

EDITORIAL

“Teacher Training for Sustainable Development”

By Said BERDOUZ

Last year, MATE National Conference focused on Education for Citizenship with more weight given to this issue in the Moroccan context, with the objective of sensitizing Educational authorities and especially teachers, to the importance of the subject, for it has been noticed that it has not been given its effective due in our educational system. All official texts relating to education in Morocco preach the building of a democratic society, where people are endowed, through education, with a global vision and understanding large enough to encompass the world's largest diversity in terms of culture. Our curricula are meant to provide the skills and knowledge that will likely make learners aware of and accountable for their duties, their rights, to make them well prepared to share, care and participate actively in promoting citizenship basic values, and contribute to the welfare of their society and by extension to the welfare of humanity by large.

By choosing “Teacher Training for Sustainable Development” to be the theme for this year's conference, MATE is aiming at doing its bit in the educational reform being implemented in Morocco by bringing into light another hot issue which, as the board responsible for this choice believes, cannot be taken apart from the field of education. It is “Sustainable Development” as defined by the Brundtland Report (1987), namely, the ‘Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

I think it is not enough to talk about sustainable development, or better say theorize about people all over the world having the right for a better quality of life and taking into account the fact that the future generations are endowed with the same right, hence, it becomes a paramount importance to take all necessary measures to preserve natural resources, to protect our planet, and to share the world cake by enhancing economical growth in areas where poverty has settled down. What is more important than the “What to do” is “How to do it”, I mean how to help people enjoy what is preached in the texts of Sustainable Development, how to “satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.”

If we are to achieve the objectives set internationally for sustainable development, new cultural aspects, aspects which go along with the requisites of Sustainable Development, are to be introduced, practiced, and reinforced in society. People should be made aware of and helped to live by the agreed-upon basic principles of sustainability, listed below as they appear in most of the texts related to the issue, i.e. the enhancement of

- economic development,
- social development, and
- environmental protection.

It is not an easy task since each of these pillars entails a true commitment on behalf of the world community, and any institution, be it local or international, will be called upon to contribute to the efforts invested to ensure winning the challenge of. Being aware of this, and as a responsible citizen NGO concerned with education, MATE is glad to provide a platform for eminent scholars and professional educators to share their views and experiences relating to Sustainability in order to come up with a set of practical convincing things that can definitely reorient our education and make it meet the requirements of Sustainable Development, and by the same provide teachers, the corner stones of

any educational action, who will be, most of the time, called upon to carry out any action plan meant to imbue Sustainability in the educative systems. We, MATERs, really believe in the power of effective education, but we also believe that one cannot give something he or she has not got. If we want teachers to be involved in Sustainable Development Education let us prepare them for that.

It sets out five principles that provide a basis for sustainable development policy in the UK:

- living within environmental limits - ensuring the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so in the future;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society - meeting diverse needs and creating opportunity for all;
- achieving a sustainable economy - with efficient resource use incentivised; using sound science responsibly - strong scientific evidence, taking into account scientific uncertainty and public attitudes and values; and
- promoting good governance- effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society; social progress which recognizes the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

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REPORTS ON MATE ACTIVITIES

General Council Meeting

Date : 18/03/06

Site : The training Center for Primary School Teachers, Rabat

Attendance : A. Bouziane, A. Ait Ali, A. Rhaiti, A. Lamhiouli, M. Blibil, M. Hassim, M. Makhfi, R. Kerkech, S. Berdouz, N. Belkachla.

Agenda:

1. Briefing

2. Setting up work committees and assigning tasks for the National Conference (NC).

1. The president thanked MATE partners in the organizing committee for the great efforts they have invested to make the inspectors' seminar a success. He reported M. Fahmi's and A. Raddadi's apologies and the excuses they provided for not being able to make it for the GC meeting; and those of Ms. Zakia Iraqi, the person in charge of the Direction of the Curricula, for failing to attend the opening ceremony of the colloquium. He then updated the board on the different issues:

* The last MATE day during the present board mandate will be organized in Larache on March 31st, 2006. A. Ait Ali, A. Zaki and M. Nejbi, in coordination with the president, will be in charge of it. The board will be expecting a report on this.

* S. Berdouz and A. Raddadi will travel to Tangiers and meet with R. Senhaji for the last touches concerning the NC and report to the board. Raddadi is making contacts for the different meetings there.

* Posters were designed by Raddadi and distributed in different parts in Morocco. There is still a need for more posters, however, to satisfy the needs of the different regions. The president will get in touch with Raddadi.

* Folders are being taken care of by A. Raddadi

* Lodging of the participants moved to Shella Hotel because Armada Hotel cannot host more than 100 people.

* Bags are ready

* Writing pads are being taken care of by A. Raddadi and A. Ait Ali

* Badges and Badge holders are ready

* The Riaya is taking its normal procedure, as explained by the president in previous postings.

* The board agreed that the conference cost for participation, hotel phone numbers and other useful information should be given to A. Bouziane after the coming visit to Tangiers so that he will update MATE website.

* S. Berdouz will contact the textbook publishing institutions for more sponsoring, with the help of Mr Rachid Amrani from the Direction of the Curricula.

* S. Berdouz and A. Raddadi will suggest in yahoo group a nominated authority for the keynote speech.

2. Before starting off the assignment of tasks for the NC, A. Lamhiouli suggested that a brief evaluation of the Inspectors' seminar would help avoid certain flaws in the N.C. The board welcomed the idea and, after underlying the success of the seminar, and applauding the organizing committee of the Inspectors' seminar for the fabulous job they have done in terms of the choice of content and organization, some remarks related to organization were raised and recommendations were made to make future events more successful and efficient.

The following table shows the different commissions and the assigned tasks for the conference, which were consented to by the board:

Tasks	People in Charge
Programme	M. Hassim/ N. Belkachla
Registration	M. Fahmi/ A. Lamhiouli/ R. Kerkech/ A. Ghaiti/M. Makhfi
Treasurer	M. Blibil (1 st day; will give the task over to someone else to free himself for the financial report with the help of Amal)
Plenary room (materials/ water/ announcements/ communication/ etc.)	R. Kerkech/ A. Atlagh/ M. Makhfi
Workshops (Rooms/ Lists/ materials, etc.)	A. Lamhiouli/ N. Belkachla
Xeroxing	Will be discussed with R. Senhaji on-site
Banners	Mr. Berdouz and Mr. Raddadi will negotiate with R. Senhaji
Informing the media	N. Belkachla will get in touch with reachable newspapers and the Marrakech radio (will inform the board later); Mr. Berdouz will take care of others.
Inviting the Media / interviews	A. Ait Ali/ A. Raddadi
Data collection	A. Bouziane
Relation with the hotel staff and restaurant	A. Raddadi/ S. Berdouz

Other tasks can be assigned during the meeting scheduled for **Sunday, April 9th, 2006 at 10 a.m at Shella Hotel**. The board members are invited to spend the night of **Saturday 8th**, at the

hotel. Those who cannot make it for the night are required to be there by the time of the meeting. We wish the board and the conference all the success.

Beni Mellal MATE Day, Academy of Tadla Azilal region : February 18th, 2006.
Reported by : Said Elmouhtarim

Beni-Mellal MATE Regional Branch, in collaboration with the 'Academie regionale de l' education et de la formation Tadla-Azilal', service de documentation et d' animation pédagogique and the coordinating inspector, organized a MATE day in the academy on February 18th, 2006.

The meeting was an opportunity for teachers from Azilal and Beni Mellal delegations to discuss two important issues :

1. Evaluation of the new textbooks (Outlook as an example).
2. Assessing young learners.

The first paper was presented by Mr. M. Zanzoun and Mr.M.Driouch. The two speakers focussed on the principles underlying standards-based learning then moved to discuss the

outcome of a questionnaire related to the problems facing teachers while implementing the new textbooks in a mixed ability common core class.

