

INVESTIGATING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING HISTORY WITHIN THE  
COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH IN THE ALGERIAN SCHOOL

دراسة استراتيجيات تدريس التاريخ وفق منهج المقاربة بالكفاءات في المدرسة الجزائرية

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ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على تصورات المعلمين الجزائريين لتدريس التاريخ، والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها لتحقيق تدريس فعال للتاريخ، بالإضافة إلى العوائق التي تحول دون تطبيق هذه الاستراتيجيات بعد عشرين سنة من اعتماد المقاربة بالكفاءات في المدرسة الجزائرية. وللإجابة على أسئلة البحث التي طرحتها هذه الدراسة، تم اعتماد تصميم البحث المسحي. تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان عبر الإنترنت تم إرساله إلى مجموعات مختلفة من معلمي التاريخ على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وكشفت النتيجة أن معلمي التاريخ يدركون جيداً هدف تدريس التاريخ، ويستخدمون الاستراتيجيات بدرجات متفاوتة بسبب بعض الصعوبات التي يواجهونها في مدارسهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

تدريس التاريخ، الاستراتيجيات، مشاركة الطلاب، النهج القائم على الكفاءة.

Abstract :

This study investigates the Algerian teachers' perception of teaching history, the strategies teachers use to achieve effective teaching of this fundamental discipline and the problems that hinder the implementation of these strategies, mainly after two decades of adopting the competency-based approach in the Algerian school. To address the research questions, a survey research design was utilized. Data were collected via an online questionnaire sent to different groups of teachers of history on the social media platforms. The results indicates that teachers of history are well aware of the purpose of teaching history, and use the strategies in varying degree due to some difficulties they encounter in their schools.

Keywords:

Competency Based Approach, Students engagement, Strategies, Teaching history,

## INTRODUCTION:

Teaching history is fundamental to understanding the development of all fields in human society. Recognizing this, Algeria has placed significant emphasis on history education and brought about innovations in 2002 by adopting the Competency- Based Approach ( CBA) in teaching the subject of history in order to foster students' historical and critical thinking skills .

However, teaching history is not an easy task. Teachers are facing the challenges of transforming a subject that is often perceived as a rote memorization of dates and events into a more interactive subject that aims to stimulate genuine historical inquiry. In other words, teachers must adapt to 21<sup>st</sup> century demands by employing pedagogies that integrate technological advancement, meet the students' needs, and adjust their teaching to the learners' learning differences which require a more innovative, interactive and effective way of teaching. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the use of strategies in teaching history and explore the difficulties that hinder the implementation of these strategies after twenty years of adopting this approach in the Algerian school.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following major questions: What are the teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of strategies in teaching history within the Competency Based approach?

- What are the difficulties that hinder the implementation of strategies in the Algerian school?

To answer this question, we adopted a survey research design with data collected via online questionnaire sent to teachers in different groups of teachers of history on different social media.

### **1. Literature Review**

#### **1.1 The Aim of Teaching History in the Algerian Curriculum within the Competency-Based Approach**

Teaching history, like other disciplines, has shifted from the traditional to modern pedagogical approach. Within the traditional teaching methods, teaching history was based on recitation and memorization of facts in addition to lecturing and rote learning. This often resulted in boredom and students inability to critically analyze historical events. Accordingly History was considered as a boring subject for many students and result in students' disengagement from this fundamental discipline.

Recognizing the importance of history education, Algeria sought to align with advancements in teaching methodologies. In 2002, it adopted the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) to foster learners' critical thinking and engagement in the learning process.

Essentially, the aim of teaching history within the Competency-Based Approaches (CBA) is to develop the skills and abilities that make the learners think and reflect on the historical events to achieve a better understanding of the history or what is known by historical thinking skills through inculcating the learner in the learning process rather than simply reciting facts. Historical thinking skill, according to Ni Lee Bih (2023) is a part of the thinking skills process, that needs to develop in History subjects, and it is defined as a “cognitive process that allows students to explore complex and abstract ideas with teacher guidance including understanding chronology, cause and effect, change and continuity.” (Ni Lee Bih, 2023).

