
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining the Relationship between Teachers' Pedagogical Authority and Students' Creativity in Moroccan Classrooms

Mr. Khamouja Abdessallam¹ ✉ Dr. Mohamed Benmhamed² and Dr. El Ghouati Azize³

¹²³Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Ibn Tofail University, Morocco

Corresponding Author: Khamouja Abdessallam, **E-mail:** abdessallam.khamouja@uit.ac.ma

ABSTRACT

Education is a critical tool for making a productive student equipped with the necessary skills that can help him be self-reliant and creative. This requires modern teaching pedagogies that put students at the heart of the learning process. In the Moroccan context, there have been different initiatives to reform the education system. This reform tried to implement modern teaching pedagogies that decrease teachers' dominance in the classroom. The main purpose of the present study is to find out the relationship between teachers' pedagogical practices and students' creativity at the high school level after the pedagogical reform. Twenty students studying at the second-year baccalaureate level were selected from four high schools by using the convenience sampling technique. A mixed-methods approach is adopted in the current study. The participants are given a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to fill out and answer semi-structured interview questions. The findings indicate that there is a relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity.

KEYWORDS

Pedagogical Authority, Pedagogical Reform, Teachers' Resistance to change, creativity.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 23 April 2024

PUBLISHED: 05 May 2024

DOI: 10.32996/ijels.2024.6.2.6

1. Introduction

Pedagogical authority means that teachers hold authority as they are entrusted with the formal right and responsibility to take charge in the classroom, and students are expected to comply. It can be described from two perspectives: teachers possess intellectual authority and social authority. This means that teachers dominate their classrooms because they are considered the source of knowledge, and what they teach is never questioned. Societal authority means that teachers exert their control through a system of clearly defined rules, routines, and punishments that are mandated (Garrett, 2008). In the Moroccan context, in spite of all the efforts made by the public authorities to reform the education system and make it student-centered, it is still lagging behind (Chafi, Elkhrouzai, & Ouchoud, 2016). That is to say, some teachers still use the traditional teaching pedagogies in which they impose their intellectual authority, whereas learners are passive and uncreative. They also use classroom control and management as an overcontrolling strategy to impose themselves in the classroom and get full obedience from their students, which creates a threatening environment (Chtatou, 2015). The main purpose of the present study is to find out whether there is a relationship between teachers' pedagogical practices and students' creativity at the high school level after the pedagogical reform in Morocco. Therefore, the current study addresses the following research questions:

- a) Is there any relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity?
- b) Do teachers' classroom management practices impact students' creativity?

1.1 Research Hypotheses

To answer the research questions, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

- a) There is a relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity.
- b) Teachers' classroom management practices will impact students' creativity.

1.2 Pedagogical Reform in Morocco

Since education is considered an important instrument for social change and development, all countries around the world spend a large amount of money to develop it and make it meet the needs of social, economic, scientific, and technological developments (Patil, 2012). Morocco is one of the countries in which the education system has occupied a central position in the reform process since 1999 (Bedmar, 2014). In other words, the higher council for education launched the National Charter for Education and Training, the Emergency Plan, and the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 as a starting point for education reform in Morocco. This reform renovated the teaching pedagogy in Morocco. That is to say, the decision-makers tried to implement modern teaching pedagogies that put learners at the center of the educational enterprise by meeting their learning needs, therefore encouraging them to learn, self-reliance, and creativity (Chafi & Elkhrouzai, 2017). This can help learners rely on themselves in the learning process to construct knowledge in the classroom and build the necessary skills needed for their further studies. The teacher's role was reduced to that of a counselor and a guide because, in this reform, the teacher is there to guide on the stage and assist, but most of the job is done by the students themselves (Chaibi, 2008). Besides, in this educational reform, textbooks were re-innovated to improve their quality. In other words, textbooks are now based on modern pedagogical principles that focus on the needs of students and take into account their intellectual level in order to encourage self-initiatives, openness to change, self-learning, and creativity (Bedmar, 2014).

