

Linking Identity to Modernity: A Comparative Study of Mother
Tongue Curricula in Algeria, France and Germany Using the Bereday
Model
HAID Souad ¹, LAKHDAR Lakehal ²

¹ university of Algiers 2 (Algeria), souad.haid@univ-alger2.dz

² university of Algiers 2 (Algeria), Lakhdar.lakehal@univ-alger2.dz

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Abstract: This study employs George Bereday’s four-stage model (description, explanation, comparison, and juxtaposition) to analyze mother tongue curricula in Algeria, France, and Germany. The research highlights that while all three countries view the mother tongue as a cornerstone of cognitive development and national identity, their educational approaches differ significantly due to their distinct historical and cultural contexts.

The European models in France and Germany emphasize digitalization, learner autonomy, and the functional use of language across all subjects. In contrast, the Algerian curriculum places a strong emphasis on moral values and linguistic proficiency but lacks sufficient technological integration and practical application.

The study concludes that Algeria needs a qualitative reform, not through blind imitation, but through “intelligent inspiration.” The proposed project calls for a shift from rote memorization to a modern curriculum that treats Arabic as a living tool for critical thinking, supported by a digital infrastructure and diverse literary texts that bridge tradition and modernity.

Keywords: Bereday Model; Comparative Education; Mother Tongue Curricula; Educational Reform; Algerian Education System

Corresponding author: souad.haid@univ-alger2.dz
Lakhdar. lakehal @univ-alger2.dz

1. INTRODUCTION

The mother tongue constitutes the fundamental pillar in the cognitive and psychological construction of the learner. It is not merely a tool for verbal communication, but rather the vessel that holds thought, the cornerstone in shaping national identity, and the key key to comprehending various other sciences and knowledge. From this perspective, mastery of the mother tongue takes on paramount importance that goes beyond the limits of mastering linguistic rules, reaching its decisive role in charting a smooth educational path and building a critical mind with a broad horizon capable of keeping pace with the challenges of the age.

In light of accelerating global transformations and the dominance of digitization over various areas of life, educational systems face major challenges that force them to review their curricula and update their teaching methods, especially in identity and language subjects. Since closing oneself off is an obstacle to development, comparative studies have become an urgent scientific necessity to benefit from leading global experiences and to understand the contexts that led to their success or failure.

To ensure a solid and objective scientific approach in addressing this issue, this study adopts a tightly theoretical and methodological framework represented in "**George Bereday's Model**" for comparative studies. This is done by tracking its four precise stages (Description, Interpretation, Juxtaposition, and Comparison). This methodology comes to discipline the research process and extract results away from random impressions.

Accordingly, this research seeks to delve into this problematic issue by shedding light on the reality of the mother tongue curriculum in Algeria and placing it in the balance of scientific research. Based on this, there emerges a dire need to conduct a precise methodological comparison between the mother tongue education curriculum in Algeria and the mother tongue education curricula in both France and Germany. This is not for the purpose of blind imitation, but for the purpose of investing the outputs of the "Bereday" model to propose a comprehensive reform project for the curriculum of this subject, based on scientific foundations and achieving a balance between consolidating identity and the requirements of modernization.

- **2. First: From Description to Comparison: The Bereday Method in Education**

George Bereday is a comparative education scholar and encyclopedic thinker who is one of the pioneers of educational thought who contributed to the emergence of contemporary multidisciplinary education. He renewed this

field by going beyond the traditional historical approach that was limited to narrating facts, to move to drawing on educational experiences and achievements from different countries, stressing that comparing educational systems requires major preparations that include broad horizons, mastery of languages, detachment from cultural biases, and integration into the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, his research methodology is characterized by its multidisciplinary nature, combining philosophy, history, sociology, economics, and politics to understand educational problems. He proposes two types of studies: "area studies" and "comparative studies," through a model based on four sequential procedural steps. The first step is "description," where data is collected, information relevant to the problem is selected, classified, and illustrated using conceptual and geographical tables and maps. This relies on primary sources such as reports from committees, ministries, conferences, and legislative bodies, as well as secondary sources such as books, articles, and writings by foreigners. The second step is "interpretation," which goes beyond description to analyze educational landscapes across four dimensions: historical and cultural, linking education to accumulated events and prevailing values; political, examining the impact of governmental orientations, ideologies, and the conflict between central and local authorities regarding education; social, highlighting the interaction of the school with society and influential forces such as parents, elites, and religious figures; and economic, exploring the causes of problems related to education, such as labor market challenges for skilled and unskilled workers and sources of funding. Finally comes the "adjacent" stage, in which the search for The unusual features of each country's education system are extracted and formulated into a "study hypothesis" related to a specific educational problem in a specific geographical area. This is done by listing similar or different data and placing them side by side, not simultaneously, in preparation for the fourth and final stage, which is "comparison." This stage is characterized by the simultaneous handling of information and the adoption of a holistic and deep approach to thinking beyond superficial comparison in order to scrutinize the hypothesis, either confirming or denying it. The results are finally formulated in the form of a joint, alternating report that addresses the main concern of the problem and expands on the arguments and arrangement of information to create an open and continuous academic debate.

