

## Pedagogical Freedom in Curriculum Implementation: between Practice and Theory.

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Received: 08/2024, Published: 09/2024

### Abstract:

The current study aims at revealing the extent of the teachers of primary education practicing a pedagogical freedom in the Curriculums implementation, and a random sample of (374) teachers were chosen in the Directorate of Education of Mostaganem State during the academic year 2019/2020, and the researchers followed the steps of the descriptive analytical approach, and in order to achieve the objectives of the study, was used a questionnaire of pedagogy of freedom, the validity and consistency of the signs were verified, After the statistical analysis ; we have concluded the following results:

- The dominant Fields of practicing pedagogical freedom among primary education teachers are respectively: pedagogical freedom in choosing educational methods, followed by pedagogical freedom in choosing educational situations, followed by pedagogical freedom in formulating educational goals, then pedagogical freedom in the practice of pedagogical evaluation.
- There are no differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom due to the variables of the professional seniority, and the teaching phase respectively.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical freedom; The curriculums; The curriculums implementation

### الحرية البيداغوجية في تنفيذ المناهج الدراسية بين الممارسة والتنظير

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ملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى الكشف عن مدى ممارسة أساتذة التعليم الابتدائي للحرية البيداغوجية في تنفيذ المناهج الدراسية، وتم اختيار عينة عشوائية طبقية تتكون من (374) أستاذا وأستاذة بمديرية التربية لولاية مستغانم خلال الموسم الدراسي 2020/2019، واتبع الباحثان خطوات المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وسعيا لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم استخدام استبيان للحرية البيداغوجية، تم التحقق من دلالات صدقه وثباته، بعد إجراء عملية التحليل الإحصائي؛ تم التوصل إلى النتائج التالية:

- وردت مجالات ممارسة الحرية البيداغوجية السائدة لدى أساتذة التعليم الابتدائي على النحو الآتي: الحرية البيداغوجية في اختيار الوسائل التعليمية، يليه الحرية البيداغوجية اختيار الوضعيات التعليمية، يليه الحرية البيداغوجية في صوغ الأهداف التعليمية، ثم الحرية البيداغوجية في ممارسة التقويم البيداغوجي.
- عدم وجود فروق في ممارسة الحرية البيداغوجية تعزى لمتغيري الأقدمية المهنية، طور التدريس على التوالي.

## Introduction

It is a given that pedagogical action does not yield to spontaneous, impromptu work. A pre-planned strategy is essential through which the teacher defines the objectives of their future lessons and outlines what they aim to achieve by the end of a class session or an educational unit. Thus, the construction of any educational act involves four fundamental stages: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating (Yacoubi, 2002, p. 45); success in any fieldwork with learners cannot be achieved unless these four steps are considered.

Since planning is the first step in accomplishing work and achieving goals, "**Hathroubi**" (2012) defined it as "planning is the effort to control the future of an activity or a group of activities and try to direct these activities towards their goals in order to reach the maximum degree of achievement and efficiency", and also defined it as "thinking, managing and deciding in advance what needs to be done to achieve certain goals and is a process that precedes implementation" (Hathroubi, 2012, p. 56).

Therefore, through these two definitions, it clearly illustrates the extent of reliance in the pedagogical process on the teacher's personality, competence, experience, and commitment to always achieving the best, because reaching the goals and competencies outlined in the curricula, although centralized, largely depends on the teacher's personality (his training, mindset, communication, passion for his work, excellence, creativity), and other qualities that cannot be systematically combined in anyone.

The diversity of learners in their thinking and learning patterns imposes on the teacher to be somehow liberated from the constraints and pedagogical controls imposed by the academic curricula, in addition to his commitment to implementing the curricula and translating educational objectives from theory to practice, considering the various foundations that contributed to the development of those curricula and what they contain of skills and competencies of different natures. as well as the national and global values they include. It is also the teacher's responsibility to adapt the content of curricula and textbooks according to the characteristics of the learners and their environment; considering that the temporal and spatial positioning of the learner, along with the ideas and prior knowledge they carry, as well as the demands of their environment, in addition to their intelligence quotient and cognitive formation; all of these variables play a role, not easily overlooked, in the extent of success in the educational learning process.

In accordance with the reform policy spearheaded by the Ministry of National Education at the outset of the academic year 2016-2017, the education sector in Algeria witnessed the issuance of decrees and regulatory frameworks distinguished by an imperative call to break free from traditional practices in handling school curricula and delineating their objectives at the departmental level, Notably, among what has been recorded in this regard is what was stipulated in Curriculum Memorandum No. 01 directed to education directors and inspection corps in the provinces, issued by the General Inspectorate of Pedagogy on October 22, 2017, which stated:

With the implementation of the annual plans for establishing the proposed learning outcomes, so that the teacher can accurately translate its structure in the field without compromising the principle of pedagogical transparency, Therefore, he must consider flexibility in application, based on the principle of responsible pedagogical freedom, which grants him some regulated independence, enabling him to respect the specificity of the group and the pace of instructions within it, without deviating from the general framework.

This memorandum was issued in response to certain objective questions and concerns arising from the field, as well as the presence of a considerable number of new teachers, especially with the varied

interpretations and readings of the documents accompanying the curriculum installation thus, it was directed towards assisting them in overcoming these varied interpretations, dispelling confusion, and contributing to enhancing performance.

Therefore, responsible pedagogical freedom, a concept that the rewritten curricula - second-generation curricula - have focused on establishing and solidifying in educational practices.