The second paper was also presented jointly by Miss. L.Alkhiam and Mr. R.Tagant. The two speakers presented some reflections on young learners' assessment suggesting the introduction of alternative forms of assessment in our schools.

At the end of this MATE day, all the teachers received some materials related to teaching and education which were given to them by MATE and the academy. This event was very successful both at the level of organization, academic value and social contact.

ENS-MATE study day, Rabat : March 24th 2006
Reported by Rachida Kerkech

On Friday, March 24th, 2006, an ENS-MATE study day was held at the *Centre de Formation des Instituteurs et Institutrices (CFI)*, Rabat. The event was jointly organized by the English department at the Ecole Normale Supérieure Takaddoum, Rabat, and the Moroccan Association of Teachers of English, MATE.

The ENS – MATE study day is a yearly pedagogical event which is usually held in March at the ENS (this year is an exception) just before the practice teaching period. High school teachers, including host teachers who supervise trainees during practice teaching, are invited to attend the event. Colleagues and friends from other ELT sectors or institutions are also invited to attend and/or participate. We, thus, give the ENS teacher trainees the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and experience of ELT professionals other than their own teachers.

In spite of unexpected obstacles and difficulties, the organizing committee, owing to its perseverance and determination, managed to meet its objective and hold the event. This would not have been possible without the support of: MATE president, Mr. Berdouz as well as board members, colleagues from MATE 'Rabat group', and ENS colleagues, including former ones . On behalf of the ENS English department colleagues, I express our sincere thanks and gratitude.

The study day was attended by the ENS English Department faculty and trainees, teachers, inspectors, textbook writers, and teacher trainers most of whom are faithful MATE members. The event was also attended by the director of the British Council, Mr. S. McNulty, who, in spite of a tight schedule, managed to stay for a couple of hours during the morning session.

The pedagogical study day consisted of various presentations and activities in which current ELT issues were raised and debated – see program below, please.

Mr. A. Zaki addressed the issue of *culture in the Moroccan ELT classroom*. Language being part of culture and culture being part of language, in what way does L1 predisposes the L2

learners to a certain interpretation and use of the target language? Awareness was a key and recurrent term in Mr. Zaki's very interesting and challenging presentation. The debate was as challenging and interesting as the issue itself.

Mr. N. Bendouqi's presentation evolved around the current issue of *competencies and standards* taking into consideration the education reform white book. His approach was very interesting albeit personal, which was challenging to the audience. The ensuing discussion was fruitful especially that trainees had never had the opportunity to learn about the new concept of standards before their training.

The third presentation was about the new textbook *Visa to the world* currently being used in the Moroccan public high schools, 'Tronc Commun'. Mr. S. Messaoudi, on behalf of his colleagues, Mr. M. Ahellal and Mr. A. Bouddouch, presented the textbook to the audience. He talked about the approach adopted by the team and the rationale behind it. The structure and organization of the book were well explained. Issues related to textbook design, its challenges, obstacles, and perspectives were also raised and debated.

During the tea break, all participants had the opportunity to admire the caricatures exhibition organized by our colleague and friend Mr. A. Ghaiti. The pictures depicted everyday educational situations in a humorous but realistic way --the teaching profession in a nutshell. Our colleague kindly shared his impressions, experience, and ideas with teachers and trainees.

The first presentation in the afternoon was given by Mr. A. Oulbouch. He presented another new textbook also used in 'Tronc Commun', *Outlook*. The structure of the textbook as well as the approach adopted by the team were explained to the audience. Again, issues related to obstacles, challenges, and perspectives were raised and debated.

Mr. M. Nejbi addressed in his presentation the issue of *the role of the teacher in the Moroccan classroom*. Starting from the assumption that the teacher should be a facilitator of learning, Mr. Nejbi presented the strategies –macro and micro- whereby

the ELT teacher can facilitate learning. The ensuing discussion was so pleasant and interesting that it had to be resumed outside the conference room.

On behalf of the head of the department of English, Mrs. I. Nejjar, and our colleagues at the ENS, I would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who have directly or indirectly contributed to the success of this study day.

First, the guest speakers who have kindly accepted to contribute with very interesting and informative presentations in spite of other obligations and tight schedules. Special thanks go to our colleague A. Ghaiti who took the trouble to come all

the way from Khouribga to organize the caricatures exhibition and to Mr. A. Zaki for having kindly accepted to place at our disposal his personal video projector.

We extend our thanks to our colleague Mr. A. Boumoussa who kindly accepted to chair the afternoon session, to all the host teachers, Rabat MATE members, colleagues, and trainees who attended the event, participated in the general discussion, and helped install a friendly and warm atmosphere.

We are also grateful to the Academy and the CFI for having accepted to host the event.

MATE Afternoon, CPR-Inzeggane : March 29th 2006 **Reported by Mohamed Bouchakka**

MATE Agadir organized a mate afternoon at CPR, Inzeggane on Wednesday 29th 2006. There were 70 people including 50 CPR trainees, their five trainers, inspectors, secondary school teachers and MATE Agadir board members in addition to three Mate national board members (Mr. Hassim, Mr. Atlagh and Mr. Assabane). The event was as follows:

1. the opening:

Abdullah Ellassri, a CPR trainer, introduced the CPR director who welcomed Mate and expressed his happiness to contribute to our event. He focused on the point that the center is always open to such constructive events.

2. The note speech of the president of MATE, Agadir Mohamed Bouchakka

He focused on the role of MATE as a provider of services for ELT professionals locally & nationally for over 26 years now. He also mentioned the cultural and pedagogical activities and events for the benefit of supervisors, teachers, and CPR trainees and also for students (MATE afternoons, Souss pens magazine, student talent show, ICT workshop, etc.).

3. The programme of the afternoon consisted of:

3.1. A workshop: Civic Education through ELT, Mohammed Hassim & Adil Bentaher

The workshop was animated by both Mr. Mohammed Hassim, a supervisor at the delegation of Zagora and Mr. Adil Bentaher, a teacher at El Maarifa high- school in Ait Melloul.

The speakers raised the point that there has been a growing interest in introducing civic education (CE) in the Moroccan curricula. This interest has been motivated by various elements. The workshop is a contribution to this debate that is going on about introducing CE in the Moroccan educational system & seeks to elaborate ways of introducing CE in Moroccan ELT classes. Extracts of videos about citizenship classes from **teachers' TV** were used as a basis for discussion which was very positive.

3.2. A presentation: Susan Thornhill/ Macmillan English Horizons

Susan Thornhill talked to trainees for 15 mn about the English Horizons book and distributed English Horizons books (Tb/Sb/Wb) and audio cassettes to trainees .

3.3. A presentation: Project work as a means to promote learning, Ahmed Atlagh

Mr. Ahmed Atlagh, a teacher at Elbakkali high school talked about the importance of project work in a language classroom in relation also to English Horizons book. He gave a lot of practical examples.

The interaction with CPR trainees was very positive and fruitful. The speakers provided the trainees with samples in the form of check-lists and handouts. The trainees were so interested in the topics which were thoroughly discussed.

Competency-based education and Standards-based education: What, why, and how?

By Ahmed Chaibi

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to demystify the theoretical issues related to both *competency-based* and *standards-based approaches to education*. 'Competencies' and 'standards' are the most recurrent catchwords in the field of education in Morocco and elsewhere. I'd like to look at what they are, why we should take them seriously, and how we can implement them for the benefit of our learners and community. A particular focus will be put on the standards-based education as it has been adopted for now 3 years in our EFL curriculum. It is in our intention to:

➤ outline the concept and characteristics of competency-based education.