2.1 The Description Stage

Algeria (Arabic Language):

The Arabic language curriculum for the fifth year of primary school in Algeria is considered a preparatory stage for the middle school phase. The **graduation profile** for the Arabic language curriculum defines four basic competencies, including communicative competencies, methodological competencies, cognitive competencies, and [personal/social] competencies. An hourly volume of **8 and a quarter hours** is allocated for the Arabic language compared to 4 and a half hours for mathematics. Regarding the **comprehensive competency for the Arabic language subject**, the curriculum focuses on enabling the learner to communicate orally and in writing and to deal with argumentative and explanatory texts consisting of (130-150 words) which focus on the **value-based and ethical aspect** and the consolidation of national identity. The Arabic language curriculum at this academic level also aims to achieve **cross-curricular competencies** of an intellectual, methodological, communicative, and personal nature to develop a spirit of initiative, the use of media, and the extrapolation of data. The Arabic language education curriculum at this level is based on a **matrix specific to knowledge resources**. It consists of grammar rules, verb conjugation, and tools of accusative and jussive cases. The annual subject program also focuses on employing deductive and oppositional connectors (such as: therefore, conversely, however) and expressions of certainty and hesitation (such as: perhaps, probably, I think) to produce texts of 8 to 10 lines. To assess the extent of acquisition of this competency, an evaluation system is adopted that goes beyond measurement to include immediate remediation, remedial activities, and self-assessment.

National Curriculum Committee (2016). National Curriculum Reference: Primary Education Stage. Algeria. Ministry of National Education.

France (French Language):

The structure of the French educational curricula reveals that Cycle 3 (Cycle de consolidation) of education represents a strategic link to ensure continuity between primary education and middle school education (i.e., grades CM1, CM2, and 6ème). The French language education methodology in this cycle (Cycle 3) is manifested as a pillar to unify cognitive acquisitions while giving top priority to "oral language" as an entry point for independence in reading and writing. The language education curriculum at this level also includes pivotal competencies including **listening and understanding** by distinguishing

sounds and interacting with audio-visual messages, and **speaking** through training the student to take the audience into account by adjusting voice tone and body gestures and using digital media in presentations. In addition to participating in exchanges that appear in practical examples such as debates and role-playing games (such as expressing refusal or thanks). It also involves training on texts that include argumentative strategies such as refutation and summarization. To verify the learner's attainment of the competency, the teacher relies on an **assessment process** based on revealing the learner's ability to provide justified information, tell stories, and understand audio texts lasting up to 10 minutes, along with mastering fluid reading of complex literary texts and producing independent written texts ranging between one and two pages, while observing spelling and grammatical rules and using the keyboard effectively.

<https://eduscol.education.fr>

Cycles d'enseignement : école primaire-
collège <https://www.education.gouv.fr/programmes-et-horaires-l-ecole-elementaire-9011>

Germany (German Language):

