

ESAA*: Navigating Between Complex Institutional Issues and Communication Strategies in the Algerian University Field

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Abstract. *This article offers an in-depth reading of the managerial experience of the Algerian Higher School of Business (ESAA) from 2019 to 2024, a unique binational institution in the Algerian university landscape. Based on participant objectification and the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's fields, the authors explore how the ESAA navigates between a hybrid governance model, commercial imperatives (paid training) and complex institutional issues, particularly related to Algerian-French relations and positioning in a predominantly public higher education system. The study details the school's institutional and commercial communication strategy, highlighting its proactive adaptation to the digital shift, its differentiation through educational innovation and its strong identity anchoring through Algerian cultural symbols. The analysis highlights the quest for capital (economic, symbolic, social, cultural) of the ESAA to establish its legitimacy and its influence. She also explores the challenges of this approach, in particular the tensions linked to the reproduction of academic inequalities and the need for a balance between international standards and local specificities. The article concludes on the position of the ESAA as a strategic actor, a soft power tool, in search of a sustainable balance in a crucial African context.*

Keywords: *ESAA, institutional communication, algerian university field, hybrid governance, differentiation strategy*

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Received: 11 May 2025; Accepted: 7 September 2025; Published online: 28 June 2026

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ESAA*: Əlcəzair universitet sahəsində mürəkkəb institusional məsələlər və kommunikasiya strategiyaları arasında naviqasiya

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Xülasə. *Bu məqalə Əlcəzair universitet məkanında unikal ikitərəfli bir qurum olan Əlcəzair Ali Biznes Məktəbinin (ESAA) 2019-cu ildən 2024-cü ilə qədər idarəetmə təcrübəsinin dərinəndən araşdırılmasını təklif edir. İştirakçıların obyektivləşdirilməsinə və Pyer Burdyenin sahələrinin nəzəri çərçivəsinə əsaslanaraq müəlliflər ESAA-nın hibrid idarəetmə modeli, kommersioniya imperativləri (ödənişli təlim) və mürəkkəb institusional məsələlər, xüsusən də Əlcəzair-Fransa münasibətləri və əsasən dövlət ali təhsil sistemindəki mövqeyi ilə bağlı məsələlər arasında necə hərəkət etdiyini araşdırırlar. Tədqiqatda məktəbin institusional və kommersioniya kommunikasiya strategiyası ətraflı şəkildə təqdim olunur, onun rəqəmsal dəyişikliyə proaktiv uyğunlaşması, təhsil innovasiyası vasitəsilə*

fərqlənməsi və Əlcəzair mədəni simvolları vasitəsilə möhkəmləndirilmiş güclü kimliyi vurğulanır. Təhlil ESAA-nın legitimliyini və təsirini müəyyən etmək üçün kapital (iqtisadi, simvolik, sosial, mədəni) axtarışını vurğulayır. O, həmçinin bu yanaşmanın çətinliklərini, xüsusən də akademik bərabərsizliklərin təkrarlanması ilə əlaqəli gərginlikləri və beynəlxalq standartlar ilə yerli xüsusiyyətlər arasında tarazlığa ehtiyacı araşdırır. Məqalə, ESAA-nın mühüm Afrika kontekstində davamlı tarazlıq axtarışında strateji aktyor, yumşaq güc aləti kimi mövqeyinə toxunur.

Açar sözlər: ESAA, institusional kommunikasiya, əlcəzair universitet sahəsi, hibrid idarəetmə, fərqləndirmə strategiyası

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Daxil oldu: 11 May 2025; Qəbul edildi: 7 Sentyabr 2025; Onlayn dərc edildi: 28 İyun 2026

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Introduction

The ESAA (Algerian Higher School of Business), a singular institution at the crossroads of Algerian and international dynamics. The article that we propose is intended to be a somewhat critical reading (in the sociological sense of the term) of a complex managerial experience, extending over more than five years. Since April 2019 and until July 2024, Karim Kiared, main author of this article (useful clarification for methodological reasons), was at the head of the Algerian Higher School of Business (ESAA). This business school stands out as one of the most important university structures in Algeria. It is useful to note the specific character that distinguishes it. Since its creation in 2004, the ESAA has always asserted itself as a reference institution in Algeria, positioning itself at the crossroads of local expectations and a clear international openness. This creation is the result of an intergovernmental agreement between Algeria and France, formalized by the JORADP of September 14, 2005.

