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Teachers as social educators: Exploring the non-linguistic roles of Algerian EFL teachers

Saida Tobbi 

Abstract: This study investigates how EFL teachers in Algerian universities perform non-linguistic social and educational roles, and how these behaviors relate to students' feelings of belonging and civic attitudes. Grounded in socialisation theory, hidden curriculum perspectives, and an ecological model of teacher agency, it explores teachers' social roles, their underlying reasons, and students' experiences. Using a primarily qualitative mixed-methods approach, Phase 1 included ethnographic case studies, interviews, and reflective diaries from six universities. Later phases involved developing context-specific tools and surveying 150 teachers and 400 students, with targeted qualitative follow-ups. Results reveal a core set of practices, especially pastoral care and academic-pastoral mediation. Teachers' implementation of these roles depends on institutional resources and employment status. Students' reports of teacher practices correlate with increased feelings of belonging and civic intention. Due to purposive sampling and cross-sectional design, the findings are correlational. The study discusses implications for social-education policy, recognizing teachers, and professional development.

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Keywords: civic engagement, social pedagogy, higher education, identity mentoring; pastoral care; socialisation theory, teacher roles

Učitelé jako sociální pedagogové: Zkoumání nelingvistických rolí alžírských učitelů angličtiny jako cizího jazyka

Abstrakt: Tato studie zkoumá, jak učitelé angličtiny jako cizího jazyka (EFL) na alžírských univerzitách naplňují nelingvistické role sociálních pedagogů, a jak tato praxe souvisí s pocitem sounáležitosti a občanskými postoji studentů. Výzkum vychází z teorie socializace, perspektiv skrytého kurikula a ekologického modelu profesního jednání učitele, přičemž se zaměřuje na sociální role učitelů, jejich motivy a zkušenosti jejich studentů. V rámci explorativního sekvenčního smíšeného výzkumu s převahou kvalitativního přístupu zahrnovala první fáze etnografické případové studie, rozhovory a reflektivní deníky na šesti univerzitách. V následujících fázích byly vyvinuty nástroje zohledňující specifika daného kontextu a byl proveden výzkum mezi 150 učiteli a 400 studenty, na který navázalo kvalitativní šetření. Zjištění identifikují základní repertoár praktik, zejména

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pastorační péči a akademicko-pastorační mediaci. Způsob, jakým učitelé tyto role naplňují, souvisí s institucionálními zdroji a pracovním statutem. Aktivity učitelů, které uvádějí sami studenti, jsou spojeny s vyšší mírou sounáležitosti a občanské angažovanosti. Vzhledem k záměrnému výběru vzorku a průřezové povaze dat mají zjištění korelační charakter. Studie diskutuje dopady na politiku sociální výchovy a vzdělávání, uznání role učitelů a jejich profesní rozvoj.

Klíčová slova: občanské zapojení; sociální pedagogika; vysoké školství; mentoring identity; pastorační péče; teorie socializace; role učitelů

1 Introduction

Education serves not only as a tool for skill and knowledge transfer but also as a key arena for socialisation, where values, identities, and civic attitudes are shaped and challenged (Spiel et al., 2018). Social education research focuses on how schools and their staff impact social inclusion, moral development, and community growth. In this framework, teachers are seen not just as disciplinary instructors but also as social educators - agents who, through everyday interactions, pastoral care, and curriculum mediation, influence students' social worlds and their future paths. This perspective highlights teachers' roles in transmitting values, providing emotional support, mediating cultural practices, and promoting students' civic and social engagement (Döring et al., 2024; Sunkad et al., 2025).

Research on teacher roles beyond basic instruction highlights various non-linguistic responsibilities, including pastoral care, identity mentoring, social guidance, and mediating between schools, families, and communities. These functions are often grouped under terms like "hidden curriculum" and "pastoral systems" (Topliss & Leber, 2024). Such roles are crucial for students' well-being, resilience, and civic participation across different settings. However, the literature on teachers as social educators generally treats subject teachers as a homogeneous group or focuses on contexts in which the national curriculum emphasises civic education. Relatively few studies explore how language teachers, particularly those in EFL environments, adopt social-educational roles in multilingual, postcolonial situations (Guo et al., 2021). When language-classroom research exists, it mainly focuses on pedagogical and linguistic goals, such as proficiency and communicative competence, often overlooking the social and non-linguistic functions teachers fulfil.

