



The Role of Continuing Education in Strengthening the Partnership Between Constantine 2 University and the Economic and Social Environment

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Abstract

Continuing education is considered a strategic tool for enhancing the partnership between the university and the economic and social environment. It aims to improve the efficiency of working individuals and align their skills with the needs of the labor market. This research seeks to assess the current state of continuing education at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri, by examining the centers responsible for continuing education and their partnerships with the economic and social environment. The descriptive-analytical method was adopted to describe the current situation of continuing education at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri. The research concluded that the university's openness to the economic and social environment through continuing education represents an alternative opportunity to transition into a distinguished economic university.

The study recommends involving the private sector in the development and funding of training programs, whether they are innovative projects or startup initiatives arising from Ministerial Decision 1275.

Keywords: *Continuing education, partnership, labor market, training programs, innovative projects, startup.*

Le rôle de la formation continue dans le renforcement du partenariat entre l'université Constantine 2 et l'environnement économique et social

Résumé

La formation continue est considérée comme un outil stratégique pour renforcer le partenariat entre l'université et l'environnement économique et social. Elle vise à améliorer l'efficacité des travailleurs et à aligner leurs compétences sur les besoins du marché du travail. Cette recherche vise à évaluer l'état actuel de la formation continue à l'université Constantine 2 - Abdelhamid Mehri, en examinant les centres responsables de la formation continue et leurs partenariats avec l'environnement économique et social. La méthode descriptive-analytique a été adoptée pour décrire la situation actuelle de la formation continue à l'université Constantine 2 - Abdelhamid Mehri. La recherche a conclu que l'ouverture de l'université à l'environnement économique et social par le biais de la formation continue représente une opportunité alternative pour devenir une université économique de premier plan.

L'étude recommande d'impliquer le secteur privé dans le développement et le financement des programmes de formation, qu'il s'agisse de projets innovants ou d'initiatives de start-up découlant de la décision ministérielle 1275.

Mots-clés : *Formation continue, partenariat, marché du travail, programmes de formation, projets innovants, start-up.*



1. Introduction

The university is considered a scientific and academic institution that plays an important role in the development of knowledge and scientific research through educational programs. In light of global economic transformations, the university is now required to keep pace with these changes and modernize its role to contribute to sustainable development. The partnership between the university and the economic and social environment is one of the pillars for achieving sustainable development.

One of the most important tools for this partnership is continuing education, which includes all training programs aimed at improving the efficiency of working individuals and updating their knowledge to meet the demands and needs of the labor market.

Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri, as one of the higher education institutions in Algeria, possesses great potential to activate its partnership with the economic and social environment through continuing education.

How does continuing education contribute to strengthening Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri's partnership with the economic and social environment?

This central research question includes the following sub-questions:

- What are the centers responsible for continuing education?
- To what extent does Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri benefit from the partnership with the economic and social environment?

1.1. Research Hypothesis

To answer the research question, the following hypothesis was formulated: The partnership between Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri and the economic and social environment needs greater activation to ensure effective results.

1.2. Research Significance

Continuing education is considered a tool for improving the efficiency of working individuals and updating their knowledge, thus increasing the productivity and competitiveness of institutions. It plays a role in supporting and developing the economy both qualitatively and quantitatively, by providing competencies aligned with market demands and requirements.

1.3. Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the reality of continuing education at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri;
- To identify mechanisms for enhancing the partnership between Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri and the economic and social environment.

1.4. Research Methodology

The descriptive method was adopted for the theoretical framework of the study, while the descriptive-analytical method was used to describe the current state of continuing education at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri.



1.5. Research Structure

To answer the research question, the study is divided into two sections:

- The theoretical framework of the research.
- A description of the current state of continuing education at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Research

2.1 The Concept of Continuing Education

In this section, we will clarify the term continuing education from two aspects:

2.1.1 The Linguistic Meaning

The term continuing education is composed of two words:

Education in the Arabic language is derived from the root word *kawwana* - *yukawwinu* - *takweenan*, meaning to train (**Almaany, 2010**).

The term continuing in the language is used to describe actions that persist in occurring during the present moment in which the event or action is taking place. It is also used to express predetermined future plans (**Al-Momani, 2024, p. 47**).