The German language represents the basic pillar for understanding the world and achieving cognitive and academic communication in Germany. Its educational requirements are organized across eight progressive levels (A-H) starting from the first grade and completing by the end of the tenth grade according to the standards of the "Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK)". Within the framework of the **compulsory education curriculum**, the curriculum in the primary stage (Grades 1-6) focuses on an integrated educational model linking speaking, listening, reading, and writing, with special attention to the transition from phonetically guided writing to correct standard spelling and developing "connected handwriting" as a basic motor skill, leading up to the secondary stage which enhances reading fluency and the use of digital technologies. Furthermore, the **contribution of language to forming the comprehensive profile of the curriculum** as a tool for developing individual identity and cultural participation makes mastering it a shared task for the entire educational staff, not just language teachers, while maintaining the importance of foreign languages. The targeted competencies in the **dual grade 9/10** focus on preparing students for the upper secondary stage by dealing with rich knowledge resources including literary texts such as drama, stories, and allegories, and functional texts such as blogs

and cinematic quotes. They are practically

trained on complex skills such as writing CVs, submitting job applications, conducting debates, job interviews, and speeches, to ensure their mastery of the fields of linguistic production, reception, active interaction, and linguistic awareness of various forms.

3. Second: The Interpretation Stage

Analysis of the factors and contexts (Historical, Political, Social) that influenced the form of language education in each country.

3.1 Algeria, Historical Interpretation:

The factors and contexts that influenced the form of language education in Algeria can be summarized according to the following divisions: **The Historical Context (Colonial Legacy and the Phase of Liberation):**

Education in Algeria before 1962 was characterized by educational duality, where the colonial era influenced by imposing the French school style, in which the French language dominated as the primary language of instruction to serve colonial interests. In contrast, a parallel historical context appeared represented in **Kuttab (Quranic schools) and Madrasas**, which were an "incubator for the Arabic language" and a source for cultural resistance and the preservation of identity (p. 231). After independence, an urgent historical priority emerged for "Arabization of Education" as a sovereign act to express Algerian identity, and replacing the French language with the Arabic language to "Algerianize" the educational framework (p. 232).

3.2 France The French Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment (Late 18th Century):

The philosophy of the Enlightenment (Rationalism) and the French Revolution (1789) marked a radical turning point, as the authority of the Catholic Church was undermined and education was separated from religious dominance. This contributed to the emergence of ideas of public, compulsory, and free education as a right for every citizen, and a focus on science, knowledge, and critical thinking instead of religious indoctrination. The period (1881-1882) is also considered a milestone in the history of French education, where the laws of **Jules Ferry** established the principles of the "Republican School" which made education compulsory, free, and secular.

Dominique Borne, Historien, Histoires de France. <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/16178>

Alongside this, a radical shift occurred in curricula, especially regarding the intensive focus on the French language, history, French geography, and sciences, with the exclusion of religious education and its replacement with "Moral and Civic Education." The goal of this was to build a unified nation and instill the values of the Republic.

- *l'inspection générale de l'éducation du sport et de la recherche, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale... (2023). la république à l'école, France*
- **With the advent of the World Wars (20th Century):** Destruction occurred in the infrastructure in France, followed by a series of social transformations which pushed the state to update curricula again. It expanded secondary and higher education to achieve equality and keep pace with social transformations, and used education to enhance the "feeling of unity and belonging" by focusing on the history of France and its heroes.
- *Dominique Borne, Historien, Histoires de France...*

The late 20th century witnessed the emergence of globalization, opening the way for technological development and administrative decentralization in managing education, which education in this country benefited from. Technology was introduced, and foreign languages were taught, but with the preservation of the status of the French language. Authority was also granted to local authorities (decentralization) in education issues, but with curricula remaining under central national supervision to ensure the unity of values.

Gaudry-Lachet Anne, Rakocovic Robert... (2018).

Second: Cultural Factors and Contexts Influencing French Language Education in the French Educational System:

French language education is closely linked to the cultural identity of the country, and these factors are manifested in:

- **Language as a Vessel for National Identity:** Where the French language is not considered merely a tool for communication, but is a "symbol of belonging and connection to the French civilizational entity." This is embodied in the reality of education, where the French language occupies a central place in the curricula (writing and speaking), meaning it is considered the vessel that preserves French culture and history, and the most important indicator for integration into French society.