The Algerian setting highlights the importance of a sociopedagogical perspective. Within Algeria's multilingual environment - where Arabic, Tamazight, French, and increasingly English are used in education and public spheres - young people navigate complex identities and aspirations. Recent policy changes and public discussions on language education have elevated English as a symbol of mobility and global engagement, despite ongoing debates about language and national identity. These factors make EFL classrooms key spaces for examining how cultural repertoires, social values, and future ambitions are performed and challenged.

Research on Algerian EFL teachers has examined identity development and classroom behaviours, such as interactional and multimodal actions. However, these studies usually focus on teacher cognition and pedagogy, rather than explicitly characterising teacher roles as social educators. Recent research on Algerian language teachers explores professional identity and multimodal communication, as well as challenges related to national reforms (e.g., Benabdallah, 2025; Smaili & Benamara, 2022). While these contributions are valuable, they often overlook how teachers serve as social guides, moral models, and community connectors within broader social education frameworks. As a result, there is

limited systematic, empirical understanding of the non-linguistic social roles played by Algerian EFL teachers, how teachers perceive these roles, and the importance of such practices for students' values, sense of belonging, and civic attitudes.

This research fills that gap by exploring the sociological theories of socialisation and existing literature on teachers as social and pastoral educators. It examines the non-linguistic roles Algerian EFL teachers perform and their social impacts on students in higher education. The study aims to empirically identify the range of social educator practices used by these teachers, analyse their motivations and limitations, and evaluate how students perceive these roles in influencing social values and inclusion.

Accordingly, we have formulated three research questions:

1. What non-linguistic social roles, such as pastoral care, identity mentoring, civic socialisation, and mediation, do Algerian EFL teachers assume in their classrooms and informal interactions?
2. How do Algerian EFL teachers express the objectives, ethical reasons, and institutional limitations that influence how they perform their roles?
3. How do students perceive and experience these non-linguistic teacher roles regarding value development, sense of belonging, and civic or social participation?

The study advances social education scholarship in four keyways. It expands models of teacher socialisation by detailing the range of social-educational roles played by language teachers in multilingual, postcolonial contexts. Methodologically, it employs a mixed qualitative approach - combining classroom ethnography, teacher interviews, and student narratives - to effectively capture interactional practices along with reflective rationales. In practice, the results will guide teacher training and institutional policies by showing how training and support can acknowledge and professionalise social-educator roles. Ethically and for policy considerations, it underscores equity issues, specifically, how unequal institutional support for teacher-led pastoral and civic activities might either reinforce or reduce social inequalities, and offers practical recommendations for incorporating social education aims into language teaching policies and practices.

2 Literature review

Recent research has expanded the analytical perspective for language classrooms to encompass teachers' non-linguistic roles - such as pastoral care, mediation, mentoring, and community brokerage - highlighting their roles as social educators alongside their function as language instructors. Several research areas contribute to this reconceptualisation: studies on affective and care work, analyses of pastoral roles and institutional limitations, investigations into civic and community practices in language learning, and work exploring the impact on teacher training and professional development.

One strand of scholarship on teacher affect and care highlights how interpersonal practice serves as a resource for learners' social and emotional development. Empirical and conceptual studies on teachers' social and emotional competences show that teachers' affective behaviours (empathy, responsiveness, relational skills) contribute to classroom climates that support engagement and wellbeing. Sapir and Mizrahi-Shtelman (2023) show that homeroom teachers develop practice-based care expertise - intuitive, relational and emotional forms of work - despite limited formal training and organisational support. These studies establish that care is a skilled, practiceable dimension of teaching rather than merely an instance of personal goodwill.

A second line of research explores pastoral roles and the social-work aspect of teaching documents, highlighting the scope of non-instructional tasks and the institutional tensions they create. Webb and Vulliamy's (2002) SWIPS project details how teachers assume social-work duties for students and parents, especially when external support is limited; similarly, Shalders (2002) examines variations in teachers' understanding and implementation of pastoral care, emphasising its discretionary nature.

Schoeman (2015) advocates for a whole-school approach to pastoral education in teacher training to ensure that new teachers perform these duties systematically rather than incidentally. Lang (1991) also emphasises the need for explicit affective education training, so pastoral responsibilities are recognised and integrated into teacher preparation. Collectively, these studies reveal a persistent gap between teachers' social expectations and the institutional support and training available to sustain these roles.

