



Newsletter of the Moroccan Association of Teachers of English, Volume 29 (Issue 1-2), Summer-Autumn 2009

## EDITORIAL

### MATE: Where do we go from here? Mohamed Najbi

MATE must pride itself on having been at the forefront of ELT in Morocco since it was founded in 1979. On leafing through the back issues of MATE proceedings, you will notice that MATE was chiefly instrumental in introducing ELT innovations in our English classroom. In the 1980s, it held workshops and conferences on issues such as communicative testing, English for communication, integrating language skills, teacher education/ development... These issues represented the state of art of ELT as it was at the time of these workshops and conferences. State-of-the-art and current issues have been a concern for MATE since its inception.

One of the landmarks in the history of MATE is that it brought together speakers from Maghreb countries for a four-day conference in 1989, giving them the opportunity to share *ELT Maghrebi Experience* and strengthen their ELT ties. Since then, it has become customary to have speakers from the Maghreb at MATE Conferences. In the 1990s, it took a more articulated *Maghrebi/Arab* perspective as is evidenced by the themes of the conferences it held during this decade; for instance, "*ELT in the Maghreb: Focus on the Learner*", "*ELT in the Maghreb: Current issues in Evaluation*", "*ESP in the Arab World: Reality Check and Prospects*"...

At the beginning of the new millennium, MATE played a vital role in raising ELT practitioners' consciousness of the challenges ahead. The theme of MATE 2000, "*The new education reform in Morocco: The role of English*", provided a broad platform for addressing the key issues pertaining to the teaching/ learning of English in Morocco. Mohammed Melouk's (2000) assertion, "the notion of General English, currently adopted in the Moroccan syllabuses needs readjustment to meet the needs of future generations as well as the requirements of the educational orientations for the coming decades." still resonates ten years on. The first decade of this millennium ended with MATE having addressed a wide variety of issues such as "*Assessing Quality in Language Education: Focus on Teacher Competencies, Educational Materials and Learner Performances*", "*Leadership and values in Language education*", "*Enhancing ELT quality through evaluation and information technologies*", and "*The teaching and assessment of English*

for global purposes". These issues certainly impact ELT in Morocco.

Having succinctly chronicled the endeavors made by MATE so far, using some of its proceedings as a frame of reference, let's outline some of the challenges ahead for MATE in the next decade. MATE will have to (i) commit itself to researching practice in order to develop more effective teacher education programs to be implemented across the country; (ii) respond pragmatically to the challenges that will arise out of the four-year "emergency plan"; (iii) foster professional dialogue between teachers of English and teachers of other languages; (iv) continually evolve in order to reflect the ever-changing needs of ELT practitioners in Morocco irrespective of their teaching status; (v) continue through close collaboration with RELO to evolve the English Access Micro-scholarships Program into one that will meet the linguistic needs of as many non-elite 14- to-18-year-old students as possible across Morocco; (vi) further evolve the English Summer Camps to reach out to the largest nationwide student audience possible and (vii) further cement its cultural ties with all those concerned about enhancing the quality of ELT in Morocco. MATE has made over the years great strides in making itself heard in language education in Morocco. It certainly will continue to do so in the decades ahead.

*Published with this issue,*  
**Guidelines for the Teaching of English as  
a Foreign Language in the Middle School:  
Third Year. (2009)**

### On the Inside

- \* MATE Borad Meeting.
- \* Reports on MATE Activities.
- \* Boosting reading - writing relationship in an EFL Classroom, by A. Bouziane.
- \* Integrating assessment in your EFL class, by A. Chaddoudi.
- \* Building a professional milieu for the teacher's learning community: Theory into practice, by K. Bratt & Y. Elbousty.

Edited by:  
Lahcen Ahmam, Mohamed Hammani  
& Mohammed Hassim

The meeting was attended by:

Mohammed Hammani - Fahmi El Madani - Rachida Senhaji - Abderrahim Rhaiti - Mohammed Makhfi - Mustapha Zanzoun - Lahcen Ahmam - Ahmed Atlagh - Elarbi Bounsir - Hamid El Bhioui - Hassane Fathi - Hamza Mahmoud - Lahcen Tighoula

**Agenda**

- Discussion of Moral and Financial Reports
- MATE Activities in 2009 - 2010
- Access-related Issues
- AOB.

**Discussion of Moral and Financial Report**

**Moral Report**

Mr. Fahmi, MATE Secretary General, gave MATE board members an idea about the report on MATE activities 2008-2009. This report, written by both Rachida Senhaji and El Madani Fahmi, was sent to the Ministry of Education.