There are numerous previous studies that have pointed to these practices, for instance a study by “**Saud bin Maseer Al-Bala'asi**” (2011) examined the prevailing educational philosophy among middle school teachers in Al-Qurayyat province. The concluded the absence of a clear educational philosophy among the teachers and found no statistically significant differences attributed to variables such as nationality, years of experience, academic qualifications, and academic specialization.

Another study by “**Alimat**” and “**Al-Khawalda**” (2011) surveyed the perceptions of elementary science teachers in Jordan regarding their pedagogical knowledge and practice. It found that teachers' possession or lack of pedagogical knowledge had an impact on their teaching practices. The most important sources for teachers to acquire pedagogical knowledge are represented by their university studies and tradition, as well as by their professional colleagues.

Furthermore, a study conducted by “**Samira Harbi**” (2011) aimed at exploring the attitudes of elementary education teachers towards the effectiveness of educational planning in developing students' capabilities. It concluded that the attitudes of elementary education teachers towards improving educational planning for the teaching methods employed by the teacher were negative. Despite its discussion of educational planning of teacher's relationship with their students and its adoption of teaching methods characterized by teacher-student participation, it does not provide means of communication with parents, nor does it address its relationship with the school administration. It also does not implement teaching methods that align with the students' age characteristics and different abilities, nor does it consider the flexibility aspect in teaching methods that enable the teacher to innovate and renew.

Additionally, it concluded that the attitudes of elementary education teachers towards the care of educational planning in providing educational resources for student development were moderate, as was the case with students' practice of the necessary educational and sports activities for their development.

In a study by “**Ahlam Merabet**” (2006), aimed at uncovering the reality of the educational system undergoing various changes and reforms at different stages, it was found that the curriculum changes have led teachers to adopt new teaching methods and improve their classroom performance, benefiting the education sector overall. However, the study also revealed that recent reforms by the Ministry of National Education failed to provide teachers with the explanatory and material resources needed to fulfill their teaching duties. As a result, the teaching profession has become more challenging, compounded by a lack of resources and comprehensive knowledge across scientific, psychological, and linguistic domains. Additionally, classrooms are overcrowded, and teacher workload exceeds the plan mandated by the Ministry of National Education. These challenges refute the notion that Algerian teachers perform their duties with ease.

Based on the above, the study's problem statement revolves around the following question:

**To what extent do primary school teachers exercise pedagogical freedom in implementing the school curricula?**

**Firstly: Study Hypotheses**

After presenting the research problem and the questions that emerged from it, the study hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- The areas of primary school teachers' practice of responsible pedagogical freedom prevalent in implementing the curricula are as follows, respectively: pedagogical freedom in the selection of teaching methods, pedagogical freedom in the selection of educational situations, pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives, and pedagogical freedom in pedagogical assessment practices.
- There are no differences in the practice of responsible pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of professional seniority.
- There are no differences in the practice of responsible pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of teaching level.

### **Secondly: Study Objectives**

The current study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the domains in which primary school teachers exercise prevailing responsible pedagogical freedom in implementing the school curricula.
- To ascertain the differences in the practice of responsible pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of professional seniority.
- To determine the variances in the practice of responsible pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of teaching level.

### **Thirdly: Study Significance**

The significance of the current study lies in its subject matter itself. Responsible pedagogical freedom is a topic that has not been extensively addressed in the writings of authors and experts in the field of education. It has accompanied the changes that have occurred in school curricula, aligning with contemporary global developments in the field of education. Therefore, this study holds value for both curriculum developers and teachers, as it bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical application in the field.

### **Fourth: Study Boundaries**

The scope of the current study is defined by its central theme, which examines "Responsible Pedagogical Freedom in Curriculum Implementation: Bridging Practice and Theory." It specifically targets elementary school teachers employed in the Education Directorate of Mostaganem province and utilizes the Pedagogical Freedom questionnaire as its primary research tool. Moreover, the study is temporally and spatially confined to the academic year (2019-2020) in Mostaganem. The findings of the study and their potential applicability will be discussed within the context of these defined boundaries.

### **Fifth: Procedural Definitions of Study Concepts**

- **Responsible pedagogical freedom:** the teacher's autonomy in planning and executing the educational process within the framework of approved educational curricula. The current study encompasses the following areas: formulating learning objectives, selecting learning situations, choosing educational resources, and practicing pedagogical assessment. It is quantified by the score obtained by the teacher on the questionnaire prepared for the study, theoretically ranging between (38-190).
- **Curriculum:** A formal pedagogical document issued by the Ministry of National Education to establish the obligatory framework for teaching a specific subject. It is expected to include objectives and competencies at all levels, content, contexts, educational activities, extracurricular activities, methodologies, resources, as well as assessment tools and techniques.

## 1. Pedagogical freedom

### 1.1. The concept of pedagogical freedom

Historically, this concept was not understood in its current sense as it emerged in the writings and works of thinkers throughout different eras. However, the nature and specificity of the educational act, and the significance of the teacher's role as the primary driver of the educational process makes it illogical to disregard his identity and humanity, considering his role as a supervisor in this constructive process.

In the introduction to the curriculum prepared by the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars in 1952, "**Sheikh El Arabi El-Tebessi**" emphasizes the essential role of the teacher in the educational process, stating: "However, no matter how progressive and unified programs may be, their value amounts to nothing without the teacher who ensures their implementation. It is the consciences, hearts, and minds of the men of our upbringing alone that imbue every Islamic endeavor with blessed vitality." In this regard, he further asserts, "Teachers have the full right to distribute lessons according to the need and adapt them to suit the environment. Similarly, they have the authority to add or omit certain lessons they perceive as valuable or beneficial, or those they deem to have no value or benefit for their context, as long as this falls within the general framework of the program..." This educational approach grants the teacher a role characterized by flexibility, freedom of action, and creativity within the overarching structure of the curriculum (Achoui, 1991, pp. 37-38).