Third, research on community-facing and civic aspects of language education offers practical methods for enhancing social involvement in language programs. Sarbunan (2023) shows that integrating community service into language classes encourages cultural awareness, civic participation, and inclusive learning, while Khoury (2007) describes various social and brokerage roles played by ESL teachers in multicultural environments, such as listener/counsellor and culture broker. Negoescu, Boştină-Bratu, and Morar (2019) highlight the importance of strategic and social skills in foreign-language classrooms, arguing that communicative competence encompasses social and socio-cultural facets that teachers should develop. These findings suggest that classroom activities can be purposefully designed to foster social change and community participation when curricula and teacher training explicitly prioritise these goals.

Fourth, contextual and region-specific work underscores the importance of situating social-educational inquiry within local sociolinguistic realities. Fatmi and Belmekki (2024) discuss the need for sociolinguistic awareness in Algerian ELT and propose sociolinguistic profiling as a pedagogical resource for teacher education in Algeria. Liu (2023) examines the role of ESL/EFL teachers in moral and political education in China, arguing for the incorporation of moral-education elements into teacher training. Although from a different national context, this work supports the broader claim that language teachers routinely encounter moral and civic dimensions in their classrooms and need preparation to address them.

These studies collectively highlight three key implications for this research. Firstly, teachers' non-linguistic practices are intentional, patterned, and significantly influence students' social and emotional growth; they are not merely incidental. Secondly, the recognition, training, and workload assigned by institutions are inconsistent and often inadequate, making social-educational work rely heavily on teachers' discretionary efforts. Thirdly, integrating community and civic themes into language teaching is possible, but it requires deliberate curriculum design and institutional support. Consequently, these studies underscore the importance of employing mixed-methods research to examine micro-practices, such as diaries, interviews, and classroom sequences and link them to student outcomes and institutional factors. Notably, Fatmi and Belmekki's (2024) focus on sociolinguistic profiling in Algeria shows that localised measures and tailored teacher education are crucial for advancing research and policies that professionalise the social-educator role of EFL teachers in Algerian higher education.

3 Theoretical framework

This study is rooted in social education and demands a theoretical framework that (a) views schooling as a space for social development, (b) recognises teachers as key agents of socialisation within institutions, and (c) considers how practices are influenced by layered institutional conditions. To do this, we employ three complementary perspectives - socialisation theory, the hidden curriculum combined with social pedagogy, and an ecological model of teacher agency - that together link interactional practices to institutional limitations and normative effects.

3.1 Socialisation theory

Socialisation theory highlights the ongoing interpersonal interactions through which individuals develop their values, identities, and civic attitudes. It views schooling as a key environment where

social norms are both upheld and challenged (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). From this viewpoint, non-verbal teacher actions, such as mentoring, pastoral care, guiding procedures, and demonstrating ethical behavior, are significant not just as isolated acts but as practices that gradually shape students' sense of belonging and civic outlook (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Analytically, socialisation theory supports the analysis of outcomes such as identity negotiation, value development, and civic engagement, drawing attention to patterns over time evident in diary entries and longitudinal data (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

3.2 Hidden curriculum and social pedagogy

The concept of the hidden curriculum highlights how routine classroom arrangements and administrative interactions convey normative messages not explicit in formal curricula (Jackson, 1968). Such tacit lessons often shape learners' expectations about authority, help-seeking, and institutional membership (Jackson, 1968). Social pedagogy complements this by foregrounding educators' ethical and relational obligations: it treats pedagogical work as extending beyond cognitive transmission to include care, mediation, and integration within community contexts (Cameron & Moss, 2011). Together, these lenses enable us to treat quotidian acts - taking extra time to advise a struggling student, drafting referral notes, or facilitating small volunteering projects - as pedagogical practices with moral and civic significance, and to design measures that capture these tacit dimensions rather than generic "support."

3.3 Ecological model of teacher agency

To connect micro-level practices with meso- and macro-level constraints, we adopt an ecological perspective on agency. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977) offers a broad framework for understanding development within nested contexts, while recent applications position teacher agency within interacting personal, institutional, and policy layers (Priestley et al., 2015). This ecological approach highlights how departmental norms, resource availability, and policy incentives either enable or restrict teachers' ability to fulfil social-educator roles. It also clarifies site-level differences: even with similar personal dispositions, social-educational outcomes can vary depending on whether institutional supports—such as mentoring programs, external partnerships, or recognition mechanisms—are in place (Priestley et al., 2015).

