

## Coaching New University Lecturers in E- Learning Practice: the Case of the Virtual University of Sénégal (UVS)

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**Abstract:** An experiment leading to train new colleagues in E-Learning has started at the Virtual University of Senegal (UVS) for three years. In order to improve students' learning and success, the coaching process emphasizes on the knowledge building related to the professional action of a teacher and on the development of pedagogical skills from a co-analysis of real teaching practice. The training, too aims at facilitating the management of teaching and the integration of the teachers in the community of UVS as well. The process helps the development of an objective vision of teaching and a professional teaching identity as well. The training process, in addition, stimulates the professional autonomy of the new teacher. Those in charge of the training get advantages in monitoring such a process adequately.

**Keywords:** support, distance learning, university pedagogy, trainee teachers, experienced teachers.

### INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2013, the Virtual University of Senegal has succeeded to give minimal support to the new lecturers as they started their first classes in E- Learning situation. Such a practice is no longer accepted nowadays. Indeed we know now that researchers in Teacher's professional socialisation agree on the first teaching years experience and their deep influence over individual's subsequent professional development (Gold, 2016; Huberman, 2019; Zeichner & Core, 2020). Thus, professional integration is a crucial time in a career, as the experiences on those days impact on development practice ; if those experiences are negative or even traumatizing, they can have pernicious effects on efficiency and on the quality of services provided. (Raymond & Hade, 2017). In addition, We know that teaching practice situation has much developed in these last years. Teaching has become more complicated and professionalized (Cohier, Bednarz. Gaudreau, Pallascio and Parent, 1999; Héту, Lavoie and Baillauquès, 1999; Paquay, Altet, Charlier and Perrenoud, 1999; Perrenoud, 1994; Raymond and Lenoir, 1998). Many new rules are applied in institutions and (in universities curriculum development and testing), and new social requirements for learners' success are being formulated (strategic planning and performance contract).

These various considerations suggest that it would be imprudent today not to provide more support for the professional integration of beginning lecturers if we want to promote a starting career that helps them to take up the challenge of education in general and E- Learning training in

particular. This requires, therefore, in each UVS training Pôle (faculty), the development and deployment of new strategies and means intended not only to facilitate the professional integration of the next generation of lecturers into the educational community, but also to foster among them the emergence and development of the skills needed to teach, so that all students learn better (Sané, 2017). Yet, the coming generation of university lecturers at UVS has some particular characteristics as they increase the challenges and multiply the issues related to professional insertion.

Indeed, many of the lecturers hired at UVS have neither training in pedagogy nor teaching experience ; their training is essentially based on disciplines and their work experience, when they have any, deals with a field of practice other than teaching. it means that, in many cases at UVS, the step of professional integration merges with the period when the person begins the construction of an identity and of a teaching practice. For years, generally speaking, teaching practice at the university was done "on the job" (Sané, 2017). The new teacher was supported in the development of his pedagogical skills in a more or less random way i.e., depending on the existing methods of the Pole in terms of support for recruits as well as on the goodwill and personal initiatives of more experienced colleagues.

Currently, paying attention to the disadvantages and limitations of such a poorly organized and blamed teaching apprenticeship, the UVS has begun to implement measures and has taken

concrete means to support adequately the professional development of recruits on the pedagogical level. These initiatives come on time, because the recruitment of the teaching staff that has begun in recent years at UVS should continue and even increase in the coming years, mainly because of the growing number of students registering at UVS.

Thus, for example, in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (Pôle LSHE), two courses related to technopedagogy and management of educational institutions have been introduced. These courses are new forms of support for teachers. In addition, the institution provides all UVS lecturers with training modules on university pedagogy. Other ideas are emerging for the creation of a centre for university pedagogy (CPU-UVS). We have noted the importance of such a telling decision as teacher training. In the following section, we first define what is meant by "coaching", and then we shall specify and explain duly the main characteristics of the model developed and being experimented at the LSHE Pôle.