"**Yaqoubi**" (2002) highlighted the importance of the teacher's role, citing the researcher "**Fourastié**", who stated, "If it is customary for an engineer to study in two months what he intends to build in a year, then duty now dictates that he studies in a year what he wants to construct in a month." According to "**Yaqoubi**", if this is the duty of an engineer, then what about the teacher who nurtures minds? The teacher is even more obligated to avoid all improvisation and randomness so that his work is purposeful and effective (Yaqoubi, 2002, p. 45).

In the context of the Algerian educational system references, the concept of pedagogical freedom has not been clearly articulated. All that has been mentioned in this context falls within the nature of education itself or the conclusions drawn from the educational material. Among what has been recorded as a concept of pedagogical freedom is what was mentioned in the curricular guide for curriculum preparation in one of its paragraphs: "Although knowledge construction is a personal endeavor, it occurs within a social framework. Information is linked to the social environment, and since context arises from our thoughts and contributions from others in the interaction process. The social structuralist perspective is considered an extension of structuralism, and it emphasizes social interactions in knowledge construction, specifically focusing on pathways and psychological interactions. It clarifies that the confrontation between individuals is a source of growth, suggesting a spiral model with an alternating sequence of phrases: internal individual confrontation, and the construction of cognitive models" (Ministry of National Education, 2009, p. 16).

And thus, the nature of knowledge construction, as indicated in this paragraph, entails that the teacher exercises a degree of freedom amidst the interactions occurring within the classroom, striving to achieve harmony among learners on one hand - despite their differing psychological needs - and between the learners and their social environment on the other hand.

The concept of responsible pedagogical freedom appears in official documents through its mention in a documented intervention titled "Structuring the Documents Accompanying Second-Generation Curricula." It is among the training presentations of the National Curriculum Committee, forming part of the content of the second training session on accompanying documents. The text of the statement reads: "The accompanying document confirms, in its objectives, the principle of responsible

pedagogical freedom for the teacher in utilizing the accompanying document.” Through an examination of the accompanying documents for the annual learning plans, it was unanimously agreed that what has been presented is merely non-binding proposals for teachers. It is up to them to develop an annual plan with educational segments characterized by pedagogical effectiveness within the specific context of each department and the pace of the educational process. In conclusion, responsible pedagogical freedom is defined as "the independence of the teacher in planning and implementing the educational process within the framework of the approved educational curricula" (Ministry of National Education, 2017-2018, p. 45).

### **1.1.2. Justifications for the Existence of Responsible Pedagogical Freedom in the New Curricula**

The most significant rationale for its existence is to unleash the energies and potentials of the teacher, and to employ them in an atmosphere of flexibility and educational and pedagogical creativity, away from the constraints imposed on him by restricting them and linking them to specific mechanisms and models (Ministry of National Education, 2017-2018, p. 47).

### **1.1.3. Boundaries of Pedagogical Freedom in Educational Practices**

The boundaries of responsible pedagogical freedom within the general framework of official curricula, as indicated by the Ministry of National Education (2017-2018, p. 45), consist of refraining from encroaching upon the following:

- The established goals and objectives outlined in various documents forming the basis of curricula.
- Graduation features, comprehensive competencies, and final subject competencies for the academic subjects.
- The adopted approach in teaching (the competency-based approach within the framework of the social constructivist model).
- Teaching methods for various educational activities.
- Competency attainment resources (cognitive, methodological, and values-based resources).
- The sequence of different educational situations within the concept of the learning segment.
- Weekly and annual time allocation for prescribed subjects.

### **1.1.4. The effectiveness and capability of responsible pedagogical freedom to motivate field practitioners to enhance and develop educational performance**

Responsible pedagogical freedom, like other educational ideas and ambitious projects, requires a suitable educational environment to fulfill its associated functions, without providing the conditions for adoption and responsible practice, we will only further obscure matters, and lead the practitioner in the field to confusion and further unsuccessful experiments, and this may kill faith in his capacity for conscious positive change (Ministry of National Education, 2017-2018, p. 47).

## **1.2. Pedagogical Freedom in Curriculum Implementation**

### **1.2.1. Concept of Curriculum**

“The term 'curriculum', originating from Latin, denotes the method an individual adopts to reach a specific goal. The term is mentioned in the Holy Quran in verse 48 of Surah Al-Ma'idah, where Allah SWT says: “To each of you We have ordained a code of law and a way of life”. It is also mentioned in a statement by “**Ibn Abbas**” (may Allah be pleased with them both): “The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not pass away until he left you upon a clear way”. This leads us to understand the linguistic meaning of the word “curriculum” and the word “methodology”. Referring to linguistic

dictionaries, we find that the term 'clear route' is mentioned, and likewise, the term 'methodology' means clarity. Thus, linguistically, 'curriculum' signifies a clear path." (Al-Zouini et al., 2013, p. 17).

The curriculum was defined in the past as: "A collection of information, facts, concepts, ideas, and skills taught to students in the form of study materials. It is commonly referred to as "curricula" or "a set of prescribed study materials for a grade or stage of education", or "the subjects presented by the school to students for a specific subject", in a specific class. For instance, the entirety of the mathematics subjects in the first year of high school are referred to as the mathematics curriculum, and similarly, the total subjects of Arabic language are referred to as the Arabic language curriculum... and so on. A textbook is allocated for each subject, specifying precisely what students' study in each grade, and the examination is conducted at the end of the academic year." (Salah, 2004, p. 18).