3.4 Integrative use of three lenses

These three frameworks complement each other. Socialisation theory defines the normative goals of social education, while the hidden curriculum and social pedagogy offer terminology for the less visible mechanisms that transmit these goals. The ecological model places these mechanisms within contextual conditions that enable them. This integrated theoretical approach guided the creation of the analytic codebook, influenced diary prompts (such as encouraging teachers to consider the moral or civic purpose of interventions), informed survey item development (by aligning measures with hidden-curriculum content and agency constraints), and supported the multi-site design and comparison of high- and low-resourced settings.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research design

The study used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach with a focus on qualitative data. The qualitative stage developed core categories related to non-linguistic social-educator practices through ethnographic case studies, semi-structured interviews, and teachers' reflective diaries. These categories guided the creation and testing of survey tools for teachers and students. The quantitative phase then examined relationships hinted at by the qualitative results, employing clear and reliable

analytic methods. Follow-up qualitative research helped interpret and add context to the emerging quantitative patterns. The qualitative fieldwork took place in December 2025.

4.2 Research sites

Six Algerian universities and university centres offering English-language degree programs were intentionally selected to reflect regional and institutional differences that affect teachers' ability to fulfil social-educator roles. The sites were categorised into Higher and Lower institutional support capacity groups before any on-site visits, based on clear, measurable indicators of institutional support for social education.

The sites were categorised based on six predefined indicators of institutional support: enrolment, presence of a doctoral program, research infrastructure, funded partnerships, LMS usage, and student-support or co-curricular capacity. This coding resulted in classifying the University of Algiers 2, the University of Oran 2, and the University of Constantine 1 as sites with higher institutional support capacity, while Tamanrasset University, Naâma University Centre, and El Bayadh University Centre were categorised as sites with lower institutional support capacity. The initial classification prior to fieldwork served as the primary stratification factor for sampling. During and after fieldwork, validation checks - using observer field notes and aggregated survey responses - were conducted; small discrepancies are documented in the Results, and sensitivity analyses tested whether the main findings remain consistent with different cut-points or a continuous support indicator.

4.3 Delegation of on-site visits and data-collection mode

A research associate conducted the on-site visits on behalf of the researcher, who provided a detailed briefing and demonstration of the observation protocol during a preparatory meeting. This delegation was essential to complete fieldwork across six sites within the planned schedule, with validity maintained through protocol-based training, a supervised pilot visit, prompt upload of fieldnotes, and triangulation with interviews and diaries. The main impact of delegation was a reduced direct presence of the researcher at some sites, which is acknowledged as a limitation rather than compromising the credibility of the data. The associate received standardised data-collection templates and written instructions. Participant interviews were conducted remotely via telephone, WhatsApp, Viber, or other secure audio platforms, with only campus visits delegated. A pilot visit was conducted during training involving inter-rater checks of the observation protocol. Audio recordings and field notes collected by the associate were uploaded to an encrypted project folder immediately after each visit. Photographic evidence of public, non-identifiable facilities (e.g., noticeboards indicating student services) was collected where possible to support observer checklist entries.

4.4 Participants and sampling

The qualitative sample included thirty EFL teachers - five from each site - and thirty EFL students - five from each site. Thirty teachers completed structured reflective diaries from October to December 2025. The quantitative surveys involved 150 teacher respondents and 400 student respondents. Student sampling employed stratified cluster sampling within English departments, with strata based on university site and year of study. Clusters consisted of intact tutorial or class groups, and within-cluster selection was done via random draws from enrolment lists where possible. Teacher sampling was stratified by site and full-time employment status.

As shown in Table 1, all participating teachers were full-time, permanent faculty members. Associate teachers (*enseignant associé*) were deliberately excluded because the study centred on roles that are integrated into routine departmental duties, such as tutoring, advising, and coordination. In the sampled institutions, associate teachers usually do not share the same institutional status or workload profile, so including them could have introduced variability into the construct under investigation rather than enhancing its generalizability. Consequently, the findings are applicable to full-time faculty within similar Algerian EFL departments, but not to part-time or externally affiliated instructors. In

these institutions, full-time faculty typically teach about 12 hours weekly and regularly engage in tutoring and departmental coordination, which constitute the social-educator responsibilities examined in this study.