### Frame of Reference

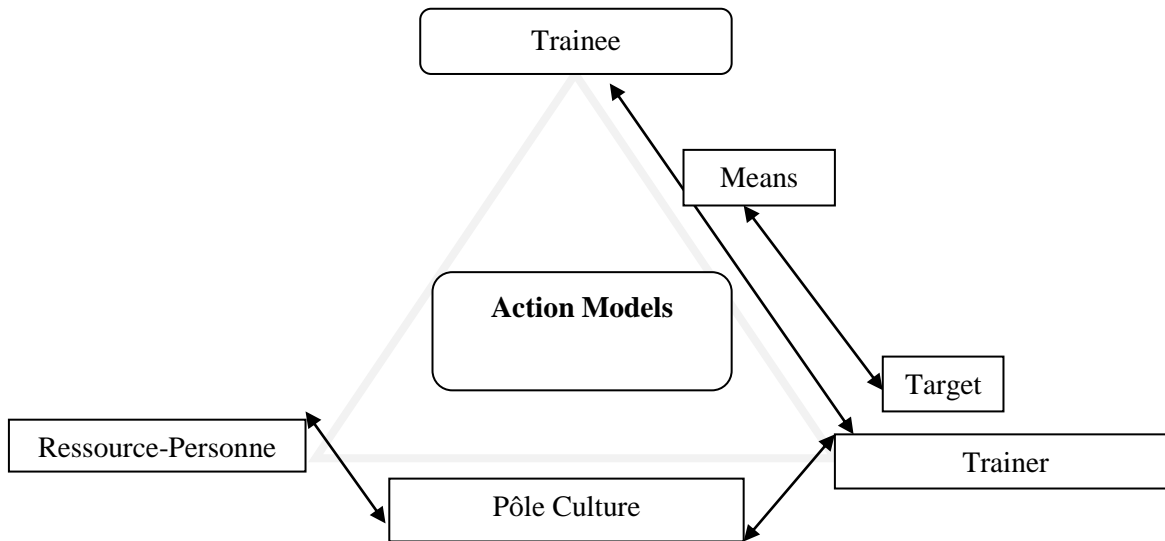
The model of support for new teachers proposed here is based on the implicit assumption that one only really learns to teach by teaching. Indeed, such learning can happen "on the job", out of any formal, structured and consciously organized framework to support beginning teachers. However, we are convinced that with appropriate strategies and means, it is possible to speed up the capacity building related to E-Learning, as well as the development of professional competencies expected from a teacher.

Guiding a person who is new to the profession is first of all "being with" that person, by his side, to help him make better use of the new interactions and experiences he is daily confronted with, in action in the field, with learners and with colleagues, in a context where many things are new to the person. Le Boterf (2016) rightfully defines coaching as a pedagogical function, essentially aiming to: 1) help the person being coached to name what he is doing and to identify

the problems he is encountering in practice, 2) to keep the trainee in touch with resources and knowledge adapted to the difficulties experienced (it is what St-Arnaud [1999] refers to as the supplementary function), and 3) to help him to focus on his approach and progress. In our system, the interactions and concrete experiences analysis in the field by the beginner takes a central place. Such an analysis helps to reveal the novice's capacities as well as the problems he has to face.

According to Lafortune and Deaudelin, (2001), coaching or close training is to bring support to people in a learning situation "so that they can progress in knowledge building". In this case, it is helping beginners to build knowledge about teaching. The support provided should also increase the development of needed teaching skills, such as designing and implementing teaching strategies that focus on student learning and development, and assessing learning progress.

In our model, different pedagogical means are combined to highlight the construction of useful knowledge and skills in teaching. The type of support provided varies according to the progress of the person being closely trained in the construction process in question. For example, during the training workshops (2017-2018), we noticed that the trainees often asked their coaches to validate their lesson plan and their professional decisions. These frequent requests, at the beginning of the coaching relationship, required the coach to do something like coaching or tutoring. At other times, it is rather a work of co-construction of knowledge that would be developed through the interaction between the trainee and the trainer or through the interaction in a group analysis of practices. In short, for us, training closely a person who is new to the profession means first to be closely in relation to him and his own concerns, working in interaction to him and to other beginners in a reflective approach to professional practice and, of course, it is providing appropriate support and insight in a given situation. Figure 1, below, is an overview of the components of the coaching model, which will be detailed later.