Due to the criticisms directed at the old concept of curriculum and the educational practices resulting from that concept, additionally, the emergence of certain factors and ideas, including educational and psychological theories, led to the evolution of the concept of curriculum during the first half of the twentieth century. It adopted a modern perspective that it had not previously held. Some educators define the curriculum, in its modern sense, as "the set of experiences and activities that the school prepares for its students inside and outside its premises with the aim of assisting them in comprehensive growth, and adjusting their behavior according to its educational objectives", or "the set of experiences and activities provided by the school under its supervision to students for them to interact with and learn from. As a result of this interaction and engagement, learning or modification of their behavior occurs, leading to the achievement of comprehensive integrated growth, which is the ultimate goal of education" (Salah, 2004, p. 21).

In the general framework of curricula, the following concept of curriculum has been provided:

"Curriculum refers to all organized learning experiences and all the influences that a student may be exposed to, under the school's responsibility, during his formation period. This concept includes learning activities in which the student participates, the methods and means used, as well as the adopted evaluation methods."

## **1.2.2. Areas of Practicing Responsible Pedagogical Freedom in Curriculum Implementation**

### **1.2.2.1. Pedagogical Freedom in Formulating Learning Objectives**

"**Abdelmoumen Yaakoubi**" mentioned in his book 'Didactic Action Engineering' an important quote from "**Ralph Tyler**" about the value and importance of objectives. "**Tyler**" stated: "Verifying the validity of teaching methods and examination methods is not achieved by referring to the texts of textbooks and prescribed curricula, but by referring to the objectives behind these texts and curricula. Because, in his view, texts and curricula can be studied in multiple ways and to achieve many goals, so they are not suitable to be the reference for verifying the validity and integrity of teaching/learning or the accuracy of exams. Therefore, it is necessary for the objectives to be determined prior to the educational activity". (Yaakoubi, 2002, p. 58).

The educational objective is defined as "a description of the expected behavior of the learner as a result of interacting with certain facts, standards, fixed divine values, and changing educational experiences, and actively engaging with them". (Mudkor, 1990, p. 332).

From this definition and others, it becomes evident that the educational objective represents the outcome we aim to achieve at the individual level, both present and future regarding all aspects of their personality and their interactions with society.

And this concept of the educational objective was reinforced by what was stated in the guiding law of national education 08/04 dated January 23, 2008, in its second article, first paragraph, which states:

“The mission of Algerian schools is to form citizens endowed with definite national characteristics, deeply attached to the values of the Algerian people, capable of understanding the world around them, adapting to it, influencing it, and open to global civilization.”

Ultimately, the objectives are the result of the interaction of a set of fundamental inputs with various and diverse factors, including the needs of the children subjected to educational action, as well as the environment in which they live, and the values, principles, and level of progress prevailing in that society.

As societies differ in their systems, conditions, and the degree of progress they have achieved, evolving over time, each society has its own thinkers and viewpoints, seeking through a certain system to crystallize the general objectives of education at the level of institutions and individuals. These objectives are influenced by the society's overall policies, system, beliefs, and, particularly, its historical and cultural backgrounds.

The pedagogical freedom in formulating an educational objective means determining the proficiency that must be achieved, which learners seek to acquire and can be monitored by the instructor at the end of appropriate training, while considering the following conditions:

- The training objectives must be sound.
- That the objectives progress in sequence from general to specific, from broad to narrow, and from easy to difficult.

#### **1.2.2.2. Pedagogical Freedom in Selecting Educational Situations**

If educational objectives are the foundation of the educational process, then those objectives require specific contextual situations in terms of time and place. They also require specific knowledge content closely related to the conceptual field outlined in the annual plans. Returning to the components of the curriculum, it contains what is known as constants and variables. If the curriculum is among those constants that the teacher is not allowed to change or replace, then the content, or what is referred to as the substance, undergoes a kind of screening by the competent and experienced teacher in his work.

A set of conditions can be identified that the teacher must consider during field practice with students across all its stages, from planning through execution to evaluation. These conditions are as follows:

- Learning situations should hold significance for the learner, drawing inspiration from their lived experiences, expressing the culture, knowledge, and cultural and intellectual heritage carried by their environment.
- That situation should convey and reflect the objectives and goals outlined in the curriculum, and should clearly manifest in the learner's behavior following the learning process, albeit to some extent, while noting the connection between objectives and competencies in their diversity and multiplicity.
- Those situations should evoke the learner's emotions and express his needs and desires within their own social context, fulfilling his aspirations for coexistence within his immediate community.
- The contents should align with the students' level and maturity on one hand and meet their need for scientific knowledge on the other.
- They should serve as a practical translation of the learning objectives and contribute to the development of children's skills in critical thinking, analysis, and other essential life skills.

#### **1.2.2.3. Pedagogical freedom in choosing educational methods**

Returning to the previous discussion, the diversity in learners' thinking styles, demands, and needs necessitates a specific and deliberate approach to fieldwork. Given that pedagogical factors, or educational methods, have become essential with the evolution of educational curricula.

Educational resources encompass all tools and aids that assist students and facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge, thereby serving to stimulate the educational process.