2. Teachers' Resistance to Change

Despite all the pedagogical reforms implemented by the public authorities, the reality of classroom practice does not respond to the highly advocated educational ideals set by the National Charter for Education and Training, the Emergency Plan, and the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 (Chafi & Elkhrouzai, 2017). Simply put, teachers still impose on students a traditional pedagogy of teaching in which they practice their excessive pedagogical authority and over-dominate the teacher-student relationship to maintain the role that is given to them by society (Wursten & Jacobs, 2016). That is to say, in Moroccan classrooms, teachers still use a traditional teaching pedagogy in which they are considered the source of knowledge.

This traditional view is anchored in the notion that the teacher is supreme, that he owns knowledge, and that he knows best how to communicate it (Chafi, Elkhrouzai, & Ouchoud, 2016). This intellectual authority makes most teachers over-dominate the teaching practices in the classroom and use the transmission pedagogy as a tool for teaching, whereas learners are treated as minors, irreflective and uncritical thinkers. They are just expected to reproduce information or knowledge, which kills their creativity (Chtatou, 2015). Besides, the hierarchical social makeup restricts teachers from wholly appropriating the notion of going down to the learner's level, prior knowledge, preoccupations, and requirements. That is, some Moroccan teachers still don't believe in creating positive and encouraging relationships with students. They believe that they should keep a distance from students so that their hierarchical position will not be destroyed in the classroom. This means that teachers maintain a barrier so that students know their limits (Chafi & Elkhrouzai, 2017). Moreover, some Moroccan teachers still use the traditional pedagogy of classroom control and discipline in their teaching practices by giving students no chance to freely talk because they believe that classroom control is understood as children maintaining physical order and obeying classroom rules (Chafi, Elkhrouzai, & Ouchoud, 2016). To explain, they insist on establishing their authoritative presence in class to guarantee complete obedience in compliance with students. For example, in Moroccan classrooms, students are trained to cross their hands, remain silent, and raise their hands to answer only when they are appointed by teachers to answer questions. It is noteworthy that any student who gives an answer or talks without being given permission is subjected to punishment either verbally or physically (Chafi & Elkhrouzai, 2017). This authoritarianism that is practiced by some teachers in the classroom negatively affects students' psychology because it makes them passive learners (Chafi, Elkhrouzai, & Ouchoud, 2016). This pedagogical authority also reproduces the traditional teaching that fosters dependence, passivity, control, and full obedience. This goes against the main goals of modern education because the purpose of learning within the educational system is to change students in both the cognitive and affective aspects of their personalities to prepare them for practical affairs. (Post, 2008).

3. Methodology

Research methodology is about the steps and techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic (Kothari, 1990). The present research is based on a mixed-methods approach. It is both quantitative and qualitative, using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to examine the relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity in the classroom.

3.1 Participants

By relying on the convenience sampling technique, twenty students studying at the second-year baccalaureate level are selected from four high schools to fill out a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. They are also administered semi-structured interview questions to be answered.

3.2 Data Collection

The present study uses a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview as the main data collection tools to answer the research questions. They are meant to collect data quantitatively and qualitatively on students' feelings and reactions to their teachers' classroom pedagogy. The questionnaire is divided into two main sections. The first section contains items about teachers' teaching practices. The second section contains items about the importance of self-reliance and creativity. The semi-structured interview is used to qualitatively collect data about teachers' behavior with their students in the classroom, namely detailed information about teachers' pedagogical practices and their effect on students' creativity at the high school level.

3.3 Data Analysis

SPSS software version 25 is adopted to transcribe and analyze the data collected. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire is tested for internal consistency through Cronbach's coefficient test. The findings indicate that Cronbach Alpha for the total number of items in the questionnaire is $\alpha = .81$. Consequently, Cronbach's findings show that there is an acceptable internal consistency among the questionnaire items because a reliability coefficient of .60 or higher is acceptable in most research (McNaughton, 2007). After calculating the total score of teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity, Pearson's correlation test was used to measure the correlation between the variables under study.

4. Questionnaire Findings

To answer Research Hypothesis 1, the Person Correlation test is calculated between teachers' teaching practices in relationship with students' creativity.

Table 1: Teachers' Teaching Practices Relationship with students' Creativity.