- *Lakhal Lakhdar. (2007). Investing the Historical Dimension in Educational Reform... PhD Thesis. University of Algiers.*
- **Secularism (Laïcité) as a Cultural and Political Value:** In French education, secularism stipulates the neutrality of the state towards religions and the separation of religion from education. Its influence appears greatly on education in France through the exclusion of religious symbols from schools (such as the veil or crosses) to ensure equality. This is reflected culturally in the design of curricula that exclude religious education and focus on "rational knowledge and critical thinking" and the values of tolerance.
- *l'inspection générale de l'éducation du sport et de la recherche... (2023).*
- **Promoting "Culture of Citizenship" and Republican Values:** Education is considered a tool for creating a "good citizen" who is active in French education by instilling the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity included in the curricula. Teachers are historically viewed as "Ambassadors of the Republic" and are tasked with transmitting these values to students. This philosophy is reinforced by the principle of compulsory education starting from the age of three, reflecting the French state's vision of the importance of early intervention in forming the citizen culturally and cognitively.
- *EMMANUEL Macron, loi n° 2019-791...*
- **Literature and Arts as Pillars of Personality:** French education views creativity and artistic and literary expression not as a luxury, but as essential pillars for individual development. This is embodied through dedicating the educational content of the French language in its literary and artistic aspects, and studying the history of French art, to create a cultured generation and an audience conscious of cultural institutions by integrating visits to museums and theaters.

3.3 Germany:

German language education in Germany and the context of its curriculum development were deeply influenced by a set of historical, philosophical, and political factors and contexts. Language education was not merely a transfer of linguistic rules, but served as the tool shaping identity and citizenship.

The Philosophical and Historical Context: The Concept of "Bildung": Education in Germany, including German language education, is based on the concept of "**Bildung**" (Construction or Formation), which traces its roots to

the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism in German thought. The goal of learning the German language is not only to acquire a technical skill, but the "comprehensive formation of the individual," including the development of their integrated personality and mental and aesthetic capabilities. In Germany, literature, art, and philosophy are integrated into school curricula to enhance self-development. Focus is also placed on critical thinking and autonomy in the learner, so that they are not merely a recipient of linguistic information.

- *Friedrich Paulsen... (1908). German education, past and present...*

Within the cultural context, education seeks to be more realistic and relevant to the spirit of the age, by linking language to various aspects of culture and daily life, and adopting interactive approaches that integrate general subjects into school life, and employing living culture in language teaching. The German language curriculum includes the study of classical and contemporary German literature, with an approach of **integrating arts and media** through activities analyzing German films and series as part of language learning.

Students are urged to participate in research on music, art, and German history, and encouraged to communicate via the Internet and use technology in language learning.

Third: The Juxtaposition Stage

The Juxtaposition stage reveals a fundamental divergence in the educational philosophies governing mother tongue teaching. The curricula in the three countries studied (Algeria, France, and Germany) reflect strategic objectives related to identity, citizenship, and cognitive function.

In the Algerian context, it is concluded that Arabic language education transcends mere language acquisition, becoming a "vessel of identity" and a bridge to methodology. The language is not taught as a dry set of grammar rules, but rather as a pivotal tool for shaping the learner's personality and developing their comprehensive curriculum competencies. The distinctiveness of this system lies in linking language practice to higher-order thinking skills, such as effective planning, rigorous reasoning, and initiative. Furthermore, a systematic distinction emerges in assessment methods, shifting from "immediate remediation" and correcting deficiencies in primary school—to ensure a solid foundation—to "comprehensiveness and depth" in middle school, where group projects and discussions are used as tools to measure the learner's ability to analyze, critique, and express themselves.

In the French model, the mother tongue becomes a fundamental tool for instilling the values of the "republican school," based on secularism and free education. French language instruction is the primary driver of socialization

and equality, with curricula designed to be flexible and adaptable to rapid

changes such as cultural diversity and the digital revolution. The French curriculum places a strong emphasis on critical thinking and self-directed learning, while providing specialized educational support for groups facing learning difficulties, thus making language a means of social integration and comprehensive cognitive empowerment.

In contrast, the German system offers a unique model based on the concept of "holistic education" (Bildung). In this system, German is treated as an essential and indispensable tool for acquiring knowledge in all disciplines, such as mathematics and science, rather than simply as an independent subject. The German philosophy is characterized by pragmatism and functionality, focusing on the practical use of language in real-life situations and professional success. This is supported by a decentralized system that grants the states (Länder) cultural sovereignty, allowing for flexibility and innovation while maintaining rigorous national quality standards.

Comparison

The mother tongue curricula in the three countries are characterized by clear differences in objectives, content, and methods. The European approach, represented by France and Germany, stands out with its heavy reliance on digital tools and its adoption of a continuous assessment system to develop expression and communication skills.