It is worth noting that curricula have placed great importance on educational methods, as they are mentioned in various subject curricula. Among these is what is mentioned in the Arabic language curriculum under the guidance element related to educational methods. It states: "In addition to the textbook, the teacher should utilize other methods, especially those that attract the learner's attention. Thus, the teacher selects appropriate materials for each activity (stories, texts, scenes, situations, audio tapes, films...)" (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p. 29).

#### **1.2.2.4. Pedagogical freedom in practicing pedagogical assessment**

In its modern perspective, assessment is not limited to traditional practices related to monitoring learners' performance after a set of activities and classroom practices, which focus on expressing opinions towards those performances, but it is much more comprehensive and broader than that. It is defined as "an organized process that generates information useful for decision-making or making judgments about the value of things, people, subjects, or ideas" (Othman, 2005, p. 60), and it is also defined as "the process of giving feedback value and meaning" (Ibrahim and Ahmed, n.d., p. 198).

Hence, it becomes apparent that assessment is no longer solely practiced by the teacher with the intention of assessing students' achievements and making judgments, but rather, it is an integral part of the educational process. It is primarily associated with the objectives set within the educational work.

Historically, educational assessment has witnessed numerous and diverse developments, both in terms of concepts and practices. It is noteworthy that among the concepts associated with assessment are the authentic assessment, the formative assessment, and the alternative assessment. The latter is considered one of the most prominent definitions in the educational field.

Therefore, assessment is considered authentic or realistic when students engage in meaningful and significant tasks, and these assessment tasks are similar to learning activities, not traditional tests. It requires high-order thinking skills, integration of a wide range of knowledge, and informs students about the value of good work by specifying criteria used to judge the quality of this task.

Truly, alternative educational assessment is among the broad concepts, encompassing various types of assessment methods that require the learner to demonstrate his competencies and knowledge by forming or creating responses, or innovating products. Therefore, it is preferable to view alternative assessment as a continuum of methods or formats ranging from simple open responses written by the learner, to comprehensive explanations, and collections of integrated works by the learner over time (Allam, 2004, p. 86).

## **2. Methodology and tool**

### **2.1. Study Methodology**

The researchers in the current study adopted the descriptive-analytical methodology, which relies on description, analysis, and comparison. It is defined as a method among the methods of scientific analysis and interpretation, aimed at achieving specific objectives for a particular social situation. Alternatively, it is considered a method to describe the studied phenomenon and portray it quantitatively by collecting structured information about the problem, classifying it, analyzing it, and subjecting it to detailed study (Schrock, 2003: 147).

## 2.2. Study Population

According to the statistics provided to the researchers by the head of the primary education office in the Directorate of Education for the Wilaya of Mostaganem, the total number of primary school teachers during the academic year 2019-2020 was 3,747 male and female teachers, distributed across 12 districts (see Appendix 02).

## 2.3. Study Sample

### 2.3.1. Study Sample Size

In a research community estimated to range from several hundred to several thousand elements, it is preferable to take one hundred elements from each prepared layer and to take a total of 10% of the research community when it consists of several thousand (Morris, 2010: 319). When taking 10% of the current community, the research sample becomes composed of 373 male and female teachers, according to the following equation:

$$\text{Sample Size} = \left(\frac{3747}{100}\right) \times 10 = 374 \text{ Male and female teachers}$$

This sample was selected through stratified random sampling, “which involves dividing the original population into layers or sections with distinct characteristics that differ from one another. Each layer or category represents a homogeneous subgroup within the original population” (Mazyan, 2008: 158). “If the elements of the population are heterogeneous, we divide the population into strata, and then take a simple random sample from each stratum proportional to its size” (Al-Najjar, 2007: 25).

The sample in the current research was selected from each stratum (representing the districts according to the administrative division of primary school teachers in the Directorate of Education for the province of Mostaganem) using simple random sampling, that is, through probability sampling:

For instance, regarding the Mostaganem district, the sample size was determined as follows:

**Sample Size** =  $\left(\frac{647}{3747}\right) \times 374 = 64$  Male and female teachers; and the sample size was.

$$\text{Stratified Sample Size} = \left(\frac{\text{Stratum Size}}{\text{Population Size}}\right) \times \text{Total Sample Size}$$

**Table (01): Illustrates the distribution of sample individuals by each district**

Number	Districts	Number of community members	Number of sample members
01	Mostaganem	647	64
02	Hassi mamash	322	32
03	Ain Al Nuwaisi	210	21
04	Masra	313	31

05	Khairuddin	331	33
06	Ain Tadel	421	42
07	Bouguirat	440	44
08	Sidi Ali	290	29
09	Marsa El Hadjadj	57	06
10	Sidi Lakhdar	201	20
11	Ben Abd El Malek Ramadan	77	08
12	Achachacha	438	44
Total		3747	374

### 2.3.2. Characteristics of the Primary Study Sample

**A. According to Professional Seniority:** The following table represents the distribution of the primary study sample according to the variable of professional seniority.

**Table (02): Illustrates the distribution of the primary study sample according to professional seniority**

Professional seniority	the number	percentage %
Less than 05 years	130	34.76
From 05 – 10 years	122	32.62
More than 10 years	122	32.62
the total	374	100 %

From the above table, it is evident that the number of teachers with professional seniority ranging between "05-10 years" is equal to the number of teachers whose seniority exceeds 10 years (122 teachers, representing 32.62%), and they are successively fewer than the number of teachers whose seniority is less than 05 years (130 teachers, representing 34.76%), by a difference of 8 teachers, representing a percentage of 2.14%.