- shed some light on the standards-based approach and its underlying principles.
- simplify the standards-based approach terminology.
- survey the English as foreign language standards areas.
- highlight the EFL standards and modes of communication.
- see the place of language skills in the standards-based approach.

Competency-based education:

Competency based education (CBE) refers to a system of education in which a performance-based learning is sought. In other words, CBE puts more focus on the outcomes of the teaching-learning operation. It considers **competence** as an

application of a **combination of knowledge, understanding, experience** and **ability** to perform tasks in real life situations. In short,

- CBE specifies the **skills** needed by learners to function in areas of communication, technology, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships.
- CBE is not only concerned with what the learners know about language, but what they **do** with the language.
- CBE considers language as a tool for **communication** rather than a mere content to be mastered. It conceives of foreign language ability, for instance, as a **skill** rather than *knowledge per se*.
- CBE is a **task-based** approach and sets **goals** in terms of **behavioural objectives** (i.e. competencies).
- In CBE, competencies are similar to performance objectives, because they usually specify “**condition**”, “**task**”, and “**standards**”. However, competencies are broader than objectives (see Nunan, online¹).
- The pendulum; however, swings in this approach towards **high order processes** and critical thinking which were ignored in the ‘by-objectives approach’ (e.g. ‘understanding’, ‘interpretation’, or ‘appreciation’ are reappraised and highlighted in the CBE (see Nunan, online for more details).
- CBE also provides learners with the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- CBE specifies standards to aim at by the end of the course; therefore it is ‘criterion-referenced’ rather than ‘norm-referenced’.

The Standards-based Education

The standards approach, which is currently receiving momentum in Morocco, is a **step beyond the Competency-based Education**. This approach has also been adopted in many developed countries, including the USA. According to the proponents of this approach, effective education, needs a lot of planning and investment on how its outcomes can be constructive and rewarding not only for learners and educators, but also for parents and other citizens; that is, for community at large. To attain and demonstrate specified skills, knowledge, and attitudes, all parties in a community need to work together and decide on (i) what standards to target, and (ii) how to make sure these standards are easily reached in due time.

The National Charter of education and training (NCET) and **the white book** have created in Morocco an atmosphere for such necessary decisions. Three years ago, the EFL guidelines have tried successfully to bring these standards into light. Textbooks, which have been lately designed, inspired their activities and practices from these guidelines. The foretaste of the implementation reveals that these standards are crucial for a rigorous teaching and learning operation to take place. Standards-based education in Morocco is of a vital interest to learners, teachers, institutions, and the community for at least the following reasons:

- it defines competence (capability, know-how and expertise) as well as incompetence and inability. By setting and achieving standards, excellence is also defined (and perhaps mediocrity, too).
- it makes it possible to develop more accurate national, and later perhaps, local curricula, and devise more effective methods and techniques.
- it ensures a valid and reliable assessment. The data from such assessment determine where we need to place our emphasis to improve teaching and learning.
- it hands over responsibility to other partners as well. The National Charter (2000) in Morocco is an attempt to “responsibilize” these partners (e.g. private sector).
- it assures the quality of our educational programs and holds programs accountable for their outcomes.
- it gives teachers and schools high targets to aim at. Setting standards improves teaching and learning by clarifying their goals.
- It enables learners, parents, educators, and citizens to know what should be learned at a given point in time; i.e. no time for improvisation.
- it assures equal educational opportunity for all.
- it determines which programs receive certification, and why.
- it guarantees a continuous and constructive rethinking of teacher training and teacher development. It can serve as a basis for evaluation and later educational reforms.
- Standards for learners presuppose standards for teachers and effective teacher evaluation.

The necessity of having clear, straightforward and well-articulated standards is self-evident as has been demonstrated above. Practically speaking, the achievement of standards provides learners with the opportunity to acquire **the knowledge, attitudes and skills /strategies for better English language learning**. They also relate learning to real life situations, i.e. to what learners know, can do, and will do with English when they graduate or in their future life (i.e. learner autonomy).

Puzzling out terminology

Standards for English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, which have been introduced in the national curriculum, answer the question of ‘what’ should be taught in the Moroccan EFL classroom. Such standards are referred to as ‘**content standards**’. The ‘**performance standards**’, on the other hand, provide information to teachers and administrators about ‘how well’ learners can be expected to do ‘what’ from the content standards. The standards-based approach to teaching English in Morocco has brought with it an array of terms and expressions that have urged many teachers and supervisors to try to find resources liable to simplify that jargon. For the benefit of all parties, we deem it necessary to demystify some of this terminology without oversimplifying it. Content and performance standards collocate with other terms that we have to talk about below as well:

¹ Performance based approaches. In [www.nunan.info/presentations/\(3/3/2006\)](http://www.nunan.info/presentations/(3/3/2006))

Content Standards	CS are statements that define <i>what a learner is expected to know and be able to do in a content area</i> to attain high levels of competency in a subject matter (i.e. the subject specific knowledge, processes, and skills). That is, ‘What’ schools are expected to teach and learners expected to learn (TESOL, 1997:154).
Performance Standards	PS are statements that refer to <i>how well learners are meeting a standard</i> : they (i) specify the quality and effect of learner performance at various levels of competency (benchmarks) in the subject matter, (ii) specify how learners must demonstrate their knowledge and skills and can (iii) show learner progress towards meeting a standard.
Progress indicators	Observable and assessable activities that learners may perform to show progress toward meeting the standard; organized by grade level clusters. (Ibid) (e.g. ask the teacher to restate or simplify directions).
Proficiency Standards	These standards tell us how well learners must perform.
Assessment Standards	AS establish <i>guidelines for evaluating learner performance and attainment</i> of content standards; they often include philosophical statements of good assessment practice.
Descriptors:	Descriptors are broad categories of discrete, representative behaviours that learners exhibit when they meet a standard. They might involve : e.g. following oral and written implicit or explicit directions, requesting and providing clarification, participating in pair discussions, explaining actions, etc.
Vignettes	Vignettes provide instructional sequences (drawn from real life experiences of teachers) . They depict classroom scenes that demonstrate standards in action, and describe teacher and learners’ activities that promote English language learning (e.g. brainstorming, or note-taking).

English as a foreign language standards areas

With the above terms in mind, the teaching of English in our upper secondary schools focuses on five main standards areas², each of which includes a set of content standards that describe the knowledge and skills and/ attitudes learners should acquire by the end of a specific level. An equally important standard area which is necessary for quality education, is the “opportunity to learn how to learn”(Mary Lou 2002):

Communication	Learners will communicate in both oral and written forms, interpret both oral and written messages, show cultural understanding when they communicate information to various audiences for a variety of purposes .The emphasis will be therefore upon what learners can do with English rather than ‘what they know about English’;
Cultures	Learners will show deeper understanding of their culture(s) and other cultures;
Connections	Learners will be exposed in small doses to other subject areas such as history and geography; and transfer their learning to other subject matters.
Comparisons	- Learners will gain awareness of cross-cultural similarities and differences.
Communities	- Learners will extend their learning experiences from the EFL classroom to the outside world through activities such as the use of the e-mail, the World Wide Web and letter-writing. They will therefore be made aware that we live in a global world.

Opportunity to ‘learn how to learn’ standards prepares learners “for life” (Mary Lou 2002) throughout the 5 Cs above, and ‘learner training’ for lifelong learning is omnipresent. All the curricula and syllabi need to target enabling learners to learn how to learn, and be able to carry on learning by themselves, even when they graduate. This preparation constitutes the heart of innovations in the 21st century in the field of education all over the world.