Table 1
Participant characteristics

Category	N	Key characteristics
EFL teachers (qualitative)	30	All PhD holders; all full-time permanent faculty; 17 female, 13 male; age range 32–58; teaching experience 6–30 years; 4 reported study-abroad experience; all completed reflective diaries covering Oct–Dec 2025.
EFL students (qualitative)	30	18 female, 12 male; enrolled in Licence and Master programmes; 14 from rural backgrounds; 12 first-generation university students
EFL teachers (survey)	150	All PhD holders; all full-time permanent faculty; distributed across age cohorts (≤ 35 ; 36–50; > 50) and teaching experience ranges; a substantial subset reported study-abroad experience; site-stratified sampling across the six institutions.
EFL students (survey)	400	English-major students from all years (Licence 1–3; Master 1–2) with a balanced gender distribution, representing both urban and rural backgrounds, were sampled through stratified cluster sampling within English departments.

4.5 Instruments and procedures

Ethnographic case studies included systematic observation of both formal and informal settings of teacher–student interactions. These settings encompassed office-hours mentoring, thesis supervision meetings, student-led English conversation clubs, community literacy outreach, peer mentoring programs for first-generation students, and campus cultural events. Observations followed a standard protocol, with field notes being expanded into analytic memos within 48 hours.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using parallel guides for teachers and students. *These interviews took place via telephone, WhatsApp, or Viber, based on participants' preferences, and were audio-recorded with their consent. Remote interviews supplemented on-site observations to ensure triangulated evidence.* Teachers were contacted in October 2025 and asked to keep structured reflective diaries throughout the October–December 2025 term.

4.6 Qualitative analysis procedures

Qualitative data management and analysis were conducted using NVivo 12. The coding process involved three iterative stages: open coding to generate descriptive codes, axial coding to organise these codes into conceptual categories, and selective coding to refine themes and connect them to theoretical frameworks like socialisation theory, the hidden curriculum, and ecological teacher agency. Two coders—namely the lead researcher and a trained coder—independently coded an initial set of transcripts and diary entries. Inter-coder reliability was evaluated on a randomly chosen 20% sample, with Cohen's kappa averaging .78 across key nodes, reflecting substantial agreement. Any discrepancies were resolved during analytic reconciliation meetings and through updating the codebook to clarify inclusion and exclusion criteria. NVivo memos recorded all analytic decisions and reflexive notes.

Saturation was evaluated through multiple iterations and documented in field logs. No new high-level thematic codes appeared after interviewing the 24th teacher or student, indicating that concept saturation had been reached concerning the main research objectives. The selection of illustrative quotations adhered to a transparent protocol: quotes were chosen to showcase typical cases (modal practices), exceptional or insightful cases (those that challenged the main patterns), and process sequences (vignettes that track events through diaries, observations, and interviews). Each quote is labelled with a speaker code and a brief contextual note explaining its selection.

4.7 Quantitative instrument development and analysis

Survey instruments based on qualitative themes were tested at one higher-support and one lower-support site to evaluate item clarity and initial psychometric properties. Scale validation involved exploratory factor analysis (using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation), and internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's α (threshold: $\alpha \geq .70$). Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were also provided. Group differences were examined using independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA, with non-parametric alternatives applied when assumptions were violated. Regression analyses employed ordinary least squares with university-clustered robust standard errors; logistic regression with cluster-robust SEs was used for binary outcomes. Mediation analyses utilised bootstrap methods (5,000 resamples). Sensitivity checks included re-estimating models with alternative ISCI cut-points and treating the ISCI as a continuous predictor.

4.8 Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the ethics committee of Batna 2 University. All participants gave informed consent. Data were anonymised and securely stored on encrypted institutional drives.

5 Analysis

5.1 RQ1: Non-linguistic social roles enacted by EFL teachers

5.1.1 Factor structure and scale reliability

An exploratory factor analysis (using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation) of the teacher items ($N = 150$) identified a three-factor solution. Sampling adequacy was satisfactory ($KMO = .82$), and Bartlett's test confirmed the data's suitability for factor analysis ($\chi^2(190) = 2345.6$, $p < .001$). The resulting factors represent (1) Pastoral/Mediation, (2) Identity/Civic facilitation, and (3) Resource brokerage. Key item loadings are detailed in Supplementary Table 1.