**B. According to the teaching grade:** The following table represents the distribution of the primary study sample according to the variable of teaching grade:

**Table (03): Illustrates the distribution of the basic study sample according to the teaching grade**

Teaching stage	the number	percentage %
The first stage	79	21.12
The second stage	139	37.17
The third stage	156	41.71
the total	374	100 %

It is evident from the above table that the number of teachers instructing in the third stage (156 teachers, accounting for 41.71%) exceeds the number of teachers instructing in the second stage (139 teachers, accounting for 37.17%). Similarly, the number of teachers instructing in the first stage (79

teachers, accounting for 21.12%) surpasses by a margin of 17 teachers (accounting for 4.54%) and 77 teachers (accounting for 20.59%) respectively.

## 2.4. Study Tool

The accuracy of research and its scientific value relies on the proper selection of methods and tools that meet scientific and methodological criteria to achieve the outlined objectives and to gather information and data related to scientific research. In order to ensure reliable results, the researchers have designed a questionnaire to measure the extent of pedagogical freedom exercised by elementary school teachers in implementing the curriculum.

The questionnaire was designed after reviewing the elementary school curricula and accompanying documents, and consulting with a group of specialized inspectors in Arabic language. This process led to identifying the dimensions related to pedagogical freedom, upon which the questionnaire items would be subsequently built.

### 2.4.1. Determining the Dimensions of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into four dimensions related to the areas of pedagogical freedom practice, as follows:

- Pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives.
- Pedagogical freedom in selecting educational situations.
- Pedagogical freedom in choosing teaching tools.
- Pedagogical freedom in practicing pedagogical assessment.

### 2.4.2. Structuring the Questionnaire Sections

After determining the dimensions of the questionnaire, a set of sections was developed to measure their content. They are distributed as follows:

**Table (04): Illustrates the Distribution of Questionnaire Items Across Dimensions**

Dimensions	Number of paragraphs
Pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives	01 - 05 - 09 - 13 - 17 - 21 - 25 - 29 - 33 - 37
Pedagogical freedom in selecting educational situations	02 - 06 - 10 - 14 - 18 - 22 - 26 - 30 - 34 - 38
Pedagogical freedom in selecting educational resources	03 - 07 - 11 - 15 - 19 - 23 - 27 - 31 - 35 - 39
Pedagogical freedom in pedagogical assessment practice	04 - 08 - 12 - 16 - 20 - 24 - 28 - 32 - 36 - 40

### 2.4.3. Correction Key

The researchers provided five alternatives for each section of the questionnaire. These alternatives were represented by (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never). Each alternative was assigned grades sequentially (5, 4, 3, 2, 1), assuming all sections were positive with no negative ones.

## 2.5. Psychometric Properties of the Study Tool

### 2.5.1. Validity: The validity coefficient was calculated using three methods

#### 2.5.1.1. Expert Validity

After formulating the questionnaire items in their initial form, the researchers presented it to a group of Arabic language-specialized inspectors. Their aim was to assess its effectiveness and suitability for measuring the intended constructs, and to benefit from their feedback and suggestions regarding the appropriateness of the sections for the study domains; in terms of linguistic clarity, grammatical structures, paragraph coherence, and scientific accuracy. After the experts read the questionnaire sections, consensus was reached to modify some of the following sections:

**Table (05): Illustrates the modified sections in the Pedagogical Freedom questionnaire**

Dimension	Paragraph before modification	Paragraph after modification
Pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives	I work towards achieving lesson objectives according to the cognitive development level of the learners	I help learners reach their goals using appropriate methods
Pedagogical freedom in selecting learning situations	I consider current developments when formulating educational situations	I adapt the flow of the educational situation according to current developments
	I adjust my approach to reading texts according to the learner's environment	I manage reading texts in terms of their length and synonyms
Pedagogical freedom in practicing pedagogical assessment	I select exercises that I find as appropriate for achieving competencies	I select exercises that I deem suitable for assessing competency attainment

#### 2.5.1.2. Internal Consistency validity

To ensure the effectiveness of the pedagogical freedom questionnaire sections, the internal consistency validity of its sections was verified by calculating the correlation coefficients between the score of each section and the total score of the dimension it belongs to. Additionally, correlation coefficients between the scores of each dimension and the total score of the tool were calculated. It was found that the correlation coefficient of all sections across the three dimensions with the questionnaire was positive and high, and statistically significant at both significance levels ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ) and ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ). This indicates the high effectiveness of these sections, except for the third section of the first dimension (pedagogical

freedom in formulating educational objectives) and the first section of the fourth dimension (pedagogical freedom in practicing pedagogical assessment), whose correlation coefficients with their respective dimensions were (0.155, 0.208) respectively. These values are weak and not statistically significant.

### **2.5.1.3. Discriminant Validity**

To calculate discriminant validity, the method of concurrent comparison was employed. A comparison was made between two samples drawn from the extreme ends of the scores on the pedagogical freedom questionnaire for the survey study sample. Each sample comprised 19 male and female teachers, constituting 27% of the total sample ( $n=70$ ). The "t" test was computed between the mean of the upper sample and the mean of the lower sample. The value of "t" revealed that the questionnaire demonstrates a significant ability to distinguish between high and low practitioners of pedagogical freedom, indicating a high level of validity among the sample individuals.

## **2.5.2. Reliability**

### **2.5.2.1. Calculating Reliability Using the Split-Half Method**

The researchers relied on the split-half method to calculate the reliability of the pedagogical freedom questionnaire. They divided the questionnaire into two halves: the first half consisted of odd-numbered items, and the second half comprised even-numbered items. Then, they calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient for the halves of the questionnaire, resulting in  $r=0.58$ , which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. After correction using the Spearman-Brown equation, the correlation coefficient value for the entire questionnaire became 0.73.