**Financial Report**

Ms Rachida Senhaji, MATE Treasurer, gave a short report on MATE financial situation. A brief explanation of correct ways of managing a budget was given. She then reported on MATE/RELO Summer Camps and informed the board about the refund of the unexpended budget to RELO.

While discussing those short reports, everybody thanked all the people who were in charge of the 2008-2009 activities, but most members stated that there were some pitfalls that threatened the quality of MATE services. The decisions made concerning this issue were to:

- avoid making the same mistakes
- create organizing committees for each event
- communicate to the board all preparation-related issues
- look into all the projects MATE is involved in.
- pay more attention to the budgeting of future events.

**MATE Activities in 2009-2010**

**a. ICT Conference**

The ICT Conference will be held in Agadir. Agadir Local Branch is in charge of organizing the conference and reporting on the preparation phase. Important to note that this conference is national and is to be held under the name of MATE.

**b. Middle School Seminar**

Two sites were chosen for this seminar: El Jadida and Mohammedia. Mr Bounsir and Mr Fahmi have to inform the board within a period of ten working days about the possibility of organizing the seminar in one of these two cities.

Mr Fathi, Mr Atlagh and Mr Tighoula are to write a call for papers and send it in to the board and to sort out speakers' abstracts, bearing in mind that the email address to be used is: [matemorocco@yahoo.com](mailto:matemorocco@yahoo.com).

Mr Makhfi and Mr Fahmi are to contact the potential participants in this seminar, make a list of these participants, and inform those who are accepted based on first-come-first-

served principle. They are responsible for the registration too. The theme of the seminar is as follows: "Innovative Practices in Teaching Young Learners."

**MATE 30th National Conference 28 – 31 March 2010**

Two cities were chosen for this conference Tetouan (first choice); Casablanca (second choice)

Ms Senhaji and Mr Benyahya are to find out information about the possibility of organizing this conference in Tetouan. They should inform the board in a period of 15 working days.

Mr Rhaiti, Mr Hammani, Mr Ahmam, Mr El Bhioui and Mr Zanzoun are in charge of writing a call for papers for this conference. The theme chosen for this conference is: "**Promoting Language Education: Local and Global Challenges**"

All board members were asked to send in their suggestions on how to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> MATE Annual Conference anniversary. These suggestions will be discussed in a future meeting.

**Access-related Issues**

**a. International Access Summer camp**

MATEBOARD discussed Mr Akeddar's proposal to RELO. The decision made concerning this issue is as follows: A committee will be appointed by MATE board to further discuss this issue.

**b. End-of-program project (Access 1)**

Mr Hassim and Mr Fahmi will prepare a document about this project and decide on a suitable time and venue for this event.

**c. FAST (Festival of Access Students' Talents)**

This year, FAST will be held in Ouarzazate on April 30<sup>th</sup>-May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

**d. What to do with the equipment**

It was decided to give one pack to MATE local branches if one exists in the area where Access is held. Otherwise, this equipment will be donated to the school where Access has been held. MATE is to receive a sealed and signed document attesting that this equipment has been handed in to the school or the local branch. Also a notification letter about this donation to the beneficiary school will be sent to: the inspector of English in the area, the delegation, The Academy. The letter will also talk about what this equipment will be used for and who should benefit from it.

**e. Buying other equipment**

CD players as well as readers and dictionaries will be purchased and sent to all Access 1 centers.

**f. Equipment for Access 2 Centers**

Five desktops (screen19") and a printer will be bought for these centers, but this will be done within the budget of each center.

**AOB**

- A new local branch will be set up in Nador. Mr Makhfi will represent MATE in this event and supervise the elections of a MATE local board.

- Advertising and public information (posters, leaflets, brochures... in schools and delegations)

-Summer camps:more centres, capacity building for teachers.

## Reports on MATE Activities

### Briefing about Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE branch activities 2008-2010

Ouarzazate -Zagora MATE branch outlined a programme for each academic term. It obviously catered for a multitude of activities that concerned both teachers as well as students. Every newly elected board felt the need to adjust the way to govern mostly on the recommendations of the general assembly that preceded the mandate. The general remark was that many activities would be included in the annual programme but did not get a chance to be materialised. That was why only activities that were to be achieved that should be allowed to be programmed.

Following is a brief description of the activities that were organised by Ouarzate-zagora MATE branch:

#### 1. International Teacher's Day

Venue: Lycee Ibn Alhaitham

Date: October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

In partnership with the Delegation of the Ministry of National Education, OZMATE celebrated the International Teacher's Day at Ibn Alhaitham Technical School. Many Teachers and students attended the event. Ten short talks were presented by different people including administrators, teachers of other subjects; namely, philosophy, French, History and Geography, in addition to the contribution of the president of pupils' parents and tutors association, etc.