To make the aims of teaching history clear for the teacher, the ministry of Education set clear **objectives** for the history subject in the Algerian history and geography curriculum. To achieve these objectives three major domains are set: **cognitive, skill, and affective domain.**

To remain within the scope of this research, the study focuses on the skills that History and Geography Curriculum aims to develop to relate it later to the strategies that help achieve these objectives.

As outlined in the 2005 Algerian 2nd Year Secondary School Curriculum, the subject of history and geography aims ..aims to develop, in addition to the cognitive and affective domains, the following majors **kills:**

1. Developing **higher-order mental skills** such as analysis, reasoning, correlating , synthesis.
2. Fostering individual creativity to cultivate unique intellectual aspects and behaviors.
3. Acquiring **research skills** and using library resources including encyclopedia periodicals, Atlases, museums and monuments.
4. Gaining proficiency in **planning, preparing and implementing field projects** and activities related to course topic.
5. Developing the ability to use, read, and interpret maps, tables, graphs, and figures.
6. Acquiring the skill of writing research paper and reports, **expressing one's opinion on themes, and appreciating the opinions of others.** ( translated from 2005 Algerian 2<sup>nd</sup> year Secondary School Curriculum)

In fact, all the skills stated in the Algerian Curriculum aims to promote the student's historical skill and critical thinking.

It is undeniable that effective teaching requires the use techniques and strategies that align with the aims of the subject of teaching. Accordingly, teachers are required to use techniques and strategies to achieve the aims stated by the ministry of education in order to make teaching history more effective and lifelong.

Thus, what are the techniques and strategies teachers use in teaching history?

## **1.2 Skills and Techniques in Teaching History Within the Competency-Based Approach.**

Modern teaching is often described as a learner- centered approach. It is an approach that places the learner at the center of the learning process in which learners' needs and preferences are take inn consideration.

Within the new pedagogy, the learner is engaged in different learning activities that foster participation and interaction. The European Union (2016 cited in Machila et al.) reported that learning activities refer to the activities that aim to improve a learner's knowledge and abilities . However, the selection of the type of activity teachers aim to implement will primarily depend on the objective set by the teacher and the competencies students need to develop.

Accordingly, for an effective classroom delivery, teachers should be knowledgeable of the principles of the curriculum to come up with the learning activities relevant to the learners and the competencies stated in the curriculum (Machila, et al. 2020). In fact, the Algerian history and geography curriculum (2005) asserts the importance of varying the activities and strategies to address the students' learning differencesand meet the objectives stated in the curriculum.

Collaborative work, project-based learning, and problem-solving make learning more engaging and purposeful. These approaches also foster learner autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. Accordingly, the learner within the new pedagogy is considered as active participant, autonomous, and self-directed by contrast to the traditional teaching where he is considered as empty vessel and passive receiver of knowledge.

Here are the most important techniques and strategies within the new pedagogy that teachers can use to make teaching history more innovative, interactive, and purposeful. These strategies, in fact, aim to meet the objectives stated earlier in the Algerian curriculum and translate these objectives into classroom practices.

**1.2. 1 The Use of Primary Sources:** Letters, photographs, speeches, diaries, and official documents are sources that enable learners to connect with the historical events. By analyzing these documents, learners can understand the content and context in which the event took place.

### **1.2.2 Storytelling and Narrative**

Storytelling and narrative is considered as an effective strategy by which the teacher presents the historical events in a form of story. Narrative and storytelling makes the students more focused on the content, activates imagination and consolidates historical information.

### **1.2.3 Problem Solving**

Problem -solving is a valuable technique that stimulates students' cognitive efforts. It is a strategy to teaching in which the teacher places the students in situations that triggers students' cognitive abilities. Using this technique, students are required to use the different skills they develop to solve the problem. According to

According to Bonwell (1998 cited in Mashila et al. 2020), the purpose of this strategies is to make learners reflect, analyze, and understand what has been learnt rather than simply memorizing facts.

