning during the pandemic, academic institutions worldwide implemented the Learning-from-Home Strategy (LFHS), which aimed to minimize physical contact. The teaching and learning process shifted from in-person to online through the usability of Learning Management Systems (LMSs). Recently, Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and Learning Content Management Systems (LCMSs) have been integrated into the education systems. This integration has encouraged researchers to explore innovative methods to promote hybrid and blended learning approaches (Nguyen, 2023). Scholars have been searching for solutions that could be incorporated into teaching without replacing face-to-face learning (Guessar 2020; Ghobrini and Sarnou, 2022). In the context of education, four essential elements define the learning experience: content, participation, interface, and social interaction. Content provides foundational knowledge, participation engages through assignments and tasks, interface facilitates accessibility, and social interaction fosters collaborative learning. Together, they create a flexible environment where learners engage, explore, and excel. (Warman, 2022; Zamiri and Esmaeili, 2024)



**Figure 1:** FiTech, the Design Book for Online Learning 2019, p. 30

### 1.3 Educational objectives

Newly recruited teachers in the Algerian university benefited from a national training program that concentrated on the usability of online platforms, including MOOCs. The training was conducted online for eight months and involved many activities and quizzes designed to help develop new learning and teaching skills. The UFMC hybrid training does not include office applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. However, it provides a variety of instructional materials that can be adapted into a more effective, accessible, and virtual program to benefit students in higher education. This training framework is initiated through a series of workshops designed for new trainees to:

- a) Become familiar with an editorial chain (Scenari) to facilitate the production of educational documents.
- b) Develop a course map (mapping).
- c) Formulate measurable general and specific objectives using the revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- d) Compare and contrast between different teaching approaches (Objective vs. Competence-based approach).
- e) Identify various modes and standards of assessment.
- f) Analyze an online training system.
- g) Design a pedagogical scenario.
- h) Become familiar with the features of Moodle platform.
- i) Master the use of the Open EdX platform and Studio LMS.

### 1.4 Training workshops and activities

Online training programs are extensively prepared by digital experts (Warman, 2022), and they incorporate several designed steps aimed at achieving the training objectives. Thus, our UFMC online training provides five interactive workshops in which the trainees carry out many tasks in each workshop. These activities could be quizzes, assignments, or group work tasks. The trainees can easily download the required documents to understand how to complete the tasks assessed by the trainers. The workshops are tailored to meet every trainee’s needs. Nevertheless, each activity has a due date, and submitting work after the deadline is discouraged.

#### 1.4.1 Workshop I ‘C2I’: Enhancing Higher Education through ICT Tools

<b>Competencies</b>	After the successful completion of this workshop, the trainee will be able to: <i>create a course map and master an editorial chain for the production of educational documents.</i>
<b>Activity1</b>	Moodle student mode.
<b>Activity2</b>	Organization of a course structure using the ‘mind mapping’
<b>Activity3</b>	Reproduction of a course (editorial chain Opale: Beginner level)
<b>Activity4</b>	Production of a course (editorial chain Opale: Advanced level)
<b>Duration</b>	4 weeks

#### 1.4.2 Workshop II ‘CCEH’: Hybrid Course Design

<b>Competencies</b>	After the completion of the second workshop, the trainee will be able to: <i>Plan a course using an adequate educational structure and applying the concept ‘course alignment’</i> At this level we explore how to use Opale
<b>Activity1</b>	Brain storming about teaching perspectives.
<b>Activity2</b>	

Activity3	Reading of the presentation ‘on-line course design’ and solving the quizzes on the platform.
Activity4	Developing a grid for the evaluation of an online course.
Activity5	Improving the course produced in the first workshop.
Duration	Writing a lesson plan to be assessed by another peer. 3 weeks

#### 1.4.3 Workshop III ‘MCFEH’: Methodology for HD Course

Competencies	After the successful completion of this workshop, the trainee will be able to use different <i>technological tools which permit to launch online courses in Moodle platform.</i>
Activity1	Accomplishment of three quizzes
Activity2	Diffusion of the course via Moodle - Configuring the course Insertion of study aids (resources) and communication spaces Insertion of activities, assignments and quizzes(tests) - Course backup ,restore, import and publication - Assigning roles
Duration	5 weeks