**Figure 1:** The Components of Training Model

### Working on the Action Model

One of the aims of the coaching process, undoubtedly the main one according to many researchers in educational sciences, is to speed up knowledge construction related to the professional action of a teacher and the development of teaching skills. It must bear in mind that the majority of new lecturers have essentially got disciplinary- based training and, often, work experience directly related to their field of specialization, which is not teaching. These people, who unexpectedly find themselves in a classroom situation, have neither training in pedagogy nor experience in E- learning.

However, beginners are not completely helpless, since they have a built-in set of thought and action patterns that make them act in a situation without having to discuss at length about what to say and how to do it. In other respects, some of them come from universities where the mode of teaching is face-to-face only. Reflection in action to Schön, (1996) is therefore largely unconscious, based on the set of embedded patterns that Bourdieu, (1972) calls the *habitus*. Beginners also bear a representation of the act of teaching they have fashioned throughout their time in school as students. This representation is salutary as it includes a vision of "how to teach" which trainees will tend to reproduce, since everyone is known to teach the way they have been taught. New lecturers therefore do not act at random, but, from the moment they start teaching, they implement patterns of action which they are not necessarily aware of (Bourassa, Serre and Ross, 1999). Coaching, as it is fundamentally centred on the

beginner's action, should precisely grant the beginner a prise-de- conscience of the implicit models that he carries with him.

It is clear that, if they need it, beginners in teaching will sooner or later be able to take training in sciences of education, which may help them to improve their models of action (for example, when they have to deal with scientific theories, models and concepts related to learning assessment or to the competencies-based approach). However, it is also clear that such training cannot be achieved in the short term. Beginners are already in the field, in action. They are deeply involved in the real experience of teaching, and it is this real experience in the field (structured by the initial schemes and models) that coaching will rely on in order to begin work on the models of action. Why focus so much on experience? Because experience is a source of knowledge, as Schön, (1996) so aptly puts it. This author even specifies that practice produces knowledge that cannot be produced otherwise. Many specialists have dealt with the topic and experiential learning has long had its place in the body of learning theories.

Coaches and students, based on systematic observation and close examination of "effective action" in a real life teaching situation (Vermersch, 2014), will therefore work together to build the beginner's knowledge and pedagogical skills so that he can wittfully improve his action models. In doing so, a new employee will arguably develop, more quickly than he would have if left to his own devices, the knowledge, skills, and the know-how required to deliver high quality education. The

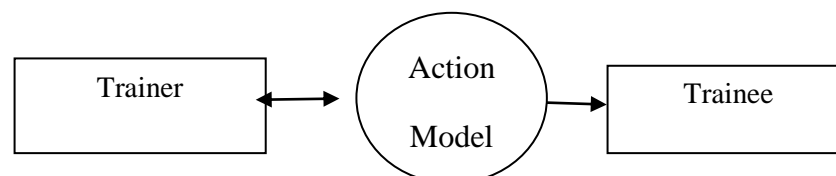
novice lecturer, for that purpose, is prompted to become a reflective practitioner.

When they are new to the profession, lecturers are overburdened by lots of emergencies (e.g. preparing lesson plans, teaching materials, planning presentations, preparing laboratories and research files, getting used to the computer tools at hand's reach), and they have no time to devote to systematic observation and close analysis of their classroom interventions. This will come a little later, at a more appropriate time. At the beginning of the task, the trainee is mainly concerned with meeting the immediate demands of the situation and the tight schedule to which he is subjected. This is why, at first, he will mainly call for his coach to validate his action ("Is it correct or not?") or to quickly lead him to the right direction or to the right person ("What should I do? Who should I see?"). During this period (which can last from a few weeks to a few months), it is mainly a guiding and coaching work that the trainer is called to do. Necessity obliges! At the beginning, there is little room and time available for questioning the philosophy and the rationale underlying the action or the implicit frame of reference in the intervention. Time goes quick and everything is in a hurry! When things become a bit clearer, the beginner will be able to consider the invitation to reflexivity that was made to him by his coach. But what exactly reflexivity is? What is a reflective practitioner?