Therefore, it can be said that the questionnaire exhibits a degree of stability in its results, and thus, it can be relied upon to achieve the purposes of the current study.

### **2.5.2.2. Calculating Reliability Using Cronbach's Alpha**

The researchers employed Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the consistency of responses to all scale items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.62, indicating a high level of reliability, making the current study tool highly stable and suitable for use with confidence to achieve the objectives of the current study.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of the Results Regarding the First Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis Statement:** "The domains of practice of elementary school teachers regarding responsible pedagogical freedom prevailing in curriculum implementation are as follows: pedagogical freedom in choosing educational resources, pedagogical freedom in selecting teaching situations, pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives, and pedagogical freedom in practicing pedagogical assessment".

After utilizing the statistical package software version 20 (IBM SPSS Statistics 20) to address this hypothesis, arithmetic means and standard deviations were computed. The rank and prevailing domains

of pedagogical freedom practice among elementary school teachers in the state of Mostaganem (Algeria) were determined, along with each dimension of the study tool, as shown in **Table (06)**:

**Table (06): Illustrates the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranks for the prevailing domains of pedagogical freedom practice among elementary school teachers in the state of Mostaganem, listed in descending order**

Number	Dimension	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Rank
1	Pedagogical freedom in selecting teaching resources	41.69	05.30	01
2	Pedagogical freedom in selecting instructional situations	40.62	04.26	02
3	Pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives	37.43	03.94	03
4	Pedagogical freedom in pedagogical assessment	36.49	03.83	04
<b>Total marks</b>		<b>156.24</b>	<b>14.55</b>	

From the above table, it is evident that pedagogical freedom in selecting educational tools ranked first with an arithmetic mean of (41.69) and a standard deviation of (05.30). In the second rank, pedagogical freedom in choosing instructional situations had an arithmetic mean of (40.62) and a standard deviation of (04.26). Pedagogical freedom in formulating educational objectives ranked third with an arithmetic mean of (37.43) and a standard deviation of (03.94). Meanwhile, pedagogical freedom in pedagogical assessment had an arithmetic mean of (36.49) and a standard deviation of (03.83).

These results are consistent with the study conducted by “**Ahlam Merabet**” (2006), which found that the changes in the curriculum made the teacher realize a new teaching method and improved his performance in the classroom, which will benefit the education sector as a whole. The study also concluded that recent reforms implemented by the Ministry of National Education did not provide the necessary instructional and material resources that the teacher needs to perform his teaching duties, and that the teaching profession has become more challenging, especially with the absence of resources. All of these indicators refute the notion that Algerian teachers are performing their duties easily.

These results can be interpreted as indicating that the concept of pedagogical freedom, despite being introduced with the reforms adopted by the Ministry of National Education, has been prevalent in practice for a long time. This is because the nature of the educational process and its human specificity inherently necessitate the teacher's personal touch. Additionally, the dynamism observed in human societies, coupled with the impact of technological advancements and the proliferation of social media platforms, has led to diversity in sources of information and a multitude of pedagogical models. Through individuals and groups presenting their services on social media platforms, each lesson has now become characterized by various and diverse methods, strategies, and approaches.

Returning to the contrast between the dimensions of pedagogical freedom and the increase in its practice in favor of educational tools, this can be attributed to:

- Variations in the learning environment across different regions of the country, necessitating the selection of suitable tools to adapt the knowledge contained in the curriculum to these environments.
- The curriculum's emphasis on diversifying the use of tools according to various environments.
- Adopting a pedagogical approach that doesn't solely emphasize educational tools but rather focuses on knowledge and skills; thus, the tool hasn't become the goal in itself but rather pedagogical means to achieve cognitive construction.

As for pedagogical freedom in pedagogical assessment practice, it can be interpreted as a result of the significant change that has occurred in the concept of assessment. Previously, assessment primarily focused on acquiring knowledge and storing it in memory with the ability to recall it, meaning an assessment based on outcomes, where theoretical knowledge was the aim of assessment, as it was associated with success rates, while the assessment model in the new curricula focuses on the learner's performance and their ability to utilize acquired skills within a new context (recruitment and integration), it also includes additional assessments, such as trajectory assessment and self-assessment by the learner, along with peer assessment. Also, continuous assessment has become integrated into the learning process. Despite the issuance of ministerial directive No. 223 dated 13/11/2017 regarding the formulation of questions in continuous monitoring and instructions, there has been no clarification on how to calculate the points for continuous monitoring in semester assessments to date.

It is worth mentioning that despite the significant importance attributed by the Ministry of Education to pedagogical evaluation through intellectual forums and scientific seminars, and its continuous call for the necessity of adopting evaluation practices that reflect the orientations and objectives of the educational system aimed at assessing higher-order thinking skills, stereotypical approaches still prevail in the prevalent forms of evaluation, which scarcely extend beyond memorization and recall assessment. This can be attributed to:

- the instability among pedagogical actors regarding a unified concept of assessment, with each party attempting to impose its own direction based on the approach it deems most suitable.
- The widening gap between the school and the family, and the lack of trust from the latter in the former, coupled with their keenness to monitor and closely follow the teacher's actions, especially during examination periods, which has led to the teacher falling into the trap of assessment based on rote memorization and recall, in order to avoid embarrassment and accountability from the families, which may arise in case of questions regarding performance and understanding.