#### 1.4.4 Fourth workshop ‘MOOC’: Massive Open Online Course Design

Competencies	After the completion of this workshop, the trainee will be able to gain familiarity with <i>Edx platform and masters the techniques for creating instructional (tutorial) videos, a self-introduction and content videos.</i>
Activity1	Delving into MOOC Discovery
Activity2	Reading the instructions of the uploaded documents through UFMC platform and then performing the online quizzes (Their grading is automatic)
Activity3	Getting started with Open EdX
Activity4	Creating an online course on the EdX platform
Activity5	Production of an instructional video
Activity6	EdX course design (advanced level)
Duration	6 weeks

#### 1.4.5 Fifth workshop ‘SP’: Educational Follow-up

Competencies	After the successful completion of this workshop, the trainee will be able to: <i>master the key concepts of online monitoring and adapt reflective practice. S/he will be able to synthesize all that have been achieved (final synopsis)</i>
Activity1	Feedback
Activity2	Reading presentations (learning scenario, educational methods)
Activity3	Reading presentations(support, road map, online tutoring)
Activity4	Portfolio production.

**Duration**

5 weeks

**1.5 Structuring the Course via Vue program**

During the online training, the trainees were assigned to structure their course and outline the fundamental concepts using brainstorming techniques. Hence, the researcher selected the module “Dialectology and Sociolinguistic Variation” which is scheduled for first-year Master’s students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret\_ English Department (Linguistics specialty). The course is structured into three interrelated chapters: (1) Traditional vs. Urban dialectology, (2) Individual and speech community repertoire, and (3) Language contact. The three chapters are divided into closely related and interconnected learning units; each is further developed into sequences or sections. Given this, it is recommended to study the course from beginning to end, with exercises provided after each learning sequence. Each unit needs to be fully understood by students, especially the jargon and the register. Mastery of these units will help students synthesize information and apply it to real-life situations.

**1.5.1 Course plan**

This course is divided into three interrelated sections: (1) Definition of sociolinguistics, including urban and rural dialectology. (2) Categorization of language varieties as individual or speech community repertoires. (3) The impact of sociolinguistic factors on languages and dialects (language contact). The first sequence introduces key concepts essential for understanding the other sections. Each section in the course is followed by a case study or problem-solving exercise closely aligned with the course objectives and the student’s proficiency level. The following plan outlines the structure of the course content developed:

**a. Sociolinguistic interrelation between language and society**

Sociology and sociolinguistics are two disciplines which share a similar perspective on language, yet for specialists, they reveal distinct orientations. This sequence introduces complementary definitions of key concepts in each field while also revealing the impact of society on language and dialect in specific speech communities. Mastery of key terms is important to proceed throughout the process. In this part, urban and traditional dialectology is introduced to highlight the major differences.

**b. Individual versus speech community repertoire**

In this learning sequence, the social factors that are functional in the verbal repertoire are presented to first-year Master’s students in order to understand the function of each factor or variable in relevant contexts. Students should visualize that each factor could act as an independent or dependent variable, depending on their impact and position. These variables include “sex, gender, social status, economic status, ethnicity, race, religion, region (*rural/urban*), language (*dialect, register, jargon, style, and accent*), and educational level”.

**c. Language contact (description)**

This sequence provides complete descriptions of the variables that influence language change and the outcomes of language contact. In this vein, a full description is provided for code switching, code mixing and bilingualism. Students are encouraged to participate and share their experiences with language contact or conflict based on their social backgrounds, taking into account the register and terminology introduced.

The following map is an example for brainstorming and mapping the basic concepts used in this course. It serves as a guide to reveal the structure of the course content designed for learners.

**1.6 Moodle and Edx platforms**

When dealing with online courses, it is necessary to rethink the methodologies and approaches used in on-site courses (Bouhezam, 2021). Attention must be given to both ‘course design’ and ‘communication framework’. Moodle (LMS) and EdX platforms are the focus of the training, integrating spaces for the creation, organization, delivery, quizzes, communication, collaboration, and assessment activities. This diversity in function is quite interesting and helps learners develop their skills and competencies. Teacher training on the usability of the platforms is essential for using SCORM and other creative options such as URL, YouTube, online quizzes, and so forth. These platforms are not limited to teachers; learners should benefit from virtual training to enhance their skills in using online platforms and focus on their academic studies.