To be a reflective practitioner is to see, in a systematic way, one's own professional practice as an object to be known and transformed in order to improve it (to improve its effectiveness, as St-Arnaud would say in 1992). To do this, one must first get interested in intervention situations lived in the field, and then decide to linger over them in order to analyze them (Perrenoud, 2001). Often, the beginner will lose time on a situation that he feels is unsatisfactory. With the support of his coach, he will first try to describe, as accurately as possible, what happened and how it happened in the action. As Vermersch, (2014) suggests, he will

focus on detailing "the actual action or the procedural dimension of the action". In addition he will examine the intention he was pursuing at the time, in this specific situation, as well as the strategy he deployed to achieve his ends (St-Arnaud, 1992). He will address his frame of reference (representations, values, beliefs, etc.). All this should enable him to identify his model of action in a classroom situation (for example, how he manages interactions in the classroom, on what basis and for what purpose). He will then try to determine what the problem is (problem setting) and he will consider hypotheses for solutions in order to resolve the problem identified (problem solving). As soon as possible, one or the other of those hypotheses will go through a field test in order to check their value in a real life intervention context. This will likely lead him to change something in his model of action and, therefore, to transform it by modifying either the intention (which, for example, he considers unrealistic, after examination), or the strategy (which, for example, he thinks too directive, after analysis) or, again, the frame of reference underlying the action (he understands, for example, that he must adapt his requirements by paying attention to the characteristics of the students). They will make the necessary effort to change, for they want, from now, to do better in a similar situation.

That being said, it is also necessary to ponder over satisfactory situations and analyze them from a reflective perspective: Schön, (1996) rightly insists on this point. To achieve this, we follow more or less the approach developed above. However, the analysis of a satisfactory situation does not lead to the consideration of solutions to a problem, but rather helps the beginner to shape a model of effective action in teaching. The operation is advantageous, since the model obtained can normally be updated in a whole family of comparable situations. Figure 2, below, illustrates the positioning and relationship of the actors involved with regard to the new lecturer's action models



**Figure 2:** The Relationship between the Trainee, the Trainer and their Action Models

It is important to understand what a model of action is and how to work to transform it through a

reflective process. In the training context in which they participate, the coaches become



familiar with this key concept addressed by Bourassa, Serre and Ross, (1999). In addition, concrete means (for example, direct observation, which provides data on the intervention in context) as well as tools specific to the close training of the novice in the reflective analysis of his teaching practice are proposed and explained to them. It goes without saying that the trainer who closely trains the novice is strongly encouraged to become a reflective practitioner (if he has not already done so, given that we always understand a phenomenon better when we experience it ourselves).

Finally, the coaching model elaborated by our team invites the coaches and the coachees to form group for collective analysis of practices in order to carry out the work on the action models done in dyads. There are indeed limits to the learning process conducted alone or in pairs. The group (normally between four and eight participants) is a powerful source of motivation that fosters professional co-development (Fayette & Champagne, 2017). Indeed, it is like a high place for discussions about professional practice and interactions built around shared interests related to improving educational intervention. The collective analysis of practice group appears as a learning community centered on the sharing of experiences, practical and theoretical knowledge related to the issues addressed, which emerge from the close study of situations experienced in a learning context. Through group work, each participant will expand his capacity for action and reflection and will thus be able to improve his professional practice by refining his models of action.

By confronting their own ways of doing things and their points of view with those of their colleagues, the novice will be able to develop an objective conception of what E- learning is, i.e. to acquire a fine, contrasted and nuanced representation of the multiple dimensions that shape teaching work. This important knowledge-building and skill-development mechanism contributes greatly (along with reflective practice) to the development of an identity of professional teaching.

### Colleagues' Contribution

In the Pôles (faculty) and generally at UVS, there are established practices for supporting, welcoming and integrating new lecturers. These welcome and integration practices may vary from one Pôle to another. What matters, in our view, is to recognize the practices used at UVS and in the Pôles that welcome a new recruit and to insist that

the university and the colleagues in the Pôles concerned continue to do what they used to do in this text.

As we have observed at UVS, at the beginning of this research paper since 2018, most of the existing support, welcome and integration practices are quite relevant and helpful to the novice (e.g.: a tour in the digital open spaces [ENO], handing over documentation summarizing assessment practices, key institutional policies, sharing of pedagogical materials including lesson plans, etc.). In general, these practices make it easier to take up the position, to take charge of the task, and to integrate into the organization (Pôle, UVS).