The loadings show a clear grouping of items: relational and administrative support cluster on Factor 1; future-oriented identity and civic items load on Factor 2; brokerage items form a separate Factor 3. Cross-loadings are minimal, and no item has a primary loading below .66.

Table 2

Scale descriptives and internal consistency

Scale	Items	N (scale)	Mean (SD)	Cronb. α	95% CI for α
Pastoral / Mediation	6	150	3.84 (.47)	.88	[.84, .91]
Identity / Civic facilitation	5	150	3.21 (.61)	.81	[.77, .85]
Resource brokerage	4	150	2.34 (.79)	.76	[.70, .81]
Composite teacher-prac. index	-	150	3.28 (.42)	.90	[.87, .92]

Note. 95% confidence intervals for Cronbach's α were estimated via bias-corrected bootstrap (5,000 replications). N (scale) = reports the sample size contributing to each teacher scale (all teacher scales = 150).

As shown in Table 2, internal consistency remains strong across the scales ($\alpha = .76-.90$). The higher average on pastoral/mediation suggests that these activities are reported as occurring more frequently than brokerage activities within the teacher sample.

5.1.2 Qualitative prevalence and exemplars

Qualitative coding of 30 teacher interviews, 30 diaries, and 72 observation episodes yielded role counts, summarised in Supplementary Table 2.

Nearly all teachers (28 out of 30) reported offering some form of pastoral care, from listening and advising to connecting students with procedures. Mediation and identity mentoring are common across sites, while civic facilitation and brokerage are less frequent and mainly found in higher-support environments. One teacher shared an example of persistent follow-up after a student faced a family emergency: "I sat with her after class, helped draft an explanation for the *scolarité*, and checked in via message each week until she returned to full attendance" [T12; diary entry]. Another described creating a brief, targeted CV workshop that helped several students successfully apply for exchange programs: "We spent an afternoon editing applications; three students later went on exchange — the forms were the barrier, not the motivation" [T05; interview]. These examples highlight the sequential nature of social-educator work: an initial encounter often leads to paperwork, advocacy, or concrete actions that extend beyond a single meeting.

5.2 RQ2: Teachers' purposes, ethical rationales and constraints

Regression models were estimated to assess correlates of the composite teacher-practice index (N = 150). In the sample, nine teachers reported prior study-abroad experience.

Table 3

OLS regression predicting teacher-practice index (cluster-robust SEs)

Predictor	β	SE (clustered)	95% CI	p
Intercept	3.02	.07	2.88, 3.16	< .001
Study-abroad (yes; n = 9)	.18	.08	.03, .33	.02
Years teaching (per 5 yrs)	.03	.02	-.01, .07	.11
Female (1)	.05	.05	-.04, .14	.28
Workload_hours (per 5 hrs)	-.02	.01	-.04, .00	.07
High institutional support (1)	.26	.07	.12, .40	< .001

Table 3 shows that, among individual predictors, institutional support was positively associated with the adoption of social-educator roles, whereas workload was negatively associated. Study-abroad experience was positively related in the primary model ($\beta = .18$, $p = .02$); however, only nine teachers had this experience, making this finding more exploratory than definitive. Due to the very small subgroup with study-abroad exposure, additional sensitivity analyses were conducted to assess robustness. These included bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 replications), leave-one-out influence diagnostics, and alternative models that excluded the study-abroad variable or combined it into a broader "international exposure" variable. These tests suggest that the coefficient is sensitive to sample composition. Consequently, the reported association is transparent but should not be regarded as evidence of a stable effect. No significant differences were observed based on gender or years of experience.

5.2.1 Qualitative themes on rationales and constraints

Three main themes shape teacher explanations: professional ethics (26/30), structural constraints (24/30), and contingency networks (18/30). Typically, ethical reasoning was framed around responsibility, with a teacher noting that supporting students is part of their professional duty, saying, "if we do not respond, students risk dropping out" [T02; interview]. Narratives about constraints emphasised unpaid hours and lack of formal recognition, exemplified by a teacher stating, "I answer messages at night because the student has no one else, but this time is invisible to the administration"

[T18; diary]. Contingency practices were evident when teachers described organising NGO support or student volunteer groups to address service gaps, such as: "When the department cannot place students for internships, alumni contacts make short placements possible" [T23; interview].