Benefiting from a unique governance model, the ESAA generates dynamics that profoundly influence the management of its institutional communication. It must adapt to the expectations of the various stakeholders while consolidating the reputation of the school. It is precisely this last point that proves to be a major challenge, requiring the conceptualization of an effective communication strategy in a complex context. This strategy must take into account both the governance model mentioned and the Algerian reality in its social, cultural and, to a certain extent, political dimensions.

Another notable particularity, on a commercial level, the ESAA, a public school animated by a public service mission, nevertheless offers a diversified training offer, for a fee. This includes bachelor's, master's, MBA and continuing education à la carte programs. These programs target a variety of audiences – from young students to experienced professionals - requiring a rigorous segmentation of communication strategies. The school must thus reflect an Algerian identity rooted in its socio-economic reality, while preserving its DNA focused on the internationalization of business.

It is clear that the task of managing a school like this requires, first of all, awareness of the complexity of the context in which it is located, but also of its own mode of operation. The whole question is how the ESAA can ensure effective and coherent communication that meets the varied expectations of its different targets, while consolidating its unique identity. More specifically, how to articulate an integrated communication strategy, which takes into account the political, commercial and cultural imperatives of the institution?

To answer these questions, we opted for participant objectification, an approach theorized by Pierre Bourdieu in the study of university structures. This approach consists in transforming the analyst – in this case, a former director of the school – into an object of analysis. This is a systemic self-analysis carried out here in collaboration with another researcher, Mehdi Souiah, sociologist and guest teacher at ESAA, in order to better understand and objectify the author's practices and perceptions. The approach thus thought out, "gives itself the object of exploring, not the "lived experience" of the knowing subject, but the social conditions of possibility (therefore the effects and the limits) of this experience and, more precisely, of the act of objectification" (Bourdieu, 2023). We will first proceed to the description, based on the elements that we have, of the establishment, its mode of operation and the communication strategy imagined and implemented by the school management.

2. Institutional and commercial communication: concepts and application to the ESAA

Since it is a paid educational institution (insofar as training is a product that must be sold), communication in its institutional and commercial form must be defined precisely.

2.1. Definition of concepts and issues for the ESAA

Let's start with institutional communication. Quite often, the latter is assimilated, with good reason, moreover, to public communication, and for a very specific reason. Dominique Bessières (2019), quoting Miège, explains that the latter differs from political communication, even if similarities exist, in that it promotes missions of general interest carried out by public institutions. As for commercial communication, its purpose is to simplify, as Zémor (2018) would say, the complexity of public issues, by adopting a simple and effective communication method, adapted to the requirements of the public and the market.

One of the major challenges of the ESAA is to maintain effective communication with its institutional and academic stakeholders, which include Algerian ministries, partner companies and the Algerian and French components of the board of directors. The management of these relationships implies a fine adaptation of the speeches according to the interlocutors, taking into account their expectations and profiles. During international events, priority is given to academic excellence and international collaborations and partnerships. In addition, communication with the Algerian authorities, the emphasis is on the impact of the school on local social and economic development and on its alignment with public policies; and respect for governance and all the rules of the Algerian republic. This flexibility in communication makes it possible to establish the credibility of the ESAA and to ensure the continuity of its institutional positioning.

In terms of commercial communication, Lasswell (1948) emphasizes the importance of segmenting messages according to the classical scheme: "Who says what, to whom, through what channel and with what effect?" As part of a business school like ESAA, it is essential to adapt the strategy to the various segments. These varied targets can be potential and current students, parents, professionals, companies, experts and teachers, alumni or institutional partners.

2.2. The political and institutional context: challenges and adaptation strategies

The communication of the ESAA is intrinsically influenced by the political context between Algeria and France. Diplomatic tensions, although fluctuating, can complicate certain institutional messages, especially when it comes to positioning the school on topics related to bilateral relations. Faced with these challenges, the ESAA adopts a formal and positive discourse that highlights academic excellence and its pedagogical innovation. This positioning makes it possible to strengthen its legitimacy as an educational actor, while remaining on the missions of the school described in the decree of creation.

We still treated the memorial aspects fairly, we invited the late Pierre Audin to talk about the fight of his father, Maurice, we even named one of the outgoing promotions after the same Moujahed of the national cause, Maurice Audin; the name of the anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon to name the teachers' room of the school; and for the first time in Algeria, the historian Christophe Lafaye had mentioned the chemical experiments carried out during the colonial period, in the auditorium of the school itself; baptized "the smala of the Emir Abdelkader". Several screenings of films about the colonial period took place at the school, such as the film Heliopolis; in the presence of mujahideen, who came to exchange with our students.