An effective attainment of the standards above will help learners become effective in performing intellectual, communicative, cultural, interdisciplinary and social tasks. Learners will

- develop the ability to think critically;
- solve problems;
- make informed decisions;
- be creative, able to use the power of analysis, imagination, and set and test hypotheses;
- transfer their English language learning competencies to other learning situations;
- develop various communication skills;
- cooperate with peers to learn;
- be tuned to quality performance (e.g. projects and presentations);
- foster their connections with their community as responsible and conscientious citizens;
- be willing to work hard, and
- be lifelong learners.

² We have used here “Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century” as a frame of reference.

Modes of communication and language skills

The Standards-based approach describes language use as being characterized by three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational. Focusing on these modes lays specific emphasis on the context and purpose of communication rather than on any one skill in isolation.

- The **Interpersonal mode** is characterized by active negotiation of meaning among individuals. It is most evident in conversation, yet both the interpersonal and negotiated dimensions can be realized through certain reading and writing tasks (e.g. personal letters or email).

- The **Interpretive mode** involves the interpretation of cultural patterns of meanings in discourse. In fact, interpretation is a step beyond comprehension and implies the ability to “read (or listen) between the lines.”

- The **Presentational Mode** refers to the construction of messages to create opportunities to negotiate meanings and share ideas and cultural patterns with the audience. Writing and speaking, the heart of this mode, require a substantial knowledge of language and culture to successfully listen, speak, read and listen between the lines. The promotion of these modes goes through opportunities to enhance various components of communicative competence in the classroom:

○ **Grammatical competence**: the mastery of the language code itself.

○ **Socio-cultural competence**: the ability to understand and use depending utterances appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts on contextual factors.

○ **Discourse competence**: the ability to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified or coherent spoken or written text in different genres.

○ **Strategic competence**: The ability to make use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies (a) to make up for breakdowns in communication caused by restraining conditions in actual communication or to inadequate competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (b) to boost the effectiveness of communication. (Canale and Swain 1980, & Canale, 1982)

The standards-based approach suggested in the upcoming guidelines (2006) sets relatively high expectations in the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Teachers should work towards creating the conditions necessary for

all learners to meet the desired outcomes. For the teaching of these skills to be successful, teachers and textbook designers should have in mind the five standards areas (i.e. communications, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities). Opportunities ‘for learning to learn’ should also be created on a day by day basis. The four skills need to be addressed with a view to helping learners (i) meet the standards set forth for each academic level and (ii) gradually grow independent learners.

Conclusion

Adopting a standards-based approach to EFL teaching in Morocco might seem to some as a ‘fad’ and a ‘jump on a passing bandwagon’. Some might also think that ‘we cannot re-invent the wheel in the sense that the ‘standards’ movement has not brought anything new, and that it is only a case of old wine in new bottles. Yet, though the standards-based education seems similar to competency-based education, it is more inclusive and goes beyond performance standards for learners to encompass criteria to other aspects of the educational system:

- Standards for pre-service training programmes
- Criteria for in-service training
- Standards for teachers
- Criteria for management of education
- Criteria to gauge quality indicators in areas other than education.

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Teaching EFL through the competency-based model

By Abdelkader Cheddoudi

Introduction

Moroccan teachers of English now feel that they are gaining ground as they are gradually set free from the shackles of the monolithic view of syllabus design. The scope of freedom to choose from the different textbooks available on the market is a healthy sign suggesting that the teaching of foreign languages will possibly take a huge leap mainly if the new perspectives pertaining to standards-based teaching are observed in the school curriculum.

The three new textbooks designed for the common core this year – *Visa to the World*, *Outlook*, and *Window on the World*, have common features; they have apparently been based on the same principles and designed according to the same English Curriculum. Whether they have respected the suggestions in the official guidelines or not is a different question. What matters mainly for us is the degree of feasibility to apply the new methodology. If

teachers fail to really implement the innovative approach, could we possibly attribute the failure to the teachers themselves or to the textbooks?

Our attempt to give an evaluation of the textbooks comes from deep concern to train teachers in complying with the new competency-based tendency in teaching. It is only the reality of the classroom however that would permit a true evaluation of the merits of these new textbooks. And the people in a position to carry out an evaluation process are syllabus designers and teachers. Teachers may indeed be in a better position if they are equipped with the underpinning theoretical background. They are the ones who are daily confronted with the school environment (teaching situations), and they are the ones who are supposed to put theory into practice.

Because of my job as a teacher-advisor - that is constantly observing teachers in action and providing advice and feedback to correct teaching behaviour, I presume I can provide at least a bird's view of those new books being implemented in our high schools. However, a more substantial evaluation needs rigorous analysis and the use of a number of checklists to assess the major design aspects and principles. I will try in this article to limit myself to:

1. providing tentative definitions of standards and competencies,
2. exploring the standards-based perspective through the new textbooks,
3. stressing the importance of promoting change in teachers' attitudes and classroom practice,
4. and finally addressing the issue of teacher development as a crucial factor for guaranteeing high quality teaching and learning of the foreign language. I strongly articulate the view that a textbook is just a textbook that can in no way ensure achievement and success in language acquisition unless learning conditions are met and unless it is jointly and properly manipulated by the teacher and the students.

I. Standards or Competencies

A. What is 'standards'?

For the last decade, so much talk has taken place about standards and competencies on the educational scenes of so many countries of the world. In Morocco however the problem is quite recent. In our school curriculum, emphasis has now been shifted to the competency-based approach in second and foreign language teaching. But a lot of concepts associated with the new currently advocated methodology are still beyond the teacher's understanding. It seems that standards-based methodology changes colour according to different teaching contexts. This makes it quite slippery in conceptual understanding and implementing.

When in search of a definition of the two concepts *standard* and *competency* in the huge literature, the arguing seems to be blurred. Sometimes they are used interchangeably and sometimes they are quite different entities. It is probably wise, if only conceptually, to think of standards as an umbrella term encompassing competencies. In fact they are one coin with two different sides! Standards very often seems to be associated or equated with goals and rubrics. A tentative definition of standards in language teaching has been elaborated and sounds as follow: standards are

overall national guiding frameworks/ benchmarks – in the form of general statements, reflecting the goals and principles and specifying the target competencies to be attained in the foreign language and resulting in a standards performance after an extended period of language instruction . (Mine - 2005)

The National Charter for Education and Training born five years ago seems now to make substantive steps towards its implementation. Standards is commonly believed to refer to state guidelines, benchmarks, and outcomes of quality teaching. The philosophy behind the introduction of standards and competencies in the educational sector is not only a question of external influence (Ohio Model - The Five Cs produced by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) but reflects a real determination to improve the quality of teaching, to sustain education for all children according to acceptable standards, and to provide equal opportunities for all children in schools in both urban and rural areas.

The slogan maintained with respect to this new educational orientation is “**NO CHILD SHOULD LAG BEHIND**”. We very much hope that the Standards movement will really help and motivate our students to learn foreign languages quickly and easily. Pessimistically, adverse effects are also probable since the teaching-learning setting (overcrowded traditional classes) is widely different from the setting from where the Standards originated. In this sense, accommodation is a key process that we should rely on for implementation.

With regard to foreign language teaching, the Charter emphasises the adoption of a standards perspective – conceiving benchmarks and rubrics as starting points and outcomes/performances as end marks. The five Cs – referred to in the Official Guidelines- 2005, standing for Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities encompass one of the models within the standards-based methodology:

- *Communication*: refers to the fact that learners would build up language competencies to use the foreign language in various communicative situations and for different purposes in life.

- *Culture*: means equipping/providing learners with the cultural load and an understanding of the culture of the target language and raising awareness to one's own traditions and values.

- *Connections*: relates to viewing the leaning of English as part of other disciplines and using it to acquire other knowledge.