2.1.2 The Economic Meaning

The economic meaning of continuing education can be clarified based on the views of several institutions, including the following:

Article (8) of Law No. (08-07), related to the Framework Law on Vocational Training and Education, defines continuing education as: Updating workers' knowledge and

raising their skill level (**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2008, p. 5**).

UNESCO defines continuing education as: Education that helps people who are already working become better at their jobs or prepares them to enter the job market. This can be done through short- or long-term programs that are tailored to the needs of individuals and institutions (**United Nations, 2015, p. 133**).

From this, it can be said that continuing education is a way to help people get better at what they do and learn new things based on their needs and the type of educational programs they are in.

2.2. Theories Explaining Continuing Education

In this section, we will address the theories that explain continuing education, namely: the Constructivist Theory, the Behavioral Theory, the Humanistic Theory, the Cognitive Theory, the Social Theory, and the Experiential Learning Theory.

2.2.1 Constructivist Theory

The Constructivist Theory emerged as a result of a shift in the learning process – from focusing on external factors that influence how a student learns (such as curriculum and learner characteristics) to focusing on internal foundations and the learner's way of processing information and organizing knowledge (**Baligh, 2024, p. 53**).

Jean Piaget is considered one of the founders of Constructivist Theory. He believes that the learner is actively responsible for constructing knowledge, and that prior knowledge plays a significant role in building new knowledge and experiences (**Baligh, 2024, p. 53**).



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There are several core principles underlying Constructivist Theory, the most important of which are **(Baligh, 2024, p. 53)**:

- Relying on previous knowledge and experiences to build new knowledge;
- The learner describes, analyzes, and applies their knowledge in various life situations;
- Collaboration and interaction among learners play a fundamental role in forming and exchanging knowledge;
- Effective learning revolves around the learner and their mental activity;
- The teacher's role is that of a facilitator and assistant in the construction of knowledge;
- Learning is more effective when the learner is exposed to real-life situations;
- The curriculum is presented through applied scenarios, not just theoretical knowledge.

It is clear that the Constructivist Theory, in its view of continuing education, is based on the idea that such education is built upon prior experiences and should therefore be structured as practical rather than purely theoretical training programs.

2.2.2 Behavioral Theory

Among the pioneers of this theory are: Hull, Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner. The main subject of this theory is behavior—how it is learned and how it changes **(Morsi Ismail, 2024, p. 404)**.

The principles of this theory include **(Morsi Ismail, 2024, pp. 408-409)**:

- Learning occurs as a result of behavior that takes place in the environment, which leads to satisfying an individual's need and increases the likelihood of repeating the satisfying behavior in the future – this is how a response is formed;
- The theory relies on experimental studies and research that can be measured.

It can be observed that, under the Behavioral Theory, continuing education is considered a response or a result of repeated behavior and environmental factors, both of which can be measured.

2.2.3 Humanistic Theory

Abraham Maslow is one of the pioneers of this theory. He sought to compile a large body of research related to human motivation—that is, what activates, directs, and sustains human behavior. He proposed a hierarchical structure of human needs, based on two categories: deficiency needs and growth needs. Within the deficiency needs, each lower-level need must be fulfilled before moving on to the next higher level (Elsayed Abdo, 2022, p. 131).

Maslow identified four levels of deficiency needs:

- **Physiological:** hunger, thirst, physical comfort, etc.;
- **Safety:** security and freedom from danger;
- **Belonging and Love:** connection with others and acceptance;
- **Esteem:** achievement, competence, gaining approval and recognition.

According to Maslow, an individual becomes ready to act based on growth needs only if the deficiency needs are satisfied. His model includes just one growth need: self-actualization (Elsayed Abdo, 2022, p. 131).



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It is evident that this theory, in its view of continuing education, focuses on human motivation, specifically on self-actualization.

2.2.4 Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theory emerged as a result of a shift by psychologists from studying the learner's observable behavior to studying the cognitive mental processes involved. One of the pioneers of this theory is Jerome Bruner, who emphasized the importance of the relationship between prior learning and new learning in a meaningful way—namely, by determining how experiences are organized, how educational content is structured, how learning occurs, and how motivation is stimulated (**Al-Abbasi & Al-Tamimi, 2019, pp. 114-115**).