**Teacher:** Dr. BELAID Louiza  
**Module:** Sociolinguistic Variation  
**Speciality:** Linguistics  
**Level:** Master 1  
**Duration:** 18 hours per semester  
 3 hours are devoted for each subfield.

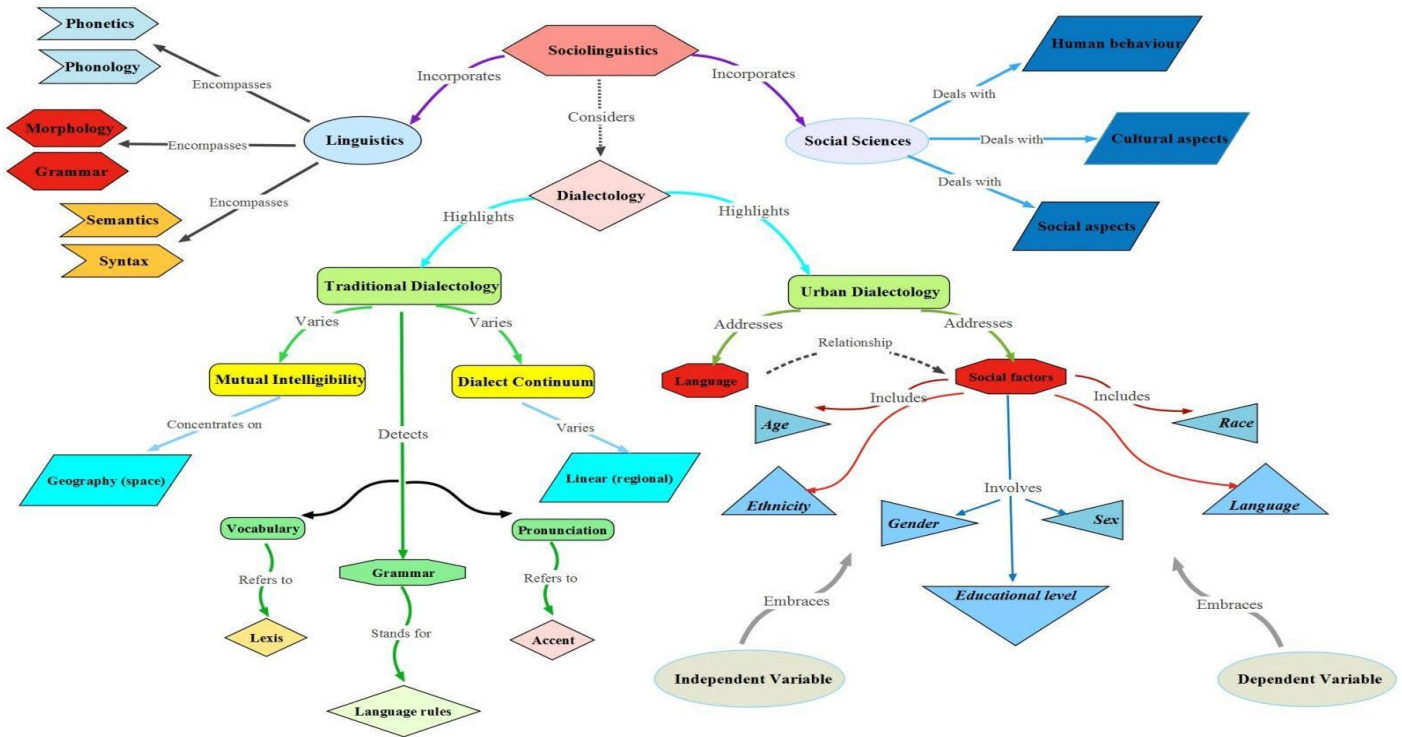


Figure1. A descriptive chart of sociolinguistics and its sub-branches

Figure 2: Course content mapping created through Vue program

## 1.7 The design of the hybrid course

### 1.7.1 Input system: Objectives and prerequisites

The course objectives are organized using the updated version of Bloom's Taxonomy. The generated objectives focus on different levels of learning defined in terms of various action verbs expressed as follows: «By the end of this course, students will be able to decipher, detect, summarize, and synthesize the differences between varieties». Particularly, these formulations allow for the determination of which learning objectives are suitable for on-site and online interactions (Hediansah and Surjono, 2020; Reyes and Meneses, 2024). Those above are categorized into specific and measurable objectives for units aligned with the learning objectives. The level of proficiency is tested through formative and summative assessments. The illustration below demonstrates how the Opale platform constructs a course map based on Bloom's Taxonomy.