The renovated Algerian history and geography curriculum (2005) stresses the importance of teaching through problem-solving by which the teacher puts the students into situation as real problem that requires the student's use of different skills that demonstrate his competencies in solving problems.

#### **1.2.4 Debates and discussions**

One powerful technique that fosters critical thinking, involvement and participation in the classroom is the use of debates. Using this technique, students are engaged in group discussions about some controversial issues by which students provide arguments to support their stance.

Class discussion is another vital activity used in the enhancement of the teaching and learning process in history as it fosters students' engagement and participation.

#### **1.2.5 Project-Based Learning**

Teaching through projects is another powerful technique in teaching history within the competency based approach. By doing projects, the students are engaged in activities that foster their critical thinking. Accordingly, students explore the real world problems by collecting different resources related a specific topic, reading, analyzing.

#### **1.2.6 Technology Integration**

As the world is becoming more technological, the use of technology is becoming inevitable. Evidence from research study have proved that using technological devices in teaching extends learning opportunity, improves students' learning, and enhances motivation ( Nicholls, 2004)

The use of technology, such as data show, computers facilitate the learning process. Teachers' use of the technological devices by displaying films, documentaries attract learners attention and makes the historical events more realistic, especially that our students are becoming more and more visual because of the use of technology in their daily life.

### **2. Methodology**

#### **2.1 The design**

To answer the research questions raised above, the researcher opted for a survey design. A survey design is used to collect information regarding the strategies teachers of history often use in their teaching to engage their learners in their study of history. The choice of the design is explained by the fact that a survey is a method that is often used in social science that helps collect data form a large range of participants.

#### **2.2 Participants**

46 teachers of history participated in this study. The participants are teachers of history from the Middle and Secondary schools from different regions across the

Algerian territory. The participants vary in their years of experience and in their degree level.

### 2.3. Tools and Data Collection Procedure

To help address a large number of participants, the researcher opted for a questionnaire. It consists 13 items- questionnaire in which both close ended and open ended questions were used. The aim of the close ended questions is to investigate the teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of the strategies in the classroom, however, the open ended questions were used to give more insight about the difficulties that hinder the implementation of the strategies in the classroom. The questionnaire is divided The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section 1: Collected demographic information such as teachers' degree level, years of experience, and teaching level.

Section 2: Focused on teachers' perceptions of teaching history.

Section 3: Explored the strategies used by history teachers and the challenges they frequently encounter when implementing these strategies.

To collect as many answers as possible, the questionnaire was sent online on google form to different groups of teachers of history: the first group is on facebook, named "Mihfadat el Ijtimiaat" *محفظة الاجتماعيات*, a group on Messenger named "Tansikiat Assathidat Atarikh wa el djoughrafia fi El Motwasit" *تنسيقية أساتذة التعليم المتوسط* and another group on telegram named "Assathidat El Motawassit and Assathidat Elthanawi" *أساتذة المتوسط و التعليم الثانوي*

### 3. Results

The responses are analyzed using computations.

#### Section one: General Information

This sections aims to give us information regarding the participants of this study teaching level, teaching experience and their higher degree level. The first question focuses on years of teaching experience.

The results show that teachers who participated in this study vary in their experiences. 50% of the teachers have reported have 10 years and above of experience in teaching, 19.56% reported have 5 years and 28.26% reported have 2 years of experience. Thus their answers are valuable and give us a clear insight about the issue raised in this study.

The second question seeks to find out the teachers' current teaching level, whether they are middle or high school teachers. The results show that 69.56% of the teachers who participated in this study are Middle School teachers, while 29.44% of the teachers are High school teachers. Having teachers from different teaching levels helps better understand the use of strategies in both levels.

The third question in the questionnaire aims to reveal the teachers' level of education. The results show that 52.17% teachers hold a license degree, and 47.82% teachers hold a master degree. However, no teacher holds a doctorate degree. Thus the results show that all teachers are qualified teachers having spent at least 4 years of training at the university .

## Section Two: Teachers' Perception and Attitudes Towards Teaching History.

The question 4 aims to reveal about the teachers' perceptions toward the importance of students' engagement in the classroom. The result show that 100% of the teachers agreed on the importance of engaging the students in the learning process for a better understanding of the subject of history. This reflects the teachers' awareness of the importance of history inculcating the learner in the learning process.