According to this theory, continuing education is considered a process of reconstructing existing cognitive structures, not just a cumulative accumulation of knowledge and skills. The development of any new cognitive structure makes the individual more capable of dealing with changes in the environment (**Al-Abbasi & Al-Tamimi, 2019, p. 114**).

2.2.5 Social Theory

One of the key figures in this theory is Albert Bandura, who believes that continuing education is acquired through observation and modeling, meaning that individuals acquire new behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs by observing and imitating others (**Eaysh, 2020, p. 103**).

It is clear that this theory views continuing education as being achieved through observation and interaction with others.

2.2.6 Experiential Learning Theory

A leading figure in this theory is David A. Kolb, who argued that it is various factors, not just the design of educational programs, that influence the outcomes of experiential learning for learners. This perspective leads to a reconsideration of the nature of experiential learning **(Al-Ajhour, 2020, p. 47)**.

It is evident that this theory emphasizes experimentation and field activities in continuing education, rather than relying solely on formal educational programs.

2.3 The Importance of Continuing Education

The qualification of human resources is contingent upon continuing education, which ensures work quality, innovation, and the motivation of human resources by encouraging them to enhance their performance and professional expertise. Continuing education is considered both a right and a lifelong duty for the individual **(Akonad & Al-Naimi, 2023, p. 156)**.

The objectives of continuing education can be summarized as **(Akonad & Al-Naimi, 2023, pp. 156-157)**:

- Updating knowledge and keeping up with developments and changes, as a necessary culture for adapting to evolving realities.
- Improving individual productivity and qualifying human resources by focusing on their training needs, enabling them to engage positively in the management and administration of their daily professional domain, and thus contribute to the development of the educational system locally, regionally, or centrally.



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- Qualifying human resources as a key entry point for rationalizing and optimizing the educational process to overcome waste in its various material and human forms.
- Achieving quality in the educational field to grant the institution local appreciation and international recognition, considering continuing education as a fundamental entry point that helps beneficiaries acquire a set of professional competencies and skills capable of facilitating their adaptation to developments in the field of information and communication technologies.

3. Description of the Current State of Continuing Education at Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri

This section aims to analyze the current state of continuing education at Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri by focusing on the university's capabilities, the status of the startup and innovative ideas during the period (2023/2024), the centers responsible for continuing education, the partnership with the economic and social environment in 2024, and the workshops and specialized training sessions conducted in 2024.

3.1 Capabilities of Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri

3.1.1 Introduction to the University

The university was established by Decree No. (11-401), dated 28/11/2011, following the restructuring of Mentouri University of Constantine. It consists of four (04) faculties

and two (02) institutes (**Constantine 2 University, 2024**), as follows:

- Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences;
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences;
- Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences;
- Faculty of Modern Technologies of Information and Communication;
- Institute of Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities;
- Institute of Library and Documentation Science.

3.1.2 Total Number of Students

The total number of students can be understood through their distribution across faculties and institutes, and according to the number of pedagogical seats for the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate levels during the period (2023–2024), as shown in the following table:

Table 1. The distribution of students by faculties, institutes, and the number of pedagogical seats for Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate programs during the period (2023–2024)

Faculties/Institutes	Pedagogical Seats	New Students	Master's Students	Doctorate (Sciences)	Doctorate (LMD)
Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences	6110	1256	1777	53	60
Faculty of	4277	1193	654	86	133



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Humanities and Social Sciences					
Faculty of Modern Technologies of Information and Communication	2527	762	641	25	85
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	2647	/	1154	30	82
Institute of Library and Documentation Science	522	77	152	23	49
Institute of Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities	1081	332	200	8	21
Total	17,164	3,620	4,578	225	430

Source: (Constantine 2 University, 2024)

From the table, the following observations can be made:

- During the period (2023–2024), the Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences recorded the highest number of pedagogical seats, primarily due to the large number of new undergraduate and Master's students. It is followed by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the

Faculty of Modern Technologies of Information and Communication, the Institute of Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities, and finally, the Institute of Library and Documentation Science.

- Based on the number of enrolled Doctorate students (both in the classical system and the LMD system), the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences ranks first, followed by the Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences, the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the Faculty of Modern Technologies of Information and Communication, the Institute of Library and Documentation Science, and lastly, the Institute of Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities.