These qualitative data demonstrate that enactment relies on both individual dedication and institutional support. While ethical motivation is common, the capacity to implement actions on a larger scale is influenced by existing support structures.

5.3 RQ3: Students' experiences: Belonging, values and civic orientation

5.3.1 Student descriptives and correlations

Seven students in the survey reported participating in study-abroad scholarships or cultural exchange programs (7/400). Table 4 offers scale descriptives and intercorrelations. The correlation between perceived teacher practice and sense of belonging ($r = .48$) is moderate to strong, indicating that students who perceive more supportive teacher behaviours tend to feel a higher sense of belonging. This relationship varies: subgroup analysis shows that the mean belonging score is higher in institutions with more support ($M = 3.62$) compared to less supportive ones ($M = 3.22$), suggesting that institutional context influences individual perceptions. The correlation between belonging and civic intent ($r = .44$) indicates a link between feelings of belonging and civic-mindedness, while the correlation between perceived practice and civic intent ($r = .36$) suggests a possible pathway through which teacher behaviours affect students' public-minded attitudes.

Table 4
Student scale descriptives and correlations ($N = 400$)

Scale	M (SD)	1	2
1. Perceived teacher practice	3.22 (.73)	1.00	
2. Sense of belonging	3.45 (.69)	.48***	1.00
3. Civic engagement intention	2.91 (.84)	.36***	.44***

Note. *** = $p < .001$.

A student's account demonstrates the relational mechanism: after an instructor assisted a small group in organising a neighbourhood literacy workshop, one participant mentioned that the experience "made me feel part of the department and boosted my confidence to pursue other projects" [S24; Higher-site]. Another student explained how follow-up support eased worries about administrative challenges and facilitated involvement: "Knowing my teacher would follow up on my registration eliminated the fear of doing it alone" [S07; Lower-site].

5.3.2 Student outcome models and mediation

As shown in Table 5, regression analyses demonstrate that perceived teacher practice predicts both sense of belonging and civic intention. Logistic models also reveal that higher perceived practice increases the likelihood of early civic action. Specifically, higher perceived teacher practice correlates with greater belonging ($\beta = .42$) and stronger civic intention ($\beta = .27$), both of which are statistically significant. The odds of engaging in early civic participation rise by approximately 48% with each one-unit increase in perceived teacher practice ($OR = 1.48$). Control covariates show small, non-significant coefficients in these models. Mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrap samples indicates partial mediation: the indirect effect of perceived teacher practice on civic intention through belonging is .18 (95% CI [.12, .24], $p < .001$), while the direct effect is still significant at .27 (95% CI [.18, .36], $p < .001$). These results clarify the proportion of the association attributable to relational inclusion compared to other pathways.

Table 5
Student outcome regressions (cluster-robust SEs)

Predictor	Belonging β (SE)	Civic intention β (SE)	Early civic action OR (SE)
Teacher practice	.42 (.04)***	.27 (.05)***	1.48 (.10)***
First generation	-.11 (.06)	-.06 (.07)	.87 (.15)
Scholarship	-.08 (.05)	-.03 (.06)	.92 (.13)
Rural origin	-.07 (.04)	-.06 (.05)	.90 (.12)
Observations	400	400	400

Note. *** = $p < .001$.

5.3.3 Joint evidence and mechanisms

Table 6 presents aligned evidence: quantitative effect sizes indicate strong associations, while qualitative sequences elucidate how these links manifest in practice. Regarding belonging, the mechanism involves repeated, tangible relational acts—such as providing advice, administrative assistance, and follow-up—that together foster a sense of support from the department. For civic intention, the mechanism is practical scaffolding: teacher-supported activities that lower barriers to initial civic engagement and build confidence for future participation.

Table 6
Joint display linking quantitative associations and qualitative mechanisms

Quantitative pattern	Qualitative mechanism	Illustrative integrated evidence
Perceived teacher practice \rightarrow Sense of belonging ($\beta = .42$).	Repeated relational sequencing: attentive meetings followed by practical assistance.	Diary and interview sequences illustrate teachers organising practical follow-ups — like drafting forms or coordinating with scolarité — and following up later. Students report feeling acknowledged and reassured, which they connect to a greater sense of belonging.
Perceived teacher practice \rightarrow Civic intention ($\beta = .27$) with indirect effect via belonging = .18.	Mobilised agency: teachers prompting manageable projects that build competence.	Teachers described small, scaffolded activities such as short workshops and peer tutoring, which students cited as turning points in their civic engagement. Students reported that these projects changed how they see themselves, shifting from passive to proactive agents.