Note that an HSE approach has been introduced at the school level with all the signage and information on several channels. And a surveillance camera system, as well as a data protection approach, in accordance with Algerian regulations.

2.3. Digital communication in higher education: a strategic necessity

The digital advent has completely transformed the way academic institutions interact with their audiences. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social networks allow not only to promote the academic offer, but also to engage in a direct and authentic dialogue with stakeholders. Institutions that integrate an effective digital communication strategy are better able to maintain a close relationship with their students, parents and partners. In addition, the use of analytical tools makes it possible to precisely measure the impact of communication campaigns, thus facilitating real-time adjustments and continuous optimization (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2016).

For its part, the ESAA has tried to proactively adapt to these new trends by significantly strengthening its digital presence and adopting an engagement-centered approach. Analyzing the impact of messages, interactions and feedback via digital platforms has become a central element in understanding the expectations of each audience segment. As part of the continuous improvement approach adopted by the school and its ISO 9001 certification, obtained two years in a row (in 2023 and in 2024), the ESAA relied on various sources to detect anomalies and collect feedback. This includes an idea box installed in the cafeteria (guaranteeing anonymity), periodic meetings with students, companies, teachers and parents, as well as forms for continuous evaluation of teachers and companies. The establishment of a psychological consultation provided by a professional has been very useful to feed the continuous improvement system as a whole. Particular attention has been paid to the processing of information from social networks. For example, an interactive campaign launched in 2023 on Instagram allowed students to ask live questions about programs and opportunities, generating a high engagement rate.

Due to the particularity of the school and the diversity of the training offers it offers, a segmentation of social networks was done naturally :

A. LinkedIn: Essentially brings together the "business" population – corporate clients and future clients, experts and teachers - to whom the school wishes to make people want to collaborate, as well as the parents of students and future students. 100% growth in relationships in 4 years, growing to 54K. B. Instagram: Has been targeted for students and future students, with the objective of making them want to join the school, by sending back an image of dynamism and modernity, by promoting the campus, the environment and the inspiring projects of the students. Creation of the instagram account in 2019 (number of subscribers 22K).

C. Facebook: Served as a more generalist platform, bringing together a mixture of the different targeted populations. 100% growth in relationships in 4 years, increasing to 80K.

D. YouTube: Mainly hosts promotional videos, but especially qualitative content from the "Excellence Conferences" organized by the school. Growth in the number of subscribers by more than 200% at 4K.

Thus, the ESAA has managed to strengthen its digital presence, recognizing the importance of social networks and digital marketing. A new graphic charter has been designed, based on the school's ambition which stems from its strategy. The website constitutes the basis of the institutional and commercial information. For the purposes of creating an attractive and attractive website, a virtual tour of the School was carried out, which, supported by figures, boosted national and international external communication. This virtual visit, which can be consulted in 2022 from the school's website and Google maps, has counted more than 160K visitors worldwide in less than 6 months. The digitalization of the admission process, through a dematerialized admission portal and the introduction of e-payment, has allowed us to process up to 2000 applications for admission per year for all training courses.

Facebook Instagram statistics attest to an increase in digital engagement: in 2023, Facebook and Instagram campaigns reached more than 50,000 users with a conversion rate of 12%, an encouraging figure in the education sector. In addition, 70% of the communication budget is now devoted to digital media, reflecting a major strategic evolution towards digital. In a constantly changing context, the ESAA must continue to adapt its communication by relying on advanced analytical tools and by strengthening its international cooperation. By integrating new technologies and remaining faithful to its founding values, the school will be able to consolidate its positioning as a reference in higher education in Algeria.

3. The ESAA in the field of Algerian higher education: issues of power and differentiation strategies

If it were necessary to identify a distinctive feature of the Algerian university, it would undoubtedly be the persistent inability to take the step towards educational structures that could be described as truly "private". Since 1962, the choice has been made of a higher education fully supported by the state. This model has certainly produced the expected effects in terms of democratization, allowing generations of young Algerians to massively obtain university degrees. We have gone from barely 3,000 high school students in 1962 to more than 2 million students today (Ministry of Higher Education, 2025). However, it would be naive to believe that Algerian higher education escapes the power dynamics that are peculiar to it. These are articulated around two pillars: institutional regulation and the quest for academic legitimacy. The ESAA offers us precisely an illuminating example of this complexity.