Colleagues, through their advice, comments, questions and suggestions, can guide and pave the way for the novice, allowing him to validate his first attempts. For example, when the novice is confronted with the thorny issue of planning and structuring the content to be taught, the advice of experienced colleagues can be very valuable. When the New lecturer profits from rich interactions with colleagues, he can learn a great deal through modeling and close training. Colleagues' contribution should be encouraged. That said, while colleagues are rarely directly involved in working with action models (as defined above), they can still influence a beginning trainee's developing practice. The contribution of colleagues in the novice's Home Pôle can therefore be important in terms of logistical support and meaningful feedback, particularly at key moments such position take up, the beginning or end of a session, etc.

### Contribution of the Resource Person

Finally, the resource person, mentioned in chart 1, conducts and coordinates; these functions are necessary to update the coaching process at the UVS level. In principle, this actor is in contact with the coaches he recruits, informs and trains, and, of course, supports in the coaching work they are expected to do with the novices. The resource person is concerned with the development of coaching skills among experienced teachers who wish to take this approach. In this regard, the resource person provides exhaustive documentation and organizes training sessions to trainers. It encourages them to analyze their coaching practices in a reflective and collective manner. Thus, teaching how to coach is done not only in a theoretical way, alone and with colleagues, through readings, reflections and discussions, but also in a very concrete way, by

living the experience of coaching someone new to the profession. Finally, the resource person should expect to be asked to provide insight into different aspects of coaching and should be able to respond to requests. Consequently, he should be familiar with the contents and processes that make up the proposed support model.

The next two sections are devoted to the presentation of what was experienced in the field during the year of experimentation at UVS. First, we shall briefly present the methodological choices that were made in order to gather relevant empirical material on the benefits of close training. These benefits shall then be explained from the point of view of the actors involved in this process.

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

It was during the second year of research, (2019) that the coaching model was field-tested with the help of volunteers (some tutors and associate teachers). Thus, nine novice teachers from the Pôle (LSHE) were accompanied by two experienced teachers. The training of the coaches was carried out by a resource person (specialist in educational sciences) of the LSHE Pôle. In the following lines, we shall present the different means of collecting chosen to gather, during the year of experimentation, data relating to the benefits of the accompaniment, from the actors' point of view. The interview, the debriefing or discussion group, the participant observation and the research diary were the preferred means of collection.

First, with regard to the trained novice lecturers, two series of semi-directed interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted and recorded. The first series of interviews was conducted between October 12, 2020 and December 8, 2020, i.e., at the end of the first experimentation session. Four themes were then discussed with the novice lecturers: 1) their progress in relation to their E-learning training since the beginning of the session; 2) their progress in supervising groups of students; 3) their assessment of the support received from the training teachers, their colleagues, and other novices; and 4) their need analysis in anticipation of the next session. The second series of interviews took place between May 18 and June 6, 2021, i.e., at the end of the second experimentation session. Three themes were discussed with the trainees: 1) the evaluation of the progress made referring to the aims of the coaching model, 2) the evaluation of the support received by the different actors of the model, and finally, 3) an overall evaluation of the

coaching received by the different actors and their future needs in terms of coaching, both in dyads and in groups.

The collective professional co-development meetings were also an opportunity to collect data. At each meeting, one of the members of the research team took the role of participant-observer: such a status means that the person was actively involved in these meetings and also took direct observation notes on the progress, themes discussed and outcome of these activities. All of these data were compiled into a single database. In total, there were thirteen group meetings, each lasting approximately two hours. The topics discussed were quite varied.

In the first experimentation session, the novices examined and reflected together on various aspects of teaching, such as course planning and learning assessment (formative and summative). They also discussed competencies in E-learning, using proper reference materials, including the famous Competency Profile for E-learning Teachers proposed by La liberté and Dorais, (2015) for PERFORMA. During the second experimentation session, the group meetings took the form of professional co-development meetings, as defined by Payette and Champagne, (2017) or collective analysis of practices, as defined by Robo, (2012). The meetings were therefore entirely centered on systematic observation and on the detailed analysis of the effective action of each teacher in a collective reflective perspective.