3.2 Status of the Startup and Innovative Ideas at Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri During the Period (2023/2024)

During the period (2023–2024), the following were recorded (**Constantine 2 University, 2024**):

- Six innovative projects;
- Sixty thesis defenses under the ministerial decision;
- Second place in national innovation competitions;
- Fourth place in robotics competitions;
- Sixteen intellectual property registrations out of thirty-nine works recorded with ONDA.



3.3 Centers Responsible for Continuing Education

3.3.1 *The Observatory for Professional Integration and Alumni*

The Observatory for Professional Integration and Alumni at Constantine 2 University – Abdelhamid Mehri aims to establish a database to track graduates from various fields and faculties of the university, in order to support and guide them toward the labor market. This ensures that they obtain jobs aligned with their academic qualifications. This is achieved through the activation of various agreements signed by the university with different national and international institutions and economic bodies.

Another goal is to revise and update academic disciplines and curricula to align with labor market demands, based on the feedback obtained from university graduates and their field experiences. This ensures that future graduates are more likely to secure employment immediately upon graduation in roles relevant to their fields of study.

The Observatory, led by a specialized team of experts in human resources and computer science, under the direction of the university administration, serves as a tool to help the university improve its performance and the quality of its outputs. It ensures that the labor market receives the necessary competencies in the required numbers, by involving the entire academic community – administration, faculty, and students – in enhancing the academic process and reinforcing the university's role as a strategic partner in the country's economic development (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**).

Additionally, the Observatory aims to (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**):

Collect information related to the professional integration of university graduates over the past years and analyze the results;

- Establish an information database containing all data needed for future decision-making;
- Conduct evaluative surveys on labor market needs and economic development requirements based on the latest market indicators and developments;
- Make adjustments to the type, number, and content of academic programs to better match market demands;
- Activate agreements signed between the university and various economic bodies and institutions to ensure that all students benefit from them, whether through internships or job opportunities;
- Sign new agreements—locally or internationally—to strengthen scientific and cultural cooperation and exchange between the university’s students and those from other national and foreign universities;
- Analyze and publish statistics to encourage participation and collect improvement suggestions from the university community (each according to their role and position);
- Strengthen the loyalty of international students studying at the university by listening to their opinions and suggestions and leveraging cultural diversity within the campus.

3.3.2 Business Incubator - Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri

The Business Incubator at Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri was established in accordance with Article 27 of Executive Decree No. (20-254), dated September



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15, 2020. It is administratively affiliated with the National Agency for the Promotion of Research Results and Technological Development (ANVREDET), which operates under the Directorate-General for Scientific Research and Technological Development (DGRSDT) of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The incubator is managed by a Director appointed by the university administration, whose file is then submitted to ANVREDET. The Director of the incubator has the authority to form a project selection committee, composed of professors who evaluate and support various projects and ideas proposed by young entrepreneurs. The incubator's administration is also responsible for establishing a Board of Directors, which includes the Director of the incubator, the Vice-Rector for External Relations, and representatives from **(University of Constantine 2, 2022):**

- ANVREDET
- The Directorate of Industry and Mines
- The National Employment Agency
- Partner economic institutions of the university.

The incubator is a structure dedicated to hosting and supporting innovative projects that are directly linked to research. It helps project owners realize their ideas and demonstrate their feasibility in the long term. The incubator provides support in areas such as training, consulting, and financing, and accompanies entrepreneurs until the creation of their startups.

3.3.3 Entrepreneurship House - Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri

The Entrepreneurship House is a flexible entity based at the university. Its mission is to raise awareness, train, and motivate students, and to provide them with initial support for the creation of businesses that carry innovative and creative ideas capable of adding value to the national economy.

Its main tasks are as follows (**University of Constantine 2, 2023**):

- Establishing a framework for consultation and partnership that promotes and develops entrepreneurial thinking within the university environment;
- Stimulating entrepreneurial spirit among researchers and students through activity programs aimed at spreading and embedding an entrepreneurial culture;
- Creating an ideas bank based on graduation projects and the outcomes of work carried out by university research laboratories, which can serve as the basis for investment projects;
- Providing follow-up and support to students with project ideas, and facilitating the implementation of their projects in cooperation with various supporting institutions;
- Valuing expertise and enriching experiences in the field of entrepreneurship;
- Promoting awareness of the various support and investment bodies.