3.1. A hybrid governance model and its legitimization challenges

With its Algerian-French binational governance model, the School evolves in a particularly complex political and institutional ecosystem. On the one hand, this configuration opens up access to international networks and a diversified expertise, considerably strengthening its credibility on the global scene. On the other hand, it imposes a subtle management of the sometimes divergent expectations between local and international stakeholders. As shown by several comparative studies (Knight, 2012; Van der Wende, 2016), a mixed governance can effectively increase the attractiveness of an institution, provided careful coordination and institutional communication perfectly aligned with shared values.

The challenges facing the ESAA are as follows:

A. Legitimization of a hybrid model: How to justify a paid model in a predominantly free university landscape? How to establish the credibility of an establishment that is both Algerian by its territorial anchoring and international by its DNA?

B. Attractiveness to a customer target with special expectations: The target audience - historically from upper-middle classes - expects tangible guarantees of quality (insertion rate, recognition of diplomas, international faculty). This requires a communication strategy based on: the organization of prestigious academic events (symposia, seminars, conferences); the systematic dissemination of a culture of excellence; the promotion of educational innovations, the assurance of quality supervision and links with the company for employability.

Note that a work of social inclusivity has been done, while maintaining the conditions of access and excellence, through excellence scholarships for example.

C. Positioning in the national ecosystem: It is both a question of distinguishing itself from private institutions that are sometimes perceived as less demanding, and of collaborating with public universities while preserving its singularity. It is useful in this regard to mention the "ESAA caravan", which has crisscrossed all regions of the country, through about fifteen schools and university centers, for example: The universities of Adrar, Tlemcen, Constantine, Blida, Oran 2, Tizi Ouzou. This initiative aimed to highlight the nature of the school, its activity and its promotion, including through its inclusivity, through "excellence scholarships". These scholarships, financed by companies, allow a population of students from all walks of life to apply, with the requirement of excellent results at the baccalaureate, in addition to the usual access conditions to school. It is also a question of satisfying regulatory requirements while preserving a margin for innovation. Still in this quest for legitimacy, the school's management has launched an in-depth study about the future of its alumni: 70% of ESAA alumni stay in Algeria against 30% who leave abroad. This reinforces the idea of a school anchored in its reality. This triple challenge explains why ESAA's institutional communication cannot be satisfied with traditional channels. It must invent an original narrative – halfway between national heritage and international standards – while demonstrating its concrete added value. As Stromquist (2018) notes in his analysis of university hybridizations, "frontier institutions must master the art of double legitimation: local by results, global by affiliations".

3.2. A Hybrid Position and Differentiation Strategy

ESAA stands out in the Algerian higher education landscape for its hybrid model. Unlike public universities, which are strongly supervised by the state, and private institutions with a strictly commercial vocation, it articulates economic pragmatism and a mission of general interest. This specificity allows it to offer training courses adapted to the requirements of the market while guaranteeing a high level of academic excellence.

To strengthen its positioning, the ESAA has deployed a differentiation strategy around several axes :

A. Pedagogical innovation, with programs constantly aligned with the expectations of the professional world.

B. Flexible management, inspired by international standards, favoring constant reactivity to market developments.

The specific status of the school implies financial autonomy, this autonomy in a context of absence of subsidies between 2019 and 2024, implies from its management a strict budgetary management, validated by a hybrid governance. Despite this, notable results and growth have been recorded

C. A strong local anchoring, which allows it to enhance its Algerian identity while cultivating an openness to the international.

In a logic of internationalization and continuous improvement, ESAA has strengthened its historical partnerships with renowned institutions such as the University of Lille and Audencia BS, while developing new agreements with institutions in Africa and Asia. This dynamic has made it possible

to enrich the academic offer and to attract high-level teachers and speakers. The development of the programs is based on a pragmatic approach, in line with the needs of the market. For example, the creation of the "MBA Cybersecurity Management", the "MBA Digital & Governance" and the "MBA Energy and Strategy" meets the expectations of companies in terms of digital transformation, risk management and energy strategy. This positioning allows the ESAA to stand out and strengthen its attractiveness.

In a logic of positioning our students on international standards, the ESAA became TOEIC center in 2022. The ESAA enrolls its students in a thorough understanding of economic and social realities by confronting them directly with the requirements of the world of work. The health crisis has revealed this ability to adapt: from the very beginning, the school adopted strict protocols. In this same dynamic, the ESAA pursues the objective of international accreditation, by implementing structural actions such as the creation of a scientific journal, the recruitment of international professors and the alignment with the best pedagogical practices; and this is following the DG's participation in the EFMD conference in 2020 in Milan, as well as an international partnership plan with universities on several continents, in particular African, for example: South Africa, South Korea. All this has resulted in a first African rank in the EDUNIVERSAL ranking for MBA and Master's degrees.