#### 2. Human Rights Day Celebration

Date: December, 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Venue: Ibn Alhaitham Technical school

The Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE branch celebrated the universal event of Human Rights on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, at Ibn Alhaitham Technical School. Students, along with teachers of English and some administrators attended the event. Those students were representatives of their respective classes. The only criterion for students to be selected was to be able to communicate in English.

The objectives were as follows:

- to celebrate the Human Rights Day.
- to get students involved in the activities.
- to sensitise them to the importance of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- to embed reading speaking, listening and writing skills throughout the afternoon.

The activities started at 14:30. The roles were distributed among teachers in such a way as to guarantee the participation of all teachers and students at the same time. The former provided help whenever felt necessary to the latter who themselves asked for any further clarification.

Students were split into five groups including different levels (mixed ability group) in such a way as to have common core, first and second baccalaureate students in each individual group. The interaction and participation was far above our

expectation. Students proved of their decent and above average level in their background knowledge of Human Rights. They came up with certain answers that were really a token of their rich knowledge of dealing with such issues.

The activities included brainstorming tasks, matching activity, introducing some key words with their definitions, multiple choice exercises, going through the 30 articles of the UDHR, matching some photos with the articles they represent. Case studies were the activity where students expressed their strong feeling. They were deeply engaged that they defended the victims offering quite reasonable solutions or alternative answers for the cases studied.

After a ten-minutes break, students resumed their work. There was a fourteen-minute video projection about three cases of people sentenced to death for the mistake they hadn't committed; but later acquitted. There was a degree of suspense but worse was the hardship and psychological torment they underwent before they finally reached the acquittal and the pressure the NGOs and appealing letters exerted on the oppressors. The activities which ensued were very interesting that students were very excited and enthusiastic to discuss the issues.

The last activity in the schedule was the viewing of a song that dealt with instances of human rights violation. At 17:00 we came to the end of our celebration of the day. Everybody was satisfied with the activities and the way they were presented. It should be mentioned that teachers of English had met for many times to finalise those activities from a bulk collected from the internet. The question was what could be of importance and pertinence to the students. Thanks God we were successful to a larger extent.

#### 3. Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE Study Day

Date: 21st February, 2009.

Venue: Mohamed VI High School.

Ouarzazate Zagoza MATE branch, jointly with the English inspectorate of Ouarzazate delegation, held a MATE Day, on February 21st 2009, at Mohamed VI High School in Ouarzazate. 33 English teachers attended the event.

Abdenacer Razzouki, a high school teacher in Mohamed VI School, facilitated a demo lesson. It was about writing a letter using the frame and the notes taken. The teacher conducted his lesson following the steps of process writing.

Mr Mohamed Larbi Tlemsani, the English Supervisor in Ouarzazate delegation, gave a presentation on Peer Coaching in which he stressed the idea of the importance of classroom observation in general, and peer observation in particular. He ended his presentation by asking teachers to give it a try and develop it socially before making it formal.

After the break, Mr Mohamed I El Asri, a high school teacher from Ibnou Al Haitham School, gave a presentation under the theme, Classroom Management. He focused on the importance of management in classroom practices, in terms of discipline, lesson plan, teacher-students rapport and even the design of the furniture within the classroom. All these components contribute to an optimal learning on the part of students. He stressed that a good management ends up in good teaching as well as teacher development.

Mr Hamza Mahmoud, a high school teacher from Abou Bakr High school, gave the MATE day schedule a certain variety. It was a light activity which he conducted in a cheerful way, making the audience thus feel completely involved in the light activity. After stressing certain points in literature regarding the five Cs in the standard based approach, the presenter presented the activity and introduced some vocabulary items used in the trial and the court. He then chose two teachers to participate in the activity. The two alibis were accused to have stolen their head master's steal while being in a meeting. The audience was supposed to prove the innocence or guilt of the two alibis by asking them separately. Towards the end, the jury was to decipher and spot the contradictory responses of the two alibis. Everybody was involved and Mr Mahmoud concluded his workshop by checking with the teachers whether the activity touches upon the five Cs he presented at the beginning

After the four presentations, the audience engaged in the discussion in a round table. They focused mainly on the importance of such meetings and collaborative work, either with peers in the school area, or in such pedagogical meetings or in MATE regional and national conferences. More points revolved around the remaining schedule of the Ouarzazate – Zagora Branch, especially the regional meeting as well as the National Conference in BeniMelal. The meeting ended with the view of meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2009 in Kalaa Mgouna and in Tinghir in May 2009, as parts of the components of the annual action plan of MATE Ouarzazate and with the collaboration of the English Inspectorate, Ouarzazate Delegation. (Adapted from Hamid Elbhioui's report)

#### **4. OZ MATE Study Day in Kelaa M'gouna**

Date: 21st March, 2009.