- *Comparisons*: is a process whereby learners realise the L1 rules and make comparisons to become conscious of the underlying system of the target language. The assumption being that the comparing process is a supportive tool for foreign language-learning.

- *Communities*: refers to prospects of extending the learning of the target language beyond the classroom walls and communicating with other cultures of the world.

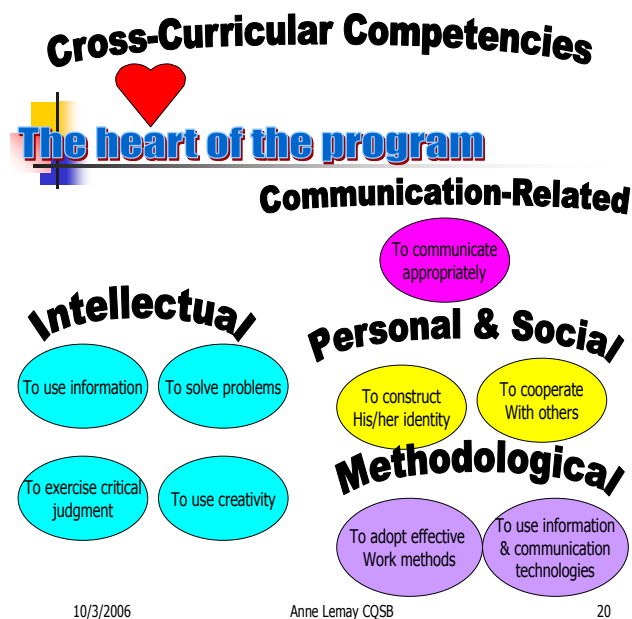
The model referred to above has spread all over foreign language settings with different degrees of success depending on the teaching-learning environments. Some of its elements like ‘communication’ and ‘culture’ are not new. They belonged to superseded methodologies like the communicative approach. The model indeed does not negate the importance of the previous approaches and techniques but tries to stretch them along a continuum.

B. What is competency?

We may in our teaching practice confuse the notion of competency with that of objective, skill, function or ability. These terms may have the same resonance for teachers who have had no chance to benefit from in-service training in standards-oriented training or workshops. One definition of the term competency is that it is “the ability to do something to a prescribed standard» (Mark Smith – 1996). Comparably, competencies for Larson are “**minimal standards for a particular transfer area**” (Larson, 2003). It can be inferred from these two short definitions that it is standards which constitute the benchmarks and the referential start-or-end point of the teaching and learning enterprise. Further debate may go around about what a ‘competence’ is and how ‘competency’ differs from it. We will be content here to join Smith’s definition in his article ‘What is Competence?’ and consider the first as virtues and qualifications enabling the individual learner for real life tasks while the latter as atomistic abilities or skills to be attained in gradual stages and on different learning occasions.

“Competence and competences are broad capacities... In contrast competency (plural competencies) is narrower, more atomistic concept used to label particular abilities” (Hyland quoted in Smith- 1996) He further explains that “In this sense it (competence) is not simply a skill but is a virtue; a general sense of excellence and goodness. It involves being up to those tasks that life presents us (op cit).” (Smith-1996)

As one example of competencies that may be included in the school curriculum, here is the following diagram by Anne Lemay (2004). In this diagram we notice a number of competencies constituting the backbone of the curriculum – communicative, personal, methodological and intellectual.

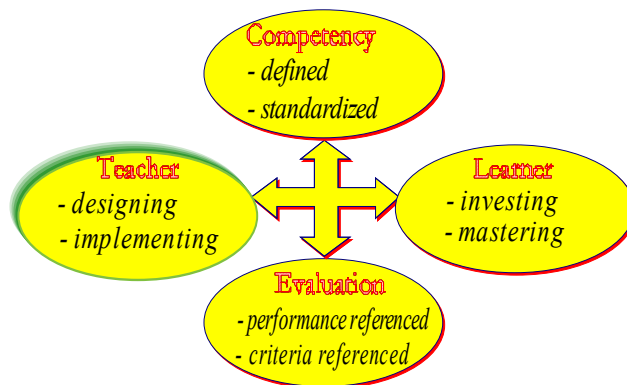


For the communicative competency learners are supposed to acquire the foreign language to a prescribed acceptable standard to allow them to communicate fluently and appropriately. For personal and social competencies, learners are recommended, through the medium of language, to get the appropriate social tools to express their identity and interact in appropriate social manners with speakers of the target language.

As for the methodological competency, learners should ‘learn how to learn’. They should acquire the necessary study skills and assume responsibility for their own learning. They may be equally introduced to information and communication technology and make the best of it to better learn the target language. By the way, Information Technology is no longer considered as a luxury but a strong requirement to improve quality teaching and quality learning. And as for the intellectual competency, learners are to develop high order thinking skills, problem-solving strategies, and creative skills work.

The second diagram we insert here (Diagram 2) is a suggestion of a model representing my own conception of competency based curriculum design. We modestly believe that it may contribute to an understanding of competency methodology in our teaching environment. At the design level we argue that defining competencies and standardizing them are a very essential question to start with.

Diagram 2 .A model of competency based syllabus design in TEFL



(Mine, May 2004)

The four major components (competency, teacher, learner, and evaluation) are elements of paramount importance in any teaching/learning context. As can be seen, they are interconnected processes that if observed properly will yield, we assume, successful results in foreign language teaching and learning.

For both teacher and learner, it is rather a matter of specification of roles to be played individually and cooperatively. In addition to using prescribed textbooks, the teacher is held accountable for producing his /her own teaching materials; the teacher is also responsible for implementing any new techniques or procedures advocated by any new methodology. The role of the learner is of great importance in picking up a foreign language. Learners have always been conceived as parrots or recipients and have behaved accordingly in classrooms.

They should from a new perspective bear part of the responsibility and be trained to acquire ways of learning by themselves and with the help of the teacher – organizer, counselor, and assessor. Learners as Stevic put it should ‘invest (in the learning process) as much as they gain’.

Last but not least is the process of ‘evaluation’. Though very crucial, it has always been neglected by syllabus designers and practicing teachers. It is sensible that if the teaching was oriented towards the competency-based methodology, it would be fair enough to think of assessment tools that comply with the new principles. There should really be no mismatch between the advocated methodology and assessment. Competency assessment is mostly performance oriented (what students can actually do with the language to demonstrate the appropriate knowledge related to a particular standards performance). We argue that students’ performances cannot be evaluated in the absence of language and communicative criteria or standards. The grids specifying those criteria in assessment or testing should reflect the instructional orientations no matter what the assessment or testing is - criteria or norm referenced.

II. Curriculum Design – the new textbooks

Among the major principles of this new competency-based education, learning is always considered self-paced; the syllabus is not time-drive nor is it exam bound. Students’ achieving standards – high or minimal, is what matters most. It is a must that even the less endowed students should get some share in education/ a minimal proficiency in language acquisition while others could reach the peak of their potential in the different disciplines.

The materials designed in accordance with the principles and tenets of the new methodology should in fact meet different learning styles and should match the different intelligences of learners. As learning is always measured in terms of performances (what learners can actually do with the language), tasks have to help learners demonstrate the competencies attained within a range of a textbook units. So the new methodology aspires to having competent learners possessing high thinking skills, digitally-informed about the world of communication and technology, and capable of solving problems encountered in real life.

The new teaching programmes which are supposed to inculcate values such as tolerance, cultural understanding and at the same time develop communication competencies and teach content areas to students are thought to be designed according to the national goals and standards as mentioned earlier. Teachers in their classrooms are the ones supposed to implement this new change and guarantee success. But how can they really make the necessary changes to keep abreast with the innovations?