3.3. Communication and Institutional Symbolism: Forging a radiant identity

Based on the principle that "Institutional communication is all communication actions aimed at promoting the identity, values and mission of an organization, in coherence with its internal and external audiences" (Bernard Dagenais, 2019), the whole effort consisted in making the ESAA a center of influence. To do this, the very image of this establishment had to be redone.

As a result, the ESAA's communication, which faltered until 2019, has regained a new lease of life, which has resulted in a delicate balance between its ambition to obtain international accreditation and the expectations of the Algerian public authorities. In a logic of capitalization, exchanges with all the former directors of the school since 2005 took place, to build the new narrative of the school's communication, in this same logic, the 15 years of the ESAA were organized in 2019, in the presence of the big family of the school. The strategy adopted by the school's management, although appearing simple, even naive at first glance, has proven to be of certain effectiveness over time: to make strong cultural and historical references, during the graduation ceremony (key moment of the year), mobilizing emblematic figures such as Emir Abdelkader, Malek Haddad, Maurice Audin or Miriam Makeba, the foundation of its communication approach. This ceremony lent itself perfectly to the dissemination of messages in the colors of the heritage and the history of the country. The message was clear and resounding: the school is Algerian, and this must be known and perceived. The library has been relaunched by naming it "El Khizana", in reference to the ancestral libraries of the great Algerian south. The school's SDG approach has been named "Fuggera" in reference to the sustainable, ingenious and ancestral Algerian irrigation system. A labeled incubator was created in 2023 and which hosted challenges and hackathons co-organized with several ministerial departments and companies. The promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit is part of the school's DNA.

A new strategy has been developed under the title of the "African ambition" to promote the school at the African level, contacts, visits and projects have been carried out.

4. Reading the position of the ESAA through the field theories of Pierre Bourdieu

At this stage of our reflection, hindsight does not yet allow us to fully evaluate the communication strategy of the ESAA, or even to attempt an exhaustive systematic analysis in the light of the field theory imagined by Pierre Bourdieu. However, it is this theoretical framework that seems most able to illuminate this approach, as evidenced by this definition taken from Homo Academicus: "A social

field is a structured space of positions where agents and institutions struggle for the accumulation and monopolization of specific capital" (Bourdieu, 1984). The key notions of this theory – field, capital and habitus - allow, it is our opinion at least, to understand this complex reality. Like any social field, higher education is structured around permanent power relations where different agents – public universities, private schools, state institutions – each seek to impose their legitimate vision of academic excellence and to capture resources. Due to its hybrid nature, the task of the ESAA turns out to be more delicate than for an ordinary institution. The challenge lies in its ability to position itself as an actor in its own right, skilfully navigating between public and private logics, while accumulating different types of capital (symbolic, cultural, social, economic) to establish its legitimacy in this competitive field.

4.1. Higher Education as a Field of Struggle: The ESAA and the quest for capital

According to Bourdieu, a field is a relatively autonomous social space. In the case of the ESAA, the field of Algerian higher education is structured around several forms of capital, which the school must mobilize and value:

A. Economic capital: It is essential to ensure the autonomy of the school in the face of traditional public financing and the budgetary constraints of state universities. The ESAA, unlike public institutions, operates on a specific financial model, with financial autonomy, which requires it to adopt attractiveness and differentiation strategies to generate its own income. In the end, it accumulates the constraints of the public and the private. It should also be emphasized that the ESAA operates according to a project-based approach: each training, module or event is conceived as an autonomous project, requiring precise planning of objectives, deadlines, resources and stakeholders. This method of organization, associated with the marketing of training offers, places the establishment in a real entrepreneurial dynamic based on its financial autonomy (Cf. in this regard Mansouri, S., & Kiared, K. 2024).

B. Symbolic capital: The school must assert its legitimacy by building an image of academic excellence, in particular by highlighting its accreditations (national and international targeted), its prestigious international partnerships and the quality of the professional integration of its graduates on the job market. This capital is nourished by recognition and prestige.

C. Social capital: Strategic alliances with renowned foreign universities and partner companies strengthen its integration into academic and professional power networks, opening doors and consolidating its influence.

D. Cultural capital: The ESAA must position itself as an institution producing and disseminating recognized and valued knowledge, through scientific research, the publication of articles, such as the creation of a journal (*The Responsible Manager's Journal*; created in 2023), and the certification of its programs by recognized organizations.