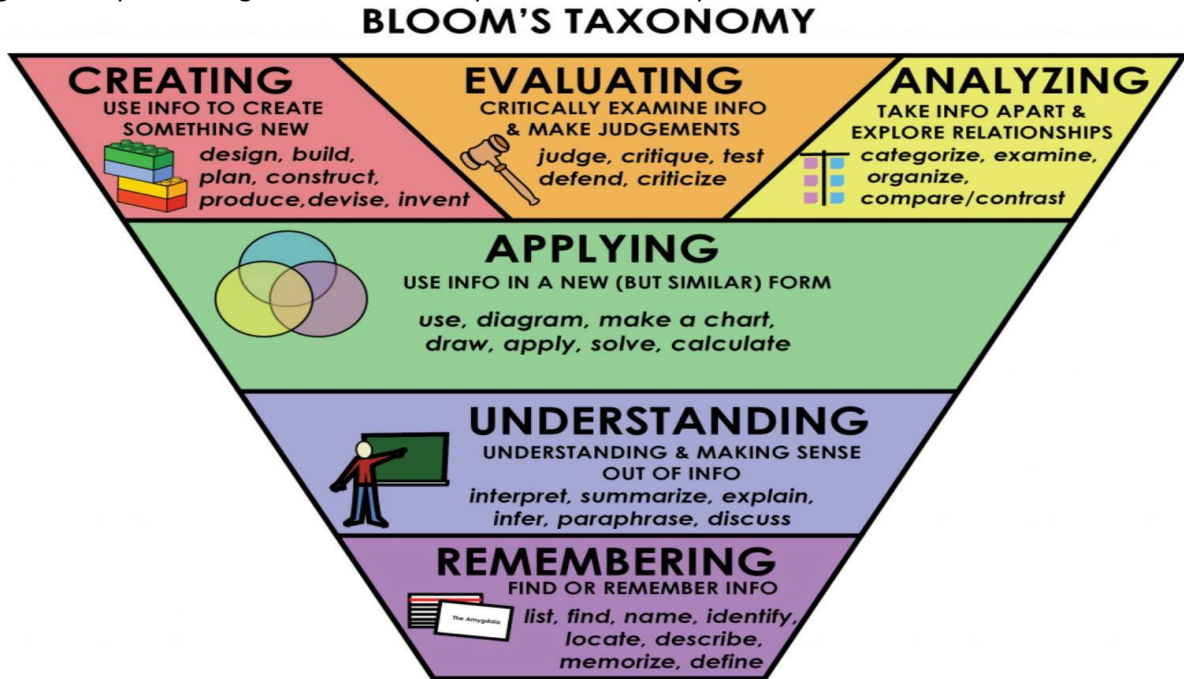
### 1.7.2 Learning system: Resources and learning activities

The content of the hybrid course “Dialectology” is determined based on the learning objectives that have already been identified. The learning outcomes necessarily affect the choice of topics, the organization of sequencing, the selection of the study aid resources or support materials (course guide, books, articles, videos, web page, podcasts) required for each sequence, and the type of teaching method (APO/APC) that best achieves the course objectives. The content is organized and planned for a specific allotted time.

Once the content has been determined, we need to identify the assessment strategies adopted for its implementation. An assessment strategy involves combining and sequencing various instructional activities to help students achieve the learning outcomes. Learning activities are constructed based on several criteria,

including individual or collaborative work, students' background knowledge, learning styles and preferences, content, time constraints, and so forth. Taking into account that students have a range of learning preferences, styles, and interests, a variety of teaching approaches and procedures are adopted and adapted accordingly.