6 Discussion

This multi-site mixed-methods study examined how Algerian EFL teachers perform non-linguistic social-educator roles and how students view the social impacts of these roles. Two key patterns emerged: firstly, pastoral care and administrative/academic mediation were the most common practices reported in both qualitative and quantitative data. Secondly, students perceiving these practices reported a stronger sense of belonging and higher civic intentions. These findings suggest potential socialising sequences—small, repeated acts of listening, advising, and procedural assistance—that may promote student inclusion and early civic engagement. However, since the survey data are cross-sectional, these relationships are correlational and should be interpreted with caution.

Analysing the findings through socialisation theory, the hidden curriculum, and ecological agency accounts helps clarify how teacher practices function and in which contexts they are most effective.

The main insight is that routine, low-visibility actions can have significant social impact when they are consistently repeated and supported by the institution. The ecological model links these micro-level behaviours to meso-level factors such as departmental coordination, formal recognition of mentoring time, and external partnerships. Essentially, the data indicate that social-educational outcomes result from a combination of micro-interaction practices and the institutional environment.

Several limitations affect the conclusions. The purposive multi-site design focused on depth and analytical contrast rather than national representativeness; prevalence estimates should not be generalised beyond the sampled ecologies. The survey was cross-sectional: while statistical mediation and associations indicate potential pathways, they do not confirm temporal order or causality. Additionally, some fieldwork was carried out by a trained research associate. Although this minimised direct researcher presence, the observation protocol was standardised, a supervised pilot was conducted, and the observational data were triangulated with interviews and diaries.

7 Conclusion

This study redefines EFL teachers in Algerian higher education as social educators within institutions, whose non-linguistic roles—such as pastoral care, mediation, mentoring, and brokerage—form a vital yet often overlooked part of social education. Instead of repeating empirical details, the conclusion emphasises the practical and policy implications of the research and outlines key priorities for future research and institutional reforms.

The study indicates that Algerian EFL teachers serve as social educators, promoting students' sense of belonging and civic participation beyond their role in

At the institutional level, institutions can make the social-education dimension of teaching visible and accountable. Practical steps include formal referral pathways between teachers and student services, clear recognition of the workload associated with mentoring and mediation duties, and modest funding for teacher-led civic activities. These measures would reduce reliance on discretionary labour and improve equitable access to support.

Teacher preparation and professional development would benefit from intentionally including social-pedagogical competences – ethical reasoning, mediation skills, and community partnership-building – so that these capacities are distributed across departments rather than concentrated in a few committed individuals. Embedding such training in pre-service and in-service programmes is likely to help convert individual practice into organisational capacity.

From a policy perspective, pilot programmes and evaluations are often a suitable first step before implementing widespread reform. Practical trials—such as testing workload-credit schemes or teacher-led funded civic projects—can assess whether standardising support improves community belonging and civic participation at a larger scale. The outcomes should inform gradual policy development.

Finally, although the study offers context-sensitive evidence that routine social-educational practices are important, its survey component is cross-sectional and therefore cannot establish causality. Key future research should involve longitudinal and experimental studies to explore developmental pathways, as well as microanalytic investigations to pinpoint teachable communicative strategies. These efforts are expected to bolster the evidence base and guide practical, evidence-based institutional responses.

Generative AI Disclosure

No Generative AI tools were employed in creating this manuscript.

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Supplementary Table 1
Exploratory factor analysis (Promax rotation)

Item	Factor 1 (Pastoral/Mediation)	Factor 2 (Identity/Civic)	Factor 3 (Brokerage)
Check students' wellbeing (T1)	.79	.12	.05
Follow-up contact (T2)	.75	.18	.08
Refer to support services (T3)	.68	.20	.11
Assist with administrative paperwork (M1)	.66	.21	.14
Career and scholarship guidance (I1)	.11	.72	.09
Organise community activities (C1)	.10	.67	.18
Link internships (R1)	.06	.15	.76
Notify external funding (R2)	.09	.18	.71

Supplementary Table 2
Qualitative prevalence of non-linguistic roles

Role	Teachers reporting role
Pastoral care	28
Academic-pastoral mediation	21
Identity mentoring	19
Civic facilitation	14
Resource brokerage	10