It is of great importance to invest in thinking of the best ways how these foreign language competencies could be achieved and assessed so that textbook designers would provide only scarce and efficient resources. It is not a good idea to produce the best ornamented textbook and claim that it could serve as a teaching and learning channel to achieve learning and teaching competencies.

The new textbooks for the common core claim indeed that

they make use of the national guidelines concerning the teaching of foreign languages in Morocco. A couple of workshops presented during the current school year (Dec.7th, 2005; Jan.20th, 2006) in my supervisory area in Salé El Jadida testify to the difficulty of implementing the new teaching orientations. The workshops included two voluntary teachers’ performances intended to see if the new textbooks are really embedded in a standards-based methodology. The first teacher presented a lesson from Visa to the World and the second teacher presented a lesson from Window on the World.

In the preliminary session of each workshop, I provided the general conceptual framework. But in all phases of evaluation of the performances - attended by high school teachers (19, 9 teachers present respectively) using checklists or simply taking notes for feedback purposes, it could be felt that, although some elements of standards-based teaching and learning are present, there is some confusion at the level of conceptualisation; a confusion that makes matters not easy to understand when the question of competencies is around.

For instance, the maps of the textbooks along with the teacher’s guide try to specify the standards and competencies – in two different columns; but these specifications are ambiguous if not confusing. They are far from being fully assimilated by the teacher who in the midst of uncertainty neglects all and very often forced to fall back on his old teaching style.

An equally important element in book design is the question of authentic materials. Authenticity, some teachers pointed out, remains unresolved and the communication in the form of dialogues presented is sometimes quite artificial. The communication chunks are fabricated and the comprehension sections (MCQs, true/false,...) especially in one of the books (Window), often have weak distracters (obvious answers) and seem rather minimally challenging for students. Another frustrating problem is that of multimedia; a real handicap for most English classes; two of the common core textbooks (Outlook and Visa) try to provide CDs as add-on material but English language teachers have no access to specialised classrooms and do not even have CD players to develop their students’ listening competencies.

During the workshops, teachers were requested to think of some issues related to textbook design. The key questions may be included here:

1. Does the textbook address the question of students’ needs seriously?
2. To what extent does the textbook match the students’ present level?
3. Are the tasks and activities suggested really competency-based?
4. Does the textbook strike a balance with respect to the four skills?
5. Does it leave enough scope for self learning?
6. Does it take assessment/testing into account?

Teachers using the materials may have thought of different answers to these problematic issues. But they were not supposed to give immediate feedback; the questions raised are meant for guiding teachers throughout the use of the

textbook during the school year and help them reconsider old conceptions pertaining to viewing the textbook as an infallible document.

As an overall evaluation, the two teachers who performed the 'demo' lessons seemed to be more concerned about students' active participation (demonstration of learning) than with functioning within the current methodology (assuming new roles). The traditional touch in teaching style is still apparent and performances vary according to teachers' potential and qualities rather than to any intrinsic value of a particular textbook.

Very witty were the teachers' remarks about elements of the two performances. But the general consensus was that **training** – the missing element, is the real key to implement the new teaching pedagogy. One may wonder therefore how standards methodology could be truly implemented if it is not at least partially understood by teachers! It is also irrational to come to teachers with a new methodology without ensuring in-service training through frequent workshops and seminars locally and nationwide!

It is possible to say now that the books may on the surface touch upon some of the fundamental principles and tenets of competency-based methodology. Very important are the attempts to solve cross-cultural issues and inculcate principles of tolerance and understanding through content and characters. The backbone themes of the books are all interesting and appealing for students ranging from personal relations through sports and education to environment and science. They to some extent reflect the students' general interests and their aspirations – all the books' covers for example invite students subconsciously to travel abroad. The books in short possess through the various pictures and colours a motivating aspect. But the pictures are not all to make students learn!

III. Teacher Development

a. Promotion of change

Creating conditions is an essential step in promoting change in foreign language teaching. The objective-based approaches seem to have bid farewell in terms of theory at least. Now a new language has reached the ears of teachers in their classrooms but unfortunately without really convincing them to change their teaching behaviours and embrace the new methodology.

One big issue is that of teachers' attitudes to change - most of them are scared as they believe any change would simply disturb the rigid already-established order of a given method or approach. In the case of newly appointed teachers, in contrast, though not systematically trained in accordance to standards-based curricula, they have received somewhat standards-based counselling sessions to implement the new textbooks for ninth form at the 'Collège' level. The implementation of the competency based approach at this stage (ninth form) seems to have been rather smooth and minimally feasible in comparison with the common core.

Being new is both an advantage and a handicap. New means that teachers can receive training to adopt the new methodology; they can learn the new behaviour to start the new approach but they need a lot of time to develop the

right competencies and the necessary expertise. The same dilemma is related to 'experienced' teachers; they have over time gained a lot expertise under a somewhat traditional approach but changing their attitudes is a nut to crack. Extrapolating this expertise and this experience requires counselling strategies to change their mindsets and provide the adequate in-service training they need to fulfil the new teaching obligations.

There is no doubt that the implementation of a standards-based approach necessitates more than well designed textbooks. It is a question of providing a lot potential of qualified teachers graduating from high standardised training centres, creating good teaching conditions (varied teaching and ICT materials), and allowing for incentives and teacher development.

b. Reconsideration of training

Supposedly that the new textbooks reflect in a mirror-like way the current methodology, would it be enough then for teachers to feel confident that learning /achievement will certainly take place after a period of instruction? You may agree at the outset that a good textbook or a bad one is only partially responsible for students' success or failure in learning a foreign language and that a large number of factors – primarily the teacher's qualifications and degree of motivation, may well be at the origin of a given learning outcome.

At this stage arises the importance of teacher development in second and foreign language teaching. We should no longer be content with pre-service training but we should consider the teaching profession as a lifelong process needing monitoring and constant counselling support. Peyton points out that "*Teacher education must shift from a focus on pre-service training alone to lifelong professional development*" (Peyton, Joy Kreeft -1997 - *Reader Digest*). Of course it is not in any way possible to implement new ideas and maintain excellent standards in English language teaching without considering a number of key conditions. The following suggestions may serve as a starting point to think of real change and prospects of teacher development. Educational policy makers are requested to think of the following:

- *adjusting the educational policy to suit the new national standards*
- *finding the human resources likely to ensure the educational transition*
- *providing proper teacher education training (focus on reflection and teacher development)*
- *providing the appropriate logistical equipments in all schools*
- *supporting teachers in their practice and reflection (supervision and counseling)*
- *guiding their individual or group research classroom projects*
- *disseminating the results*
- *rewarding teachers for their achievements.*

Change can really take place if conditions are created to make a smooth transition from old practice to the new one. Traditional teacher education programmes rely heavily on what is called the infallible expert. They fill the teacher with unnecessary theoretical knowledge focusing mainly

on imitation of models of teaching, trying to give the student-teacher an insight into the trainer's mindset. Practice makes perfect is the constant motto!

On the other hand, innovative training programmes view the teacher-learner as a problem solver trying to build up his/her own competencies and qualifications through processes of reflection and learning sustainability. It is indeed the way to permitting a teacher's life career to reach ranks of professionalism. Roberts states that:

"Learning derives from the teacher's self-monitoring and self evaluation enriched by the perspectives of colleagues. Ultimately, self-monitoring is the only possible basis for long-term change because feedback from others while possibly contributing to a change in perspective can only be a brief intervention in the teacher's experience of teaching and may not fit the teacher's personal theory." (Robert -1998)

c. Necessity to understand theory

It is quite embarrassing sometimes if not to some extent insulting to one's teaching profession to manipulate a new textbook when one completely or partially ignores the underpinning theoretical background; how important is theory to practice has always been a controversial matter. Teachers are not requested to be experts in theory development and analysis but they need to understand what they are doing and how they are getting with new techniques in their daily teaching; they need effective ways to ease the learning process and they also need self evaluation mechanisms. Of course the textbook will not provide them with all what they need but it should be very flexible and manageable allowing opportunities for teacher development.