4.2. ESAA Strategies and Logics of Distinction

In this permanent struggle for legitimacy, the ESAA adopts strategies that recall the mechanisms of distinction analyzed by Bourdieu. Differentiation through pedagogical innovation (cutting-edge programs), international openness (international partnerships) and academic requirements (certification, targeted accreditation) aim to give it a specific and enviable place in the field. Its positioning is thus built both in opposition and in complementarity: against public universities, sometimes perceived as rigid, but also against certain private schools, sometimes considered less academically demanding. The ESAA also mobilizes strong symbols to legitimize its role and enrich its symbolic capital. The reference to Algerian historical and cultural figures (Emir Abdelkader, Malek Haddad, Maurice Audin, Miriam Makeba, Franz Fanon) is a powerful way to reaffirm its national roots and its Algerian identity, while projecting an image of modernity, openness and

historical depth. These communication strategies make it possible to build a complex and nuanced institutional identity, actively participating in the accumulation of its symbolic capital.

4.3. Limits and challenges of the strategy

The communication strategy stems from the overall strategy of the school, it is distinguished by a real desire for consistency and formalization. The actions are thought out, written, declined on all the channels, in a logic of alignment between institutional discourse and daily practices. This concern for clarity and method is an undeniable strength. This formal rigor comes with a risk: that of a communication that is too framed, sometimes disconnected from certain social realities. The challenges related to inclusivity, accessibility, and the right to be heard remain sensitive points. There is still a gap between the discourse on the sociology of man and practice in real society, a gap that only active listening to the public could bridge. If the management model adopted meets international standards, the question of its local appropriation remains open. Standardization, necessary for certification, can sometimes hinder the consideration of the cultural, linguistic and social specificities of the Algerian context. The real challenge is therefore to maintain this formal excellence while strengthening human openness, inclusivity, and the ability to adapt. It is a question of articulating rigor and sensitivity, international standards and local anchoring, written strategy and lived listening. Therefore, the school's communication must now be thought of not only as an instrument of visibility and reputation, but also as a space for shared experience, where each actor (institution, company, student, neighborhood) can recognize and be heard. Note only in passing, that the management was aware of this issue, it tried to adapt its internal HR strategy by highlighting all the profiles, from the gardener to the teacher researcher, through profiles published on networks or supervising in the corridors of the school, the students through the associative projects were involved in a school support operation for all the children of the neighborhood in which the school is located, these actions made it possible to establish a peaceful, responsible and committed atmosphere with the internal and external ecosystem.

4.3. Tensions and the Reproduction of Inequalities in the academic field

The Bourdieu analysis also highlights the contradictions inherent in this positioning of the ESAA. By adopting the codes and standards of the international academic field (accreditations, partnerships with foreign business schools, alignment with world standards), the ESAA participates, despite itself or consciously, in a form of reproduction of inequalities. It contributes to consolidating an elitist higher education model, accessible mainly to students who already have a certain economic and cultural capital, able to finance these training courses or meet particular criteria of excellence. Even if this is not always the case for professional training, such as MBA and continuing education, supported by companies, and sometimes for initial training, family solidarity plays a big role. However, the reputation of the school through the customer experience, has allowed it to be systematically recommended according to field surveys (100% yes to the question: would you recommend your school?), word of mouth works. Moreover, its relative autonomy from public universities allows it to stand out, but also exposes it to political and institutional tensions. The Algerian regulatory framework, still changing and often centralized, imposes constraints that can limit its room for maneuver and force it to constantly negotiate its delicate positioning between bold innovation and compliance with state expectations.

Conclusion

The ESAA, a strategic actor in search of recognition and balance

The ESAA perfectly illustrates the complex power dynamics and the distinction strategies described by Bourdieu in an Algerian academic field in full mutation. The school actively seeks to accumulate different types of capital (economic, symbolic, social, cultural) to establish and strengthen its legitimacy, while constantly adapting to the constraints and opportunities of the Algerian university

field. Its major challenge is to manage to maintain this delicate balance, by asserting its own and hybrid identity, without being marginalized by the dominant institutions or diluted in a conformism. In the long term, its lasting success will depend on its ability to stabilize its symbolic capital, to deepen its local anchoring, and to strengthen its registration in international academic and economic networks, while navigating with agility the political and cultural imperatives that are specific to it. The ESAA being an obvious soft power tool, created to train Algerian managers of today and tomorrow, would benefit from being oriented, more and more, in the direction of the interest of the country in this crucial African context.

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