As for the trainers, a file of relevant data was compiled from the notes taken and observations made *in situ* by one of the members of the research team who actively participated in teacher training sessions. There were eight meetings in all, lasting two hours each, divided equally between the two sessions. These meetings served the coaches to focus on the pedagogical aspect of coaching beginning lecturers, on coaching skills, and on the strategies and means to be favoured in order to coach effectively, all from the perspective of reflective analysis of support practices.

Moreover, two debriefing meetings (or focus groups) were held with the trainers at the end of each of the two experimental sessions. The main objective of these recorded meetings, which lasted approximately two hours each, was to obtain from the trainers their opinion of the training of coaches.

More generally, the research diary was also used for data collection. The journal contains a variety of information. These include reflections, concerns, impressions, methodological observations, and descriptions of the relationships between the actors, all of which are useful information for the research contextualization (Savoie-Zajc, 2014).

The data collected made it possible to identify gains obtained by the various actors and thus, to ascertain, in a way, the *raison d'être* of the close training session as provided by the model. It is through content analysis that the gain from coaching was identified, both from the opinion of the novice teachers being trained and from that of the experienced teachers acting as coaches. This analysis was first made through the re-reading and repeated listenings of collected data to identify the core of observed situations or proved evidence. This analysis was first done by re-reading and listening to the data collected in order to identify the essential elements of the situations observed or the testimonies given. Other benefits categories were defined from the view of the actors (Paillé, 2006). We now present these benefits.

## RESULTS OBTAINED REGARDING BENEFITS

In this section, we first present the benefits identified by the trained teachers, then those identified by the coaches.

### Benefits Reported by the Trainees

The evaluation of the profit gained by the novice teachers was carried out in two stages: 1) first, at the end of the first coaching session, when the coached teachers were only able to express, in general, their conviction that they had evolved and progressed thanks to the coaching they had got up to that point; 2) then, at the end of the entire year of coaching, when the novices were more able to express themselves clearly as to the benefits they had obtained, and to identify the ways in which their progress had been fruitful.

### Benefits Obtained at the End of the First Session

At the end of the first coaching session, the advantages reported by the beginning teachers were closely linked to the two types of coaching they received: on the one hand, the personalized work in dyads, and on the other hand, the group work. When asked what they appreciated most about the dyad work, the mentored teachers answer as follows:

I learn a lot, the mentor [here, the mentor teacher] shows me how to do it. The mentor helps me get

off on the right foot. It's helpful, it meets my need to get confidence. The mentor asks questions and helps us find answers.

As for the group support, they show their satisfaction by saying, for example, that they liked the sharing and exchange of emotions felt and experiences lived. They also said they appreciated, from another perspective, the discussions about the role and skills of the teacher, as well as the more insightful exchanges on summative evaluation. According to them, the group meetings helped to drown a feeling of isolation thanks to the collegiality experienced and the environment of trust, cooperation and mutual aid that prevailed within the group.

To novice teachers, it is clear that the support they received had a positive influence over their practices, in the virtual classroom and in the practice setting as well. During the first session, these teachers appreciated the coaching, which was first was more disciplinary (what to teach) than pedagogical, but this tendency was gradually reversed over time. They were aware that they had made progress quite rapidly from a need for support focused on the subject matter to concerns more related to the very act of teaching (how to teach).

In the virtual classroom, the progress was expressed in a greater sense of well-being and ease during teaching periods. After only a few months, they already felt they had got better resources and their teaching was better structured, mainly with regard to lesson preparation, thanks to the "tools" they had acquired in individual coaching and also in group training. In the middle of their practice, they felt they had made progress in the way they supported their students' practices, which procures ease, satisfaction and confidence to them.

Thus, beginning trainees perceive a real evolution and notice positive changes in their teaching practice, both in the virtual classroom and in the middle of practice, thanks to the individual support they received and also thanks to the various themes addressed during the group training sessions, where they were able to build up various knowledge and took over certain tools related to their new profession for their own.