France, in particular, focuses on building a literary and artistic culture, developing comprehensive language skills, and fostering critical thinking through a diverse range of texts and the integration of literature and art.

Meanwhile, Germany emphasizes linking the mother tongue to individual identity and community participation, relying on realistic and literary texts. German is considered the foundation of learning, while simultaneously stressing the importance of foreign languages as part of a comprehensive education.

In contrast, the Algerian experience takes a different path. Its mother tongue curriculum focuses on the learner's mastery of communication skills and comprehension of argumentative and interpretive texts, placing significant emphasis on ethical and moral aspects, developing comprehensive competencies across all types of curricula (intellectual, methodological, and social), and promoting critical thinking. Assessment in this field also plays a pivotal role, going beyond mere measurement to the immediate identification of students' weaknesses and the development of specific remedial activities to address them. Furthermore, it is distinguished by its engagement of the learner through self-assessment, fostering awareness of their own weaknesses. However, unlike the French and German experiences, the use of digital technologies in education in Algeria remains limited, highlighting the need to develop a robust digital infrastructure.

Results

Based on **Bereday's model** for comparative educational studies, a reform can be proposed for the mother tongue (Arabic) education curriculum in Algeria for the primary and middle stages that transcends methods of indoctrination and memorization towards developing critical thinking and effective communication skills. This is done by drawing inspiration from the German and French experiences while being rooted in Algerian national specificity. The project is based on transforming language from mere abstract rules into a vital tool for critical thinking and social communication and employing it in various fields, alongside developing reading, writing, and oral expression skills and analyzing situations through modern teaching methods that encourage class

interaction. To achieve this, it is necessary to integrate literary and historical texts—a carefully studied integration through selecting texts with extreme care that reflect the authenticity of Algerian society and its culture. These should vary between literary forms such as poetry, prose, stories, novels, and plays, and represent different historical periods and civilizations, taking into account gradation in difficulty, student interests, and cultural openness. This is done by including works of Algerian, Arab, and foreign writers. In addition, these texts must be linked to their historical, political, and social context, focusing on the history of Algeria and its resistance to colonialism and societal transformations. Comparing original texts and documents related to history helps understand the evolution of values and ideas embraced by the Algerian citizen and builds a conception linking the past to the present. This reform step falls within stimulating critical thinking in the learner through deep analysis and deduction instead of superficial comprehension, and providing opportunities for free and responsible expression of opinions in a classroom environment that respects difference. It encourages students to broaden their horizons by exploring diverse knowledge sources such as articles, documentaries, and websites relevant to the subject of study, whether the material relates to history, geography, or other subjects. This ultimately contributes to building a confident generation, aware of its history and identity, and qualified to face contemporary challenges.

Conclusion

By applying the stages of George Bereday's comparative studies model (description, explanation, comparison, and analysis) to the language and mathematics curricula in Algeria, France, and Germany, this study arrived at a number of pivotal conclusions. The analysis revealed that the differences in educational curricula among the three countries are not merely procedural but rather a profound reflection of each country's historical, cultural, and political contexts. While Germany and France have adopted curricula based on functionality, digitalization,

and critical thinking as pillars for citizen development, the Algerian curriculum—despite its strong emphasis on

identity and values—still needs to strengthen its practical and technological aspects.

The comparison and juxtaposition stages revealed a clear gap in the use of technology and in treating language as a tool for comprehensive knowledge, not merely as a subject. European models excel in integrating language with other disciplines and in fostering learner autonomy. Based on this, the findings confirm that the desired educational reform for the mother tongue (Arabic) curriculum in Algeria lies not in imitating Western experiences, but in intelligently drawing inspiration from them.

Accordingly, the proposed reform project calls for a qualitative shift that transcends rote learning and the memorization of abstract grammatical rules, moving towards an approach that makes Arabic a living tool for thinking, research, communication, and understanding the world. This is achieved by integrating authentic literary and historical texts that connect the learner to their roots and broaden their horizons to other cultures, along with the urgent need to integrate digital tools and develop a technological infrastructure similar to the German and French models.

This new vision for the curriculum, which combines "authenticity" embodied in historical and literary texts with "modernity" represented by critical thinking and digitalization, is the optimal way to prepare an Algerian generation rooted in its identity, open to the world, and equipped with the necessary skills to face the challenges of the future with awareness and confidence.

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