### **3.2. Presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the results pertaining to the second hypothesis**

**Hypothesis Statement:** "There are no differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of professional seniority".

After utilizing version 20 of the statistical package software (IBM SPSS Statistics 20) to address this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed, and the F-value was computed to determine the level of significance of the differences. The results of the analysis of variance are presented in **Table (07)** as follows:

**Table (07): Illustrates the results of the one-way analysis of variance test for the significance of differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of professional seniority**

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	Calculated F value	Probability
Between groups	410.661	2	205.331	0.969	0.380
Within groups	78611.213	371	211.890	*	*
Total	79021.874	373	*	*	*

From the results of the one-way analysis of variance test in the above table, we observe that the probability value (Sig. bilateral) is 0.380, which is greater than the significance level of 5%. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis, which suggests that there are no differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of professional seniority.

These results are consistent with the study conducted by “Al-Bala'asi” (2011), the study by “Alimat” and “Al-Khawalda” (2011), and the study by “Harbi” (2011).

These results can be interpreted by considering that the concept of pedagogical freedom is a purely pedagogical concept that emerged with the revised curricula and was not previously addressed academically in a clear manner. This made everyone relatively close in understanding its meaning. Although it is an ancient educational practice that precedes instructional action, such practice was characterized by conservatism. Moreover, cognitive content was often revered and surpassing it was considered a taboo; furthermore, field practices in the realm of pedagogical freedom, in its broader form, are modern due to the modernity of the revised curricula. Furthermore, this concept had not been established in previous curricula. Additionally, it is a concept more closely associated with competency-based approaches, which are a recently adopted approach in the curricula of the Ministry of National Education.

With the improvements introduced in the curricula, the call for excellence to achieve creativity has become a demand for practitioners, supervisors, and observers alike. This has led to the absence of differences in its practice attributed to the variable of professional seniority.

### 3.3. Presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the results pertaining to the third hypothesis

**Hypothesis Statement:** "There are no differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of teaching level".

After utilizing version 20 of the statistical package software (IBM SPSS Statistics 20) to address this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, and the F-value was calculated to determine the level of significance of the differences. The results of the analysis of variance are presented in **Table (08)** as follows:

**Table (08): Illustrates the results of the one-way analysis of variance test for the significance of differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of teaching level**

Source of	Sum of	Degrees of	Mean	Calculated F	Probability
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variance	squares	freedom	squares	value	
<b>Between groups</b>	<b>491.598</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>245.799</b>	<b>1.161</b>	<b>0.314</b>
<b>Within groups</b>	<b>78530.277</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>211.672</b>	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>79021.874</b>	<b>373</b>	*	*	*

We notice from the results of the one-way analysis of variance test in the above table that the probability value (Sig. bilateral) is 0.314, which is greater than the significance level of 5%. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis, which suggests that there are no differences in the practice of pedagogical freedom attributed to the variable of teaching level.

These results are consistent with the study conducted by “**Al-Bala'asi**” (2011), the study by “**Alimat**” and “**Al-Khawalda**” (2011), and the study by “**Harbi**” (2011).

These results can be interpreted by the Ministry of Education's commitment to building curricula according to a systematic approach for all stages of basic education in general, and primary education in particular. This commitment had a positive impact on the curricula, making them more coherent and integrated than they were previously, resulting in pedagogical practices becoming more equitable across different educational levels.

The division of the stages of primary education is not merely a pedagogical division, considering the convergence and harmony that the age stages witness. The transition from one age stage to another is hardly noticeable, occurring smoothly and seamlessly, a process that may not be apparent to those unfamiliar with its intricacies and details.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, the researchers concluded that the practice of primary school teachers in exercising pedagogical freedom still falls short of the aspirations of the supervising ministry, particularly concerning the selection of learning situations that reflect educational content, as well as the practice of pedagogical assessment in the required manner. Striving to break free from conventional practices and to alleviate the monotony experienced by the educational sector during the teaching process.

If the ultimate goal of opening the door to pedagogical freedom is creativity, excellence, and infusing the joy of learning into classroom practices to make them more attractive by responding to the needs and preferences of learners, which vary from one environment to another, then that goal remains elusive for several reasons, most notably:

- Reluctance of those involved in pedagogical action to embrace reforms and accept them, facing them with a kind of rejection without proper scientific study or true academic background, resulting in reforms remaining stagnant and limited to some conventional and stereotypical practices far from the desired.

- The absence of scientific support and clear educational reference for the concept of pedagogical freedom, despite it being the essence of educational action.
- The teacher's submission to familial supervision and parental intervention in the school's affairs in non-pedagogical ways in search of their children's success through all means and methods, has led many teachers to adhere strictly to the textbook and refrain from deviating from it to satisfy families and avoid engaging in fruitless dialogue.
- The lack of training in the field of practicing pedagogical freedom and breaking free from educational constraints, given the problems and administrative hurdles faced by the inspection sector.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers suggest the following:

- Working on organizing scientific conferences and intellectual seminars to provide further insight into the concept of pedagogical freedom and its practical implementation in the field.
- Opening up opportunities for specialists to participate in the preparation of textbooks and selecting the best models from them for pedagogical practitioners, while advocating for diversification.
- Forming the monitoring and inspection apparatus with new and more flexible mechanisms to monitor the teacher's work, ensuring the evaluation of their performance and skills.
- Promoting educational research in the realm of pedagogical freedom and other contemporary subjects, and rewarding this effort with commendation and support in diverse ways.

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