Practising teachers always tend to give little attention to theory; very few of them go beyond contemplating students' reactions to any new teaching material. Most of them are content with how students digest the language contents and how well they will do on the day of the exam. Teachers are in fact required to be very careful with and responsive to the implementing of new material. They have – through systematic reflection, to consider students' feedback and their own teaching progression so that they may provide a true evaluation of the materials at hand. Such a reflective attitude will certainly ease the whole teaching process allowing for more accurate insights into the real needs and interests of students.

d. Different perceptions

The assumption is that a textbook designed by local or national commissions may well tap the very needs of local learners and reflect in concrete ways their learning perception of how to learn a second or foreign language. Even in local settings variance is possible and proportion is advisable.

We should bear in mind that the textbook designer's mindset is different from the teacher's and equally different from that of the students'. It is true that the teacher is in a better position to determine or rather approximate the needs of his students. He can also manipulate the contents of the materials to suit the students' cognitive level and socio-cultural background. And best of all if she can produce her

own materials benefiting from the different sources and language teaching websites available on the Internet. Such a teaching would be very close to students and appropriate to the teaching and learning situation. The teaching elements would be manipulated and adapted according to any new and unexpected changes taking place.

e. Teacher's professional qualities

A teacher's sense of appropriateness is a determining factor in bringing the language class to meet the expected learning standards. It is that very sense that enables the teacher to help students attain the target competencies; very common is the sense of improvisation and that of commitment which boost a teacher's confidence to deal in a free way with any textbook or any new approach. Confident self learning teachers possess a capacity for creative language teaching, a capacity that goes beyond the textbook and the classroom walls. When elements of quality teaching are there, they breed only successful learning in the foreign language class.

The assumption is that new theories are very likely to yield interesting results in acquiring the foreign or second language. Therefore, teachers are supposed to change their teaching habits and adopt new ways and new techniques to comply with the principles and goals of the new approach. If a teacher for example adopts his or her outdated audio-lingual procedures and techniques and has in mind for example to get students acquire the basic pragmatic strategies for communication in English and interact in appropriate manners with other speakers of the language, then there is something terribly wrong from the start.

Teachers now realise that textbooks, though sometimes strong supportive devices, should not be their sole source in carrying out a lesson. Access to other teaching materials has become within easy reach especially with the wide-spread of the Internet – various teacher websites provide interesting teaching materials for all language learning levels. However, some teachers still stick to the textbook as they strongly believe learning is rather exam-driven and absolutely not competency-based as is often the claim.

A certain detachment from the textbook is almost necessary for the teacher for feedback and evaluation purposes. If the teacher is completely and blindly following the textbook to the extent of being unable to distinguish the right needs of students from the elusive ones, it would be extremely difficult for him/her to manipulate the suggestions and benefit from any valuable insights offered by the textbook. The textbook should not only offer informed guidelines for teachers but should also leave a margin for teacher reflection which is considered an appropriate and natural teaching reaction.

Conclusion:

Any misunderstanding of the concepts and principles of the new approach to language teaching will eventually have detrimental effects on the classroom practice. Teachers have to cautiously embrace the host methodology and gradually accommodate it to their already established teaching standards. They have to bear in mind that this approach is not the perfect one and that their roles consist of adopting and adapting various teaching materials likely to help their students achieve the target competencies in

the foreign language class. Criticism levelled at this new approach relates to excessive emphasis on the learning outcomes and partial neglect of the process. Assessment within this approach can not also thoroughly account for the actual teaching/ learning experiences as competencies may not be reduced to discrete units and could thereby escape the spectrum of measurement.

In fact, we may be allowed to say that no teaching can ever claim perfection in second or foreign language instruction not even one pretending to adopt standards-based methodology. It is true that the new standards teaching era has now began with its successes and failures and that teachers will certainly manage their classes under whatever circumstances; they have to earn a living but they have committed themselves to this profession with conscientiousness. Those who fail to see the teaching relevance to implement new changes are very unlikely to grow professionally and will soon get fossilized thus leaving little space for their creativeness and sense of improvisation. Their students will certainly bear the huge loss in the rather bleak teaching landscape when they realise that assessment

with all its forms has proved them below the prescribed standards!

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Try Not to Make it a Void Vessel

By Said BERDOUZ

All public schools, I mean those run by public funds, in the world are institutions meant to provide children and young men with education which is defined as : a journey of guided discovery where we are supported, nurtured and loved in our natural quest to learn about ourselves, our culture and the world, as we grow and develop our talents, personality and well-being and discover (that) our real purpose in life is our contribution to others. (innovationcentral.org/glossary). It is the long process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop within, and for the profit of, the national and international communities, the whole of their personal characters, abilities, manners, and knowledge. To be implemented this process requires some teaching since almost all its elements are to be learned either in a formal environment, the classroom for example, with a specialised teacher or outside the school from what behaviour they see around them, with peers, parents, and other adult members of the community as teachers or sources of information and knowledge.

The Moroccan school is no exception; in the preamble of the National Charter of Education and training , it is stated that the educational system of Morocco is based on the values of Islam the values of the Moroccan identity, its cultural and ethical principles, the values of citizenship, and the values of human rights and their universal principles, the educational system will be geared towards meeting the ever-changing economic, social and cultural needs of Morocco, and those of the learners. (National Charter of Education and training)

To meet these ends, an appropriate curriculum has been designed; the values highlighted above are transmitted within this curriculum either explicitly, in stand-alone subjects, citizenship education or religious education as examples, or implicitly via a cross-curricular mode of

teaching, the case of environment education being tackled through natural sciences programmes.

Citizenship has been reiterated all throughout the official documents relating to the ongoing educational reform to the point that I would say it is one of the most important issues education practitioners must address with no more delay, to show that they really care for the future of our nation and bring about the change that will make a difference by mending the broken ties between the Moroccan citizen and her/his country and I assume there is no need to give evidence on how serious the damage affecting those ties is. So, isn't it legitimate to define what citizenship is or at least try to find out what it is about?

Most of the references I have consulted agree on the fact that the term has a two-fold meaning: a legal meaning and a social meaning. Seen from the legal point of view, it means "... that set of rights and responsibilities granted to people in recognition of their attachment to a particular country", while seen from the social point of view, it refers to: "... the participation of people in their community as they fulfil and debate their rights and responsibilities" (The board of Studies NSW Australia). We can say that it touches on the political and judicial area, the socio-economic area and the socio-cultural area. Its integration in school curricula all throughout the world has the ultimate goal of promoting participation, partnership, social cohesion, access, equity, accountability and solidarity within the community, be it local or international, so that citizens, regardless of their age are set on the track that will lead them to fulfil the community's expected outcomes, namely being " good citizens".