The question 5 seeks to find out teachers' use of strategies in teaching history. The results show that 78.26% teachers reported having used various techniques and strategies to meet the students' needs and preferences. Only 17.39 teachers responded no. This shows that teacher of history are aware of the importance of varying the activities as learners differ in their learning.

The question 6 seeks to reveal about teachers perception of the teaching of history as whether it is perceived as a memorization of facts or as engagement of the students with history by analyzing and interpreting the historical evidence. 93.47% of the teachers responded "yes" to this question. Only 6.52% teachers responded "No". This again shows higher awareness of the teachers of history of the purpose of teaching history within the new pedagogy

### Section 3: Teaching Strategies and Engagement:

The question 7 seeks teachers' use of the primary source documents (e. g.; letters, diaries, photograph) in their lessons. 76.08 % teachers responded having used primary source documents such as letters, photographs, and diaries. Only 11 teachers reported not using them. This again explains the fact that teachers of history are using strategies to make their teaching more effective.

The question 8 aims to find out the teachers' use of **storytelling and narrative techniques to make historical events more engaging. The results show 89.13%** of the teachers responded having used narration and storytelling to present the historical facts and facilitate students' retention of the historical events. Only 10.86 % of the teachers responded "no". Again this shows that the majority of the teachers of history are aware of the techniques that make learning more enjoyable.

The question 9 seeks to find out teachers use of **interactive activities such as debates, and role-playing to engage students. The answers vary among teacher to the use of the technique of debates and role plying.**

39.13 % of the teacher reported having used this technique frequently, while 45.65% teacher reported having rarely used this technique while 15.21 % of the teachers reported never having used this technique.

In fact, the results show great awareness of the importance of using debates and class discussion in teaching history to make learning more effective and interactive, however, the teachers who rarely and never used this technique reported that there are several reasons that hinder the use of this activity:

Here are the main reasons:

- The large number of the students in the classroom
- The limited time allotted to the subject of history
- Students distraction
- Debates can cause chaos

The question 10 seeks to find out about the teachers use of technology in their teaching such as videos, online resources, data show to enhance their history lessons. The answers vary. 56.52% of teachers reported having used technology in their teachers, while 43.47% teachers reported not using them.

The results show that teachers of history are aware of the importance of using technology as a means to facilitate learning history and making the process of teaching and learning more effective. However the teachers who are not using technology explain the reasons for the non-use of this technique as displayed below:

- Lack of the pedagogical materials
- Non availability of means such as computers , data shows, sockets
- Limited time allotted for the subject of history

Question 11 aims to seek teachers' use **visual aids (e.g., timelines, maps, images) to help students understand historical context**. 82.60% of teachers responded having used visual aids in their teaching to facilitate the learning process. Only 17.39% teachers reported not using the visual aids because of the non availability of the visual aids at their school.

This again shows that teachers of history are well aware of the importance of use of visual aids in their teaching.

The question 12 aims to seek teachers' use of collaborative historical projects in teaching history. The results show that 86.95% teachers reported having used the projects in their teaching. Only 13.03% teachers do not use projects.

This shows that the teachers of history view projects as effective teaching strategies that help students develop their historical skills and engage them in the learning process.

Teachers who do not use project justified the nonuse of the projects in their teaching to the overcrowded classes and the great number of students.

The figure summarizes the frequency of use of the above strategies in classroom.

#### 4. Discussion of the Results

The results are discussed through answering the research question stated above.