	Teaching_practi ces	Creativity_Items_ Total_Score
Pearson Correlation	1	,508*
Sig. (2-tailed)		,022
N	20	20

The correlation in Table 1 shows that there is a positive correlation between teachers' teaching practices and the total score items of students' creativity because the correlation coefficient is $(r = .508^*)$. This correlation is statistically significant because the p-value is .022, which is less than .05. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity is accepted.

4.1 Semi-Structured Interview Findings

To further confirm or disconfirm the research's quantitative data, the semi-structured interview questions are to be conducted to see whether there is a link between teachers' classroom management practices and students' creativity.

The main questions addressed in the semi-structured interview are:

1. How does your teacher teach you?
2. Do you do any activities in the classroom? If yes, what are they?
3. Does your teacher give you some space to work in pairs and groups in the classroom?
4. Does your teacher give you some homework to do? If yes, what are they?
5. How does your teacher behave with you in the classroom?
6. How does your teacher handle the misbehavior?

The semi-structured interview questions target both the effect of teachers' teaching pedagogies and their classroom management practices on students' creativity. In response to the questions from #1# to #6#, none of the interviewees (0%) deny the importance

of using different teaching strategies in the classroom because that can encourage them to learn. Most of them don't like the way they are taught by some teachers. They explain that some of their teachers spend the whole time talking while they are just listening and copying down what teachers write on the board, which, according to their answers, prevents them from being productive in the classroom. They claim that such teachers don't involve them in the learning process by giving them some activities that encourage self-reliance and creativity. They also add that they are just given some activities to perform individually or in pairs after their teachers finish explaining a lesson. According to their answers, such activities can be done at home when the session is over. Concerning the last two questions, the respondents answer that, unlike the new generation teachers, some of the old generation ones impose on them a rigid code of conduct, explaining that any student who breaks a rule of this code is subject to punishment. They add that such teachers are unfriendly because they don't try to be close to their students.

5. Discussion

Teaching is an art that requires teachers to be equipped with different modern teaching pedagogies that can put students at the heart of the learning process. The Ministry of Education launched several initiatives to reform the education system in Morocco, such as the National Charter for Education and Training, the Emergency Plan, and the Strategic Vision 2015–2030. These initiatives came up with new and modern teaching pedagogies that reduce teachers' dominance in the classroom and situate learners at the center of the educational enterprise by meeting their learning needs. Textbooks were also developed to increase their quality because they are now based on pedagogical principles that take into account students' needs and their intellectual level in order to encourage self-learning and creativity.

Based on the findings of the present study, the quantitative research method indicates that there is relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' creativity. In other words, teachers' teaching pedagogies can either increase students' involvement in the learning process or decrease it, depending on the type of teaching pedagogies they rely on in the teaching process. To clarify, teachers who rely on student-centered teaching pedagogies can create a welcoming learning space where learners eagerly participate in constructing knowledge. The quantitative findings are confirmed by the qualitative research method. To explain, all the interviewees criticized some of their teachers for their ways of teaching. Such teachers, in spite of the pedagogical reform in Morocco, are still faithful to the old teaching pedagogies in which they are considered the source of knowledge. This traditional view is anchored in the notion that teachers are supreme, that they own knowledge, and that they know best how to communicate it. This intellectual authority makes them dominate the teaching practices and use the transmission pedagogy as a tool for teaching, whereas students are passive learners who are not given the opportunity to participate in the learning process. They are just expected to reproduce information or knowledge, which kills their creativity. Besides, the unequal power distribution in Moroccan classrooms is still dominant. That is, based on the respondents' answers, some teachers still impose their hierarchical position in their classrooms. They establish their authoritative presence in class to guarantee complete obedience and compliance from students. They also maintain a barrier so that students know their limits; a teacher remains a teacher, and a student remains a student. This creates a negative learning environment where students have to obey orders and follow the rules, which negatively affects their creativity and self-reliance in the learning process. The findings of the current study are supported by the studies conducted by Chtatou (2015), Chafi, Elkhrouzi, & Ouchouid (2016), and Chafi & Elkhrouzi (2017). They all come to the conclusion that the pedagogical reform in Morocco has not yet touched on the true principles of modern teaching pedagogies because traditional teaching is still widely used in Moroccan classrooms.