Finally, some of the teachers who received support, whose teaching experience is longer than that of the other novices (they started at UVS during the year preceding the experiment), admit

they are convinced that their first experiences as lecturers would have been much easier if they had received formal support as soon as they started teaching.

### **Gained Benefits at the End of the Year**

At the end of a full year coaching, the positive outcomes for newly trained lecturers are as follows:

Firstly, the support they have received has facilitated their entry into the profession and the assumption of their teaching duties at the beginning of the session (the first few days). The support includes the considerable assistance provided by the colleagues in the Pôle (faculty), mainly in terms of subject matter. For their part, the coaches admit that the beginners participated much more quickly in the activities of the Pôle (teamwork, new courses planning, etc.) than the new lecturers, previously hired, who had not benefited from formal support. It proves that the support, as expected, has favored the professional integration of novice teachers into the educational community, especially in their Pôle. Thus, the support makes them feel more confident and more comfortable in their practice, since they are able to call on someone any time they need help. In the same way, the professional co-development or group analysis of practice meetings have clearly helped the beginning teachers to break with isolation as mentioned above: Coaching helps to break isolation. It's a moral support to realize that everyone is going through the same thing. I'm not alone and there's a door open.

Finally, the beginners say they feel integrated into the teaching profession gradually but surely, as well as into their home Pôle and even in the UVS.

Similarly, the coaching has helped quicken the development of teaching skills. Moreover, the novices' evolution is clearly noticeable in their practices throughout classroom situations. To them, this is particularly noticeable in their concern to act on the difficulties experienced with their students, in their pedagogical development on online evaluation practices point and in the implementation of the different teaching strategies in the virtual classroom. They do appreciate the formal, dyadic supervision that gives access to a designated resource person without fear of "bothering". All these factors help them evolve more quickly and get tools to work for their practices. In addition they are to more easily recognizing the realities of E-learning. As a group, the support provided fosters the novices to

develop and target at winning supervision strategies in the practicum environment and also the classroom situation.

In general, thanks to the coaching, the novice teachers say that they "have avoided repeating the same mistakes over and over again and avoided floundering without help or answers". Or, they add they are deeply conscious of the role of coaching in developing their skills:

"Coaching is reassuring and comforting. I like the way we find solutions by ourselves. Without coaching I would not have realized that I was wrong."

In a forward-looking vision, the new lecturers being coached want to learn more about the various existing pedagogical strategies. They hope to achieve this by continuing to take part in co-development meetings or collective analysis of practices with the firm will of finding solutions to problems experienced in the virtual classroom. For example, one of them says he was disorganized at the beginning. The coaching provided him with support throughout the year. He deeply appreciated the sharing. He wishes he could continue, the team supports each other and it is motivating.

The trainees also wish they met periodically, if needed, and on case-by-case basis the coaches. To coaches, the beginners have acquired certain skills more quickly than they did when they started in the profession.

In addition, Coaching has provided the novice teachers with developing or enriching their capacities in E-learning by putting into question their initial representations of this form of training, particularly at UVS. This knowledge enriching has been achieved thanks to the close examination of the realities of E-learning during the collective support meetings. The beginners wish they continued enriching their conception of E-learning.

Moreover, the coaching, both personalized and in groups, has made the beginners build their identity as teachers, or define themselves more clearly as teachers. For example, the coached teachers had quickly to reflect, through different activities proposed in coaching (in groups more particularly) and in the identity of their teaching subject (their initial profession) with regard to their new identity as teacher at UVS (obvious duality in practice situation). This reflection has continued throughout the year and it can be said that many of



the coached teachers now feel they are teachers in E-learning.

E-learning as a vision and the identity of novice teachers is still under construction, but it is obvious, for these trainees and for their coaches as well, that their perception is increasingly clear and defined. This has happened more quickly for them than for their predecessors, according to the experienced teachers who have trained them.

Finally, coaching has clearly promoted and developed the professional autonomy of novice trainees. For the trainees, such an assertion lies in the fact that the process is not centered on directivity (no rules or restrictions), but rather is presented as a support that promotes the development of skills in reflexivity on educational practices, and in a voluntary manner. In fact, the coaching, especially in groups, has made them acquire tools (for example, a procedure for analyzing the intervention from a reflective perspective) that helped them to move forward autonomously with regard to the difficulties experienced both in the virtual classroom and in the practice situation. Moreover, their professional autonomy has become more and more noticeable with time, until, at the end of the year, they reach an autonomy deemed satisfactory by the coaches.