As far as we re concerned in Morocco, teaching citizenship is referred to as "Education for Citizenship". Its teaching starts at the primary level. In years one and two, it is not taught as a stand-alone subject, yet some of what it is about

is tackled through other subjects such as Arabic and Amazigh languages, Islamic education and sensory-motor education which all aim at developing competencies which, to some extent, form the basics of citizenship like being aware of one's identity, exploring the surrounding environment, road safety, health, to cite only a few. In years 4, 5, and 6 learners are given a course in social studies in which education for citizenship is introduced as a component. In year 4, It is dealt with as a stand-alone subject taught alternately with History and Geography and for which a two thirty-minute sessions are devoted every three weeks. For clarity sake here is how it is scheduled: week 1: a 30mn session for History + a 30mn session for Geography; week 2: a 30mn session for History + a 30mn session for Education for Citizenship; week 3: a 30mn session for Geography + a 30mn session for + Education for Citizenship. In years 5 and 6, it is taught as a stand-alone subject in weekly sessions of 30minutes. The set of competencies targeted by the course, as stated in the White Book, do not differ much from one year to another, yet they are treated in relation to 3 different topics; "The Other and I are Human Beings" for year 4, "Rights and Obligations for year 5, and "UN Convention of The Rights of The Child" for year 6. Going back to the competencies they range from Recognising the worth of oneself as an individual, use of thinking, demonstrating, choosing, expressing oneself, wants and needs, needs and rights, rights and obligations, rules and laws, respect of differences, equality, cooperation, to participation for years 5 and 6.

In the lower secondary school, one-hour session a week is devoted to citizenship, which is taught as a stand-alone subject. The program of the 1st collegial year, that is year 7, is built around the concepts of Human Rights and citizenship and the values related to the institution of Human Rights such as dignity, liberty, equality, equity, juvenile jurisdiction, solidarity, tolerance, democracy, Peace, conflicts management . The program of the 2nd year deals with the constitution and the national and local constitutional institutions (the parliament, the regional and local elected councils) with emphasis on the international conventions/charters to which Morocco subscribes, the constitutional institutions, enhancing the feel of belonging to the country, familiarization with political and social life. As far as the 3rd year is concerned, the program deals with as the central part of its core with more emphasis on anchoring of rights and obligations as the two sides of the coin citizenship, training on citizen participation and enhancing high thinking skills.

When it comes to Upper secondary school, there is no more discrete reference to citizenship education neither in the common stream nor in the first year baccalaureate, but it is re-introduced in the second year baccalaureate as a discrete subject entitled "Local Affairs". It has no definite schedule and it is supervised, if I may say so, by the social studies teacher. Learners are encouraged to carry out some project work related to issues relevant to their community affairs. Whatever positive grades they get for their work will be added to their social studies grades for continuous assessment.

As I mentioned earlier, the values of citizenship permeates almost all school subjects; accordingly, if we consider the

teaching of English in its relation with citizenship education in both Moroccan secondary schools, the white book refers to the following objectives as being part of the general aims of English curriculum:

1. To develop cross-cultural communication competency :
 - attain an understanding and appreciation of attitudes and values of other cultures;
 - consider other cultures and compare them to their own culture;
 - develop an interest in cross-cultural aspects and other ways of doing things;
 - convey their cultural concerns to other users of English .
2. To enhance the learner's awareness of, and reflection upon, global issues:
 - get acquainted with, and reflect upon, international issues and relations (e.g., international organisations, world conflicts ...etc);
 - develop an understanding of economic issues (e.g., business and financial news;
 - to get acquainted with, and reflect upon current issues (e.g., human rights, women's rights, health, education, science and technology).
3. to reinforce values pertaining to character, civility, and citizenship:
 - reflect on the consequences of their own actions and develop self- discipline, a sense of responsibility and self-respect ;
 - value cooperation and sharing, respect and care for others;
 - understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and gain awareness of active contribution to democratic processes;
 - value integrity, honesty and truth ;
 - respect nature and the physical environment.

(Excerpts from the White Book)

These aims are not specific to English curriculum; they are attributed to all languages integrated in the curriculum, be they national languages or foreign ones. No doubt the educational authorities want language education to be a carrier of citizenship education; therefore, the topics of the language units have been selected on this basis. A quick look at the list of topics of [Quick 3](#), which is not an exception, proves that: The First World War, Minorities, Language, Human Rights, Leisure, Business, Our Environment, Women in the World, Human Geography, African and Arab Writers. I do not know whether you agree with me or not, but I would say they all lend themselves to being exploited in promoting citizenship teachings. Furthermore, the White Book, which is an official document based on the National Charter of Training and Education, gives a clear vision of citizenship education in the Moroccan school; therefore, I take it for granted that this vision is the official one, the one adopted by the educational authorities, who should see that it comes true.

Taking into account, the current situation of citizenship education in our schools, I would say that all the required ingredients are there, still our broth is spoilt. Go to any of our classrooms and see how public property is protected; attend any exam or test session in our schools and see how the majority of our learners are honest and trustworthy; ask teachers about discipline problems and I am sure you will make your opinion about what respect means for our

youth; ask them about homework doing and they will tell you how responsible our pupils are; walk in the street and look around to see what sense the majority of our people have made of duty, listen to illegal immigration candidates and find out how frustrated they feel and what love they nurture towards the country. Listen to pupils and students, who seem to have lost all ethic benchmarks, and I am sure you will be amazed at what they will tell you about how adults, who are supposed to be models for the junior population, behave. Vandalism, cheating, incivility, inequity, corruption at all levels and other vices have been gaining ground in our society, despite the efforts made by a few people, the “good citizens”, to establish and enhance the appropriate system of citizenship values that suits our national identity and help us live in harmony with our environment, with ourselves, and with others.

The missing element in the process of educating our younger generations for citizenship, in my opinion, lies with the way citizenship is taught in the classrooms. The methodology suggested in the White Book for citizenship education deals with the subject as a cyclical process where learners are called upon to participate actively in their learning by “acting” which leads them to “exploring” which leads them to “reacting” which leads them back to “acting” and so on. In other words the suggested methodology requires that learners make use of what they learn in education for citizenship classes in their daily lives; they should plan actions that are expected to foster citizenship values, carry out these actions, and reflect on these actions and their outcomes. However, what we actually do in citizenship classes is not what we preach. Learners are not taught what citizenship is and how to be good citizens. They are given a lot of information about the various components of the education for citizenship curriculum through texts they will use, very often cheatingly, for assessment reasons. I do not think this is how we should work to prepare younger generations to become active, informed and responsible citizens. The right way to do it is to involve them gradually in sharing community responsibilities, mainly those relevant to their age, to create opportunities where they will be called upon to make use of the knowledge and skills they have acquired accordingly. I would rather say that the teaching of citizenship is more than passive lecturing. As it is stated in Making Sense of Citizenship, a CPD handbook issued by the UK Department for Education and Skills, it must be:

- pervasive: not limited to schools, but an integral part of all education for young people
- inclusive: an entitlement for all young people regardless of their ability or background
- lifelong: continuing throughout life.

I would add that to make citizenship education as effective as it should be, its formal teaching should be:

- active – by putting more emphasis on learning by doing
- interactive – by using discussions and debates about appropriate issues
- relevant – by focusing on real-life issues facing young people and society
- critical – by encouraging young people to think for themselves, to reflect on their actions
- collaborative – by using group-work and co-operative learning
- participative – by giving young people a say in their own learning and school affairs, by encouraging exchanges

between individuals and between schools, by encouraging voluntary work, by encouraging field studies or outings, by encouraging commitment to some right cause.

To wrap it up, I would add that language practitioners have always proclaimed the ability of language education to foster the social growth of learners by teaching and reinforcing a great deal of citizenship values and encouraging real active membership in society. What’s more is that English, like any other language, is one of the best means of social interaction. The channels of writing, reading, talking and listening are the essential tools by means of which people manage to cooperate, to handle conflicts and bring about change and improvement to themselves and to their communities. Teaching, learning, and practising these skills in a friendly, cooperative English class should give young people the confidence to contribute positively with deep and sincere concern to building up the welfare of mankind in general. I am convinced that All languages, when used to build up bridges of cultural understanding and acceptance between peoples, they are good carriers of citizenship values and principles and English is no exception; so, let us try not to make it a void vessel.

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From the editors

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