6. Conclusion

The pedagogical reform in Morocco is considered a starting point for developing the quality of the education system to meet the needs of the social, economic, scientific, and technological developments taking place in the world. Learners are put at the heart of this reform, aiming to equip them with the necessary skills that they will need in their future lives. However, the present study shows that some teachers are still faithful to traditional teaching, in which they consider themselves the source of knowledge, whereas learners are just expected to reproduce information or knowledge. Besides, such teachers still use the traditional pedagogy of classroom control and discipline in their teaching practices, which negatively affects students' involvement in constructing knowledge. Therefore, it is recommended that these teachers should dispose of their pedagogical authority and adopt modern teaching pedagogies that encourage learners to be productive and creative in the learning process. They also should abandon the traditional pedagogy of classroom control and discipline and adopt classroom management skills that create a welcoming learning environment where there is care, love, and respect because the main purpose of education is to equip students with the necessary skills that they will need after graduation. These suggestions can be the proposed solutions that might help educators be in a better position to problematize the taken-for-granted aspect of their teaching pedagogies and visualize alternative courses of action that challenge and replace some of their cherished pedagogical practices.

7. Limitations of the Study

Due to some technical and financial problems, the study included participants from only one region in Morocco. For further studies about the same topic, the researcher should include participants from all the regions of Morocco so that the findings can be overgeneralized.

For future studies, high school teachers should be included so that the researcher can have enough understanding of teachers' views and attitudes about the pedagogical reform in Morocco.

Since the pedagogical reform in Morocco touched all the school levels, future studies should also be conducted in primary and middle schools to know whether this reform affects teachers' teaching practices at all school levels or not.

Private schools should be involved in future studies. This can help the researcher know if there is any difference between private and public schools in terms of pedagogical practices.

Declarations and Acknowledgements

This research received no external funding. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

This article would have never come into existence without the help of the researchers whose names are listed in the reference list.

Special thanks should go to the headmasters of the four high schools who provided me with all the support I needed.

Words cannot express my gratitude to Dr Benmhammed Mohamed & Dr El Ghouati Azize for their collaboration and help in bringing this article into existence.

I also would like to thank the students who took part in the experiment. I strongly thank them for their patience and collaboration.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Bedmar, V. (2014). Educational Reforms in Morocco: Evolution and Current Status. (C. C. Education, Éd.) 7(12). 95.
- [2] Chtatou, M. (2015). Education for All 200-2015: Achievements and Challenges. *A Moroccan Success Story Tainted with Some Shortcomings*, p. 2.
- [3] Chaibi, A., & Hassim, M. (2008). *Leadership and Values in Language Education* (éd. 27th). Bouznika, Morocco: Moroccan Association of Teachers of English (MATE).
- [4] Chafi, E., & Elkhrouzai, E. (2017). Reculturing Pedagogical Practice: Probing Teachers' Cultural Models of Pedagogy. .5(1) 79.
- [5] Chafi, E., Elkhrouzai, & Ouchoud, J. (2016). Teacher Excessive Pedagogical Authority in Moroccan Primary Classroom. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1), 134-14
- [6] Garrett, T. (2008). Student-Centered and Teacher-Centered Classroom Management: (L. N. Rider University, Éd.). 36.
- [7] Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques (Second Revised Edition)*. New Age International Limited Publishers. New Delhi.
- [8] McNaughton, D. (2007). Learning to Listen: Teaching an Active Listening Strategy to Preservice Education Professionals. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 27(4):223-231.
- [9] Post, M. (2008). Teaching from the Orchestra: Cultural Values and Dimensions of Power Within Role Relations of an EFL Classroom. (U. o. Birmingham, Éd.). 3-8-25.
- [10] Patel, N. (2012). Role Of Education In Social Changes. *International Educational E-Journal*, 1(2), 24-56.
- [11] Wursten, H., & Jacobs, C. (2013). The Impact of Culture on Education. Available online: http://geerthofstede.com/tl_files/images/site/social/Culture_and_education.pdf