**Figure 3:** Implementing Bloom's Taxonomy in the Course Map Creation



**Source:** Lewis 2019, *Using Bloom's Taxonomy for Effective Learning*

In a hybrid course, some learning activities are conducted online, while others will occur during our on-site sessions. Although some activities may be better suited to one learning environment compared with others, the emphasis is on creating opportunities for active learning and student interaction (Ghounane, 2020; Bouhezam, 2021). In this context, flexibility in task selection is essential. The learning strategies that are consistent with the online setting may include:

- ✚ Sharing news items and reviewing assignments
- ✚ Pair work
- ✚ Private group discussions
- ✚ Wikis for collectively compiling knowledge
- ✚ Online quizzes for self-assessment
- ✚ Asynchronous discussions/chats

### 1.7.3 Output: Evaluation and re-mediation

Assessment not only enables the teacher to diagnose the competency level achieved after each activity or quiz; but it also provides an opportunity for accommodated learning to take place, by reinforcing course material or by urging students to reconsider what input they have learned in a new way. The post-test of our course is designed with primary course objectives in mind and covers all the instructional materials provided. Evaluation and assessment is a crucial step to detect the extent to which the students have developed positive or negative feedback in the classroom context (formative assessment) or at the end of the course (summative assessment); both modes of evaluation determine whether the approach adopted to learning is adequate or inadequate to reconsider the teaching styles (reflective teaching).

### 1.8 Course learning activities

Our course adopts a blended learning approach to learning to engage students flexibly in the learning process. Onsite interaction allows students to receive immediate feedback to correct their mistakes, while online learning helps students improve their learning styles and preferences, and promotes self-regulation.

### **1.8.1 Distance learning**

In online learning, students are encouraged to:

- ✚ Participate in an online discussion forum to explore the question raised in the introduction of the course (the distinction between Sociolinguistics, sociology and dialectology). This forum provides opportunities for students to exchange, understand, and share information,
- ✚ Consult the SCORM version of the course, shared via the Moodle platform, which helps students to organize constructive notes from on-site meetings,
- ✚ Complete quizzes after each learning sequence to help retrieve and retrain the information;
- ✚ Use forums to pose questions and communicate with other students when possible.

### **1.8.2 Trainers' expectations**

We cannot overlook the fact that distance learning has introduced many challenges. Students and teachers were in quarantine while their interaction was online. This shift required significant time and effort to cope with the new situation. To avoid the shortcomings that some teachers face when planning an online course for university students, they should to inform students about reliable online course providers. This may help students achieve better results through online interaction than they would through on-site interaction. Still, receiving the best education in such a context requires learners to assume responsibility and be committed to learning. The learning and teaching requirements are highly flexible. The process of transmitting and concretizing knowledge may reveal additional needs that have yet to be explored. Teachers should always stay up-to-date with the latest teaching techniques to meet the needs of learners and integrate them fully into the learning process. To improve teaching practices, it is important to engage in reflective teaching. This involves asking questions such as: What recent technological advancements are available? What are the existing challenges that teachers face? How can universities, teachers, students, training centers, and trainers collaborate to establish hybrid or e-learning as a sustainable approach? By considering these questions, we can strive to enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences. As maintained by Bin Herzallah (2021), a crucial aspect of successful teacher professional development programs is having a modular structure that corresponds to different levels of teacher experience and expertise in using technology. It is important to tailor the materials to the teachers' comfort level. This approach enables newly recruited teachers to engage with the full range of professional development modules. Experienced teachers can join at the level where their expertise ends and assist their colleagues who are less proficient in technology.

### **1.9 Conclusion**

The self-blend model is a standard approach for adult learners to complete a course, which is later evaluated by a tutor. In this model, students are flexible in choosing when and where they engage in online learning resources and activities while still having access to support and instruction from teachers during in-person class sessions. The UFMC program in Algeria is a perfect example of this model, effectively implemented for newly recruited teachers. Extending our knowledge throughout the training helped us accommodate our teaching to meet the needs and preferences of students; furthermore, we gained familiarity with Edx, Opale, Moodle platforms, and other online facilities. In essence, reflective teaching can be evaluated through the UFMC online training program, which prioritizes assessing one's teaching practices.

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