3.4 Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment in 2024

3.4.1 *Cooperation Agreement Between the Chinese Company Huawei and Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri*

The cooperation agreement between Huawei and Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri aims to join the Academy of Excellence in Information and Communication Technologies. This will allow students to participate in international competitions organized by the company, as well as benefit from its educational and training programs (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**).

This agreement reflects the university's openness to the economic and social environment, and it seeks to: introduce Huawei and its various services; move toward an innovative university and a fourth-generation university; valorize university outputs; support the business incubator; and promote the outcomes of scientific research, innovative projects, and initiatives stemming from Ministerial Decision 1275 (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**).

3.4.2 *Partnership Agreement Between the National Agency for the Promotion and Development of Technology Parks and Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri*

Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri signed a partnership agreement with the National Agency for the Promotion and Development of Technology Parks. The objective of this partnership is to combine the resources and efforts of the partners to develop and enhance innovation, entrepreneurship, and information and communication

technologies. The university's partners are key actors in this field (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**).

3.4.3 Partnership Agreement Between Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri and the Algerian National Institute of Industrial Property (NAPI)

A partnership agreement was signed between Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri and the Algerian National Institute of Industrial Property (NAPI), with the aim of (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**):

- Raising awareness about industrial property issues;
- Deepening the understanding of innovation and highlighting the importance of protecting industrial property;
- Providing a strategic opportunity to support business competitiveness and encourage scientific research;
- Showcasing the key players in the field of innovation in Algeria.

3.5 Workshops and Specialized Training Sessions in 2024

3.5.1 Training Courses and Workshops on Preparing for Professional Life

Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri organized training courses and workshops on preparing for professional life. These were conducted by the University-Enterprise Liaison Office (BLEU), in coordination with the Employment Search Club (CRE), and in collaboration with human resources managers from the General Directorate of Société Générale Bank (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**). The objectives of these courses were to (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**):



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- Teach how to build professional skills and prepare for the job market;
- Provide practical advice and direct experience to improve students' career prospects.

3.5.2 Awareness Day on Entrepreneurship Under the Theme From Idea to Building a Project

Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri, in coordination with the Business Incubator and the Center for Entrepreneurship Development, organized an awareness day on entrepreneurship under the theme **(University of Constantine 2, 2024): From Idea to Building a Project**. The event featured the participation of experts from the National Agency for Entrepreneurship Support and Development (NESDA).

The event aimed to **(University of Constantine 2, 2024):**

- Explain Ministerial Decision No. (1275): university degree, startup graduation certificate, patent certificate, and how to register via Constantine 2 University's digital platform;
- Introduce the Center for Entrepreneurship Development and its effective role in supporting project holders and providing training programs.

3.5.3 Training Workshop on Prototyping and How to Obtain the Innovative Project/Startup Label

Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri organized a training workshop on prototyping and how to obtain the label for an innovative project/startup. The goal was to assist students with innovative project ideas in their first steps toward turning their concepts into real projects, and to

present the scientific and technical foundations needed to design a prototype for innovative projects.

This workshop provided students with an opportunity to learn about the latest techniques in innovation and creativity, and to benefit from the expertise of specialists in the field (**University of Constantine 2, 2024**).

4. Conclusion

Continuing education serves as a bridge between Constantine 2 University - Abdelhamid Mehri and the economic and social environment, through mechanisms such as building partnerships with economic institutions, organizing training courses and workshops on career preparation, and establishing centers responsible for continuing education.

The university's openness to the economic and social environment through continuing education represents an alternative opportunity for developing human resources – namely, the university's output: the students. It also acts as a bridge between academic knowledge and practical application.

To transition into a truly economically-oriented university, the efforts of all parties must be combined: the university, economic and social partners, and the state. This collective effort ensures the university benefits from diversified academic competencies that meet labor market needs, supports the economic and social partner by enhancing institutional competitiveness, and serves the state by contributing to sustainable development.



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The research recommends involving the private sector in the design of training programs, seeking funding for innovative projects and startups emerging from Ministerial Decision 1275, and supporting them. It also recommends providing adequate funding for continuing education centers, whether it be the Observatory for Professional Integration and Alumni, the Business Incubator, or the Entrepreneurship House.

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