



## RATIONALE

With its detrimental effects, the COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Quarantine periods as well as closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries.

More than 90 per cent of governments adopted some form of remote learning, reaching almost 70 per cent of schoolchildren – more than 1 billion of children worldwide. However, about 30 per cent of schoolchildren globally either do not have necessary technology for remote learning available at home or were not reached by the remote learning policies. The highest rate of children that cannot be reached are in sub-Saharan Africa. Younger children are especially left behind. At least two out of three pre-primary school students cannot be reached

with remote learning. Television, despite its constraints in sharing course materials, provided the highest coverage allowing for reaching 62 per cent of schoolchildren globally. Internet channels reach only 24 per cent of schoolchildren globally, reflecting socio-economic inequality and a deep digital divide

This fact has shed light on the national legislation pertaining to "distance education", in particular higher education. This new reality, arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, made it necessary for universities to seek digital alternatives to teaching, evaluation and examinations, circumventing uniformity, developing teaching in line with modern concepts, digitizing academic, administrative and financial practices, promoting items related to attendance and absence, enabling the principle of integrated education with distance education, in order to provide an appropriate environment for education, and to search for open learning resources albeit they cannot be alternatives for traditional classroom education.

In this context, efforts have been made to organize distance education in Moroccan universities within a comprehensive and integrated approach to the legislative and regulatory framework governing the education system in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim was manifold: to overcome obstacles, enhance this system through training teachers to use modern techniques, develop an inter-university platform for e-learning, monitor numbers of learners in virtual classrooms, provide appropriate conditions for quality education, and strengthen all aspects of governance in universities whether in the field of educational or linguistic engineering, the system of evaluation and tracking or the rights and duties of learners and educational actors. Also, a system of strategic contracts between the various partners in the educational process to engage in distance education has been enacted and made a choice, pending the issuance of the decree regulating distance education, which was set in its legislative path to overcome the chaos that witnessed universities regarding the implementation of distance education in addition to a set of social and theoretical issues raised by this type of education, which will be addressed and analyzed in this symposium through two main themes:

## Theme One: The Issue of Conceptualization and Standardization

During the past two decades, the world has seen a radically accelerating pace in the development and adoption of new technologies. This rapid technological change has affected almost every aspect of life including educational sector. Therefore, it becomes indispensable today to embrace and take advantage of the vast innovative tools that technology offers to improve and facilitate education through the use ICT for networking, learning and knowledge sharing.

The education sector has been and still is the cornerstone of the advancement of societies. Capitalizing on the academic and vocational education is a modern sort of a human investment which necessitates averting from indoctrination to learning based on discovery, investigation, analysis, deduction and problem-based learning approaches.

Any form of education is centered on the learners themselves, and this necessitates the diversity of sources and forms of knowledge as well as the exploitation of the latest developments in this field. Perhaps distance education remains one of modern forms of education that has enjoyed the development of the digital sphere.

As defined by the United States Distance Learning Association, distance education is "the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance." It describes the process in which the learner and the teacher, and the book are separated in an educational setting and the transfer of traditional environment of education from a university and school to varied and geographically independent environment.

It is a recent phenomenon of education that has evolved with the rapid technological development worldwide. It aims at providing education to students who cannot reach it under common conditions. Therefore, many countries tend to turn more attention to distance education, despite the potential challenges and difficulties, especially after the corona pandemic.

Perhaps this fact may push forward the reconsideration of the concept of distance education and the problem of its usage. So, to what extent is this type of modern education able to provide an educational environment that is completely similar the actual environment of education in a virtual sphere? What are the tools for monitoring and assessing student's attendance in distance education? How should the issue of evaluations and certification be tackled? How legal and constitutional is the mandatory imposition of the distance education system and state of health emergency by some countries? What ways are there to legally protect the private life and individual liberties under this system?

## Theme Two: Distance Education, Codification and Institutionalization

This part seeks to further highlight distance education in the wake of Corona pandemic, as all countries have reacted urgently to the educational issue to guarantee that learners are not isolated from sources of knowledge. However, distance education cannot achieve its intended goals without providing logistical support and continuous credible evaluation, in addition to developing policies and legislations that make this type of instruction a legitimate and self-standing education that has legal foundations, assessments and grades. Distance education in Morocco was merely not adopted in Morocco following the urgency stressed by coronavirus; it was addressed through official educational documents including the National Charter to the Strategic Vision for Reform 2015-2030 and the framework law 17-51 which emphasizes the interest of the Moroccan educational system in this type of education, at least in terms of perception and theory. In this regard, the National Charter for Education and Training (NCET) stipulates that the future aspects of technologies will be invested in a number of fields including but not limited to:

- Use of distance education at the middle and high school levels in remote areas.
- Seeking to achieve equal opportunities by making use of information sources, data banks, and communication networks, thereby contributing at the lowest cost to solving the problem of scarcity and unequal distribution of libraries and reference documents,
- The strategic vision of reform includes paragraphs indicating the necessity and importance of using distance education as it enhances and complements classroom education, for example:
- Gradually enhancing distance learning patterns by adopting programs, digital and interactive media, and the creation of and educational electronic resources
- Developing distance learning as a complement to classroom learning and a key factor in building a participatory teamwork culture:
- Diversifying patterns of learning and training, especially at its higher levels, with the aim of providing the opportunity for the largest possible number of those wishing to change, deepen, or certify their achievements to obtain certificates matching their expertise.
- Assisting the school, through the professional competencies of entrepreneurship, in establishing distance training and rotating training programs for learners in the technical, technological, economic and vocational departments, including educational technologies, all information and interactive programs, digital resources, various technological tools and electronic devices, as well as communication networks and systems and their services and applications, such as real-time exchange of information and ideas, video conferences, distance learning and digital libraries.

Correspondingly, the framework law, emphasized the importance of integrating information and communication technology into education. The Government should take all necessary and appropriate measures to enable educational, training and scientific research institutions in the public and private sectors to develop teaching, learning and research resources and media in the education, training and scientific research system, through essentially the following mechanisms:

- Promoting the integration of ICT to improve the quality and effectiveness of school materials.
- Creating laboratories for innovation, production of digital resources and training of experts.
- Developing distance learning, as a complement to classroom education.
- Diversifying training and support methods that parallel and assist school education.
- Implementing e-education gradually in anticipation of making it available for all.

In addition to these documents, the Ministry has issued manuals and documents on the integration of information and communication technology in education.

Having a look at the provisions of the law, it seems that the Moroccan legislator has addressed distance education and even emphasized the improvement of this type of education considering it a complement to classroom education. After having reviewed these legal texts thoroughly, it appears that they are overly broad and insufficient to institutionalize distance education.

That begs the questions: Does not institutionalization require the preparation of a legal and legislative arsenal consisting of decrees and guidance circulars that make distance education an essential part of the education and training system along with classroom education? In light of this case, is the Corona pandemic not an appropriate opportunity to accelerate this legal workshop? Is it not necessary to lay down detailed and accurate foundations and legislations to keep up with this type of education, far from the framework law, to ensure that the legal status of the teacher and the learner is determined? What are the implications of distance education on the level of deepening social disparities (digital inequality) and on the labor market outcomes? What guarantees will the legislator give to protect intellectual property in the context of distance education?

These questions indicate that there is an urgent need for discussion among experts with the contribution of schools and different intellectual trends in order to diagnose this educational system and to look into comparative experiences to develop legal concepts and approaches to distance education as a subject of field study, research and analysis, with the aim of developing a comprehensive review of the requirements of the framework law to make it compatible with the conditions of the new reality of education imposed by the corona pandemic and conform to the international conventions ratified by the Kingdom of Morocco in addition to the need for the national legislation to respond to the requirements of digitization and e-education and keep pace with their development from the other hand.

## Conference Key Dates

**Conference Dates:** 11th, 12th and 13th of June 2021 in Laayoune

**Abstract Submission Deadline:** May 15, 2021.

**Notification of Acceptance:** May 20, 2021

**Final Paper Submission Deadline (full paper):** May 30, 2021

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**Abstract Submission:** the participants need to select of the two topics of their interest. Abstracts should not exceed 250-300 words including the title of the paper, a description of the hypothesis, methodology, five keyword and author's details. The participants are required to follow the formatting and submission rules recommended as follows:

**Full Paper Submission:** length of full paper must be at least 5000 words but no more than 7,000 words.

**Formatting Guidelines:** Fonts should be restricted to Times New Roman, size 12 pt., for papers in English and French whereas Sakkal Majalla font size 12 pt. should be used for paper in Arabic, 1.5 spacing between paragraphs is used for body texts of papers in all languages.

**Conference Languages:** Arabic-French-English.

**Originality:** all submission must be original; the work, or large parts of it, should not have been published previously or be currently under consideration or review elsewhere.

**Conference Contacts:** all submissions should be sent by email attachment only to [covid19project@uiz.ac.ma](mailto:covid19project@uiz.ac.ma)

**Conference Proceedings:** authors will be notified of the proceedings' date of publication at a later time

### Further information:

The host (the High School of Technology in Laayoune) will offer the following services to the participants:

- Transport between the airport and hotel on the date of both arrival and departure
- Full three - night stay for participants from outside Morocco.
- Full two-night stay for participants from other parts of Morocco.
- In special cases, the host provides around-trip e-ticket for participants from outside Morocco

**Contact Information:**

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