#### **Benefits for the Experienced Training Teachers**

The mentors have also benefited from the coaching training sessions they have attended regularly, and from the experience of being in a coaching situation as well.

The mentoring training sessions has given to experienced teachers the opportunity to focus on the pedagogical aspect of mentoring novices and not only on the subject matter support they are, in any case, perfectly capable of providing to their new colleagues without needing to train specifically for this purpose. The training sessions therefore have made the participants familiar with a reference framework relating to support. They have helped to study a model with its key concepts. Those training sessions have made the trainees get informed of various tools such as those for reflective analysis, professional co-development or collective analysis of practices that frame the intervention with novices.

These training sessions also have made the experienced teachers move from an initially directive style of support (coaching type) to a style that favours reflective analysis of practices. These training sessions also have fostered them to think

carefully and deeply of their own representations of teaching, on the one hand, and of coaching beginning teachers, on the other.

Overall, the experienced teachers trained in E-learning have expressed great satisfaction with the training meetings. They say they feel comforted, deeply confident and less anxious about the huge task of support they have gained. These moments of sharing has helped them to validate what was done in the support process and complete their reflection.

As for their experience in a coaching situation, an experience they have lived in the field in a way, it has helped them to address once more their practices, their knowledge of experience, and their representations of E-learning.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The more we go through the experience of coaching colleagues who are new to E-learning, the more we see how important it is to focus the coaching on the action models of the beginner in E-learning while admitting, paradoxically, that constitutes a real challenge. Why exactly? On the one hand, it must be admitted that such a focus runs counter to the professional culture of the three Pôles at UVS where, among colleagues, we can talk about everything (or almost everything), except for concrete teaching practices in a virtual classroom (Many people readily admit in the school environment that pedagogy is a taboo subject!). As Vermersch, (2014) points out, we willingly linger on the "satellite information" surrounding the action (i.e., on the elements of context) or on the value judgments, opinions and "subjective comments on one's own activity" (p... 48) which, moreover, provide "no information on the action achievement, nor on the nature of the results produced" (p. 47). It is, however, much more difficult to focus on the action experienced "in the detail of of how it has been done" (p. 47), because this is compromising for the individual concerned. That said, it is extraordinary, on the other hand, to note to what extent the more the actors talk about effective pedagogy, the more they want to talk about it! The habit, it seems, actually grows with use.

This may be justified by the focus on models of pedagogical action carried out in a real teaching-learning context that makes easier the construction of knowledge building and skills for teaching otherwise than by the mere logic of trial and error or hesitation that usually marks the beginnings of

the profession. However, the habit of analyzing one's interventions and, if necessary, regulating them in an attempt to consciously improve their effectiveness is not created overnight. Reflective skills take time to develop and become a basic posture for a teacher. In this respect, the guidance, technical assistance and encouragement coming from the trainer are precious. In fact, the relevant resources of the coach the beginner is granted, as well as the experiential knowledge he shares with the trainee over the course of the weeks, have a definite influence.

With regard to what we have seen so far, the interactional dynamic centred on effective "field" action, which is at the heart of the proposed model, is a powerful source of motivation and inspiration for all those who participate, whether they are novices or practising teachers. This dynamic helps to break the isolation that has so long characterized the practice of the profession, particularly in its pedagogical components. The coach, with whom the novice regularly analyzes his actual action in a real teaching situation, and the other novices he meets in a group analysis of practices and discusses his problems, successes and specific challenges posed by the "field", all these take part closely in the the training and get profit from it, on a professional level, by enriching each other. It is no exaggeration to admit that the professional co-development approach, which is fundamental to the proposed model, provides great satisfaction to all the actors who have accepted to experiment with it.

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**Source of support:** Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

**Cite this article as:**

Sané, M.V.L. "Coaching New University Lecturers in E- Learning Practice: the Case of the Virtual University of Sénégal (UVS)." *Sarcouncil Journal of Education and Sociology* 1.2 (2022): pp 17-27