##### **The first question is what are the teachers' perceptions of teaching history?**

In fact, results of the questions 4, 5, 6, reveal that the teachers of history demonstrate great awareness of the purpose of the teaching of history. 97% of teachers reported that the aim of teaching history is not a memorization of facts but the development of students' thinking skill through analyzing, and the interpretation of the historical evidence in addition to the importance of inculcating the student in

teaching history. In fact, teachers perceptions of teaching history aligns with the aims set by the ministry of education as stated in the curriculum. Namely:

1. Developing **higher-order mental skills** such as analysis, reasoning, correlating, synthesis, and reasoning.

2. Fostering individual creativity to cultivate unique intellectual aspects and behaviors

Also, it is worth mentioning that the most teachers who participated in this study, as the results show, that are holding license and master degree which reveals that these teachers received long training . In addition, most of the teachers have long experience in teaching. About 50% reported that they have 10 years of experience and above. Their experience in teaching is valuable which results in a better understanding of the purpose of history. The newly teachers, have also demonstrated great awareness to teaching history reflecting the effective training they received either at the university, colleges, and the seminars with their inspectors.

**The next question that this study aims to investigate is the strategies that teacher uses in teaching history.**

As the results demonstrate, teachers of history show great awareness to the use of strategies and their importance to achieve the aims of teaching history as stated in the Algerian Curriculum. Using these strategies, teachers are engaging the learner in the learning process. In addition, engaging the learners into different activities that make them think, reflect and analyze increases their critical thinking and develops their historical skills.

However, the results of this question reveal that teachers use these strategies at varying degree.

Lets' first examine the order of the use of strategies in teaching history:

First, **narrative, storytelling**, and the use of **projects** are the most commonly used techniques among teachers.

The next strategy is the use of **visuals such as maps, images**, and timeline in addition to the use of **primary sources** such as letters, diaries, and photographs

The third strategy is the use of **technology** such data shows, computers to display as videos, films. The last strategy is the use of **debates**.

Actually, the order of the use of these strategies stem from the difficulties that teachers often meet when implementing theses activity. First, teachers often find it difficult to use videos, documentaries, of films because of the lack of materials such as computers, data shows, maps, etc. The second major issue the teacher meet when using debates or class discussion stem from the overcrowded classes. Teachers of history reported that this strategy leads to chaos in the classroom due to the large number of the students. In addition, the time allotted to the subject of history is not enough for using some strategies as they often take time which hinders the completion of the program.

## 5. CONCLUSION

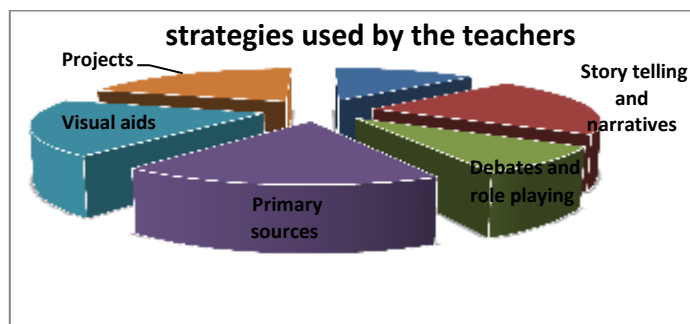
To conclude, teaching history is crucial in building the new generation. For this reason teachers are required to adopt effective instructional techniques to meet the requirement of the new generation through the use of activities that foster student engagement in the classroom. Developing students' critical and historical thinking are the major aims of history education. These aims can be achieved by using a variety of activities and strategies that help improve student performance, especially when teachers consider their students' learning differences. Accordingly, learners are better engaged with the subject when are addressed differently through different activities.

The Ministry of Education, aware of the challenges posed by the demands of the 21st century, has given significant attention to history education. It adopted the Competency-Based Approach to teach history to align with the growing requirements of this century by providing a curriculum that provides guidance of the teachers of history and make learning more effective, engaging and purposeful. The final results of this study reveal that teachers of history demonstrate great awareness of the importance of incorporating and coping with the new methodologies that enable them to successfully teach history. However, teachers are still struggling with the lack of teaching materials in the Algerian school. Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to solve this problems by providing the necessary equipments to facilitate teaching history.

### Figures and tables:

Techology use	56,52%
Story telling and narratives	89%
Debates and role playing	39%
Primary sources	76,08%
Visual aids	82,60%
Projects	86,95%

**Table 1: Frequency of Strategies used by the Teachers in Teaching History**



**Fig.1. Frequency of Strategies sed by the Teachers in Teaching History**

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