Venue: Alwouroud high School.

Jointly with the English inspectorate of Ouarzazate delegation, Ouarzazate Zagoza MATE branch held a MATE Day, on March 21st, 2009 in Alworoud High School. About 30 English teachers attended the event.

A demo-lesson was conducted by Brahim Khartite, a high school teacher in Alwouroud high School, Kelaa. The other activities that ensued were the same as the ones presented in Ourazazzate by the same facilitators. But what differed was the setting: especially the outing that took place in a wonderful Kasbah like space where teachers had a collective lunch. Of importance was the fruitful discussion that followed the meal; for, teachers raised many an issue related to teacher development, contests between schools in Ouarzazate delegation area. Alworoud school teachers had already initiated the project, and it was successful.

#### **5. Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE 10th Annual colloquium.**

Date: 24th -26th April, 2009.

Venue: Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Ouarzazate.

Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE branch organised its 10th Annual Colloquium on 24th-26th April, 2009; at Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Ouarzazate. The theme was "ELT IN MOROCCO: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES". The vent was attended by exactly 45 teacher from different regions to mention but M'hamed, Tagounit, Zagora, Tazarine, Agdez, taznakhte, Ouarzazate, Skoura, Kelaa, Dades, Tinghir, Amzmiz, and Casablanca ( British Council).

The opening ceremony was Chamber of Commerce, on Friday 24h April, 2009; at 17:45. Mohammed Larbi Tlemsani – Ouarzazate delegation Inspector chaired the speeches session of the following guests– Municipality president ( M. Addad), MEN delegation ( M.Ait Belkas), The Chmber of Commerce (L. Redouan), MATE National board( H. Elbhioui), Ouarzazate MATE (M. I Elasri) . Immediately after, the guests, including high schools headmasters, were invited to a tea party that lasted for about 25 minutes. Mr. Lahsen Ahmam gave a keynote speech, through which he revisited the teaching methods and approaches to ELT ; in addition to that, he stopped by some big challenges that lie ahead. An insightful discussion and debate ensued. Everybody concluded that every individual teacher was to endeavour to surmount the challenges that might hamper the teaching-learning affair.

On Saturday on 25thApril, 2009, there were three presentations namely: Presentation 1, NLP in large classes, by Abdelkader Hamouchi. Presentation 2, Disruptive or Challenging Behaviour: Causes, Effects and Management, by Omar Bentabet. Presentation 3, Enhancing teacher development through teacher-based professional Evaluation: Peer Observation, Project Work & Portfolio, by Mohammed Hassim. Besides, there were three workshops: Workshop 1, "From Tinghir to Beijing, many scenarios for a story of success." by Hamza Mahmoud. Workshop 2, Continuing Professional Development: Lifelong Learning Portfolios by Jason Price; Workshop 3, the Impact of Cross-Cultural Communication on International Business by Naima Leghtas. Needless to mention that all the participant were highly motivated and collaborative.

On 26th April, 2009, there were 4 presentations which were as follows: Presentation 1, The Celluloid in EFL Classroom, by Mohamed I Elasri. Presentation 2, The Implications of Constructive Theory on Education, by Brahim khartite. Presentation 3: Challenging the Numbers: The teacher's Roles and the Teaching Practices are the Heart of the Matter' by Mohamed Elarbi Tlemsani. Presentation 4, Battling Teacher-burnout by Abderrahim Missar. AS to workshops, there were three which came as follows: Workshop 1: Teaching or testing, that's the illusion by: Youssef Nadri. Workshop 2, Tips for minimizing TTT. (Orchestrating Activities) by Mohamed Elarbi Tlemsani. Workshop 3 Differentiated Instruction Strategies "One size does not fit all" by Brahim khartite.

#### **6. British Council Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE branch workshop on: Student-centred teaching**

Date: Saturday, 13th June 2009  
Venue: Alfourate Private School in Ouarzazate.

British Council, in collaboration with Ouarzazate-Zagora MATE branch, held a workshop on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009, at Alfourate Private School in Ouarzazate. This was a three hour morning workshop divided into one hour sessions on exploiting resources such as websites and podcasts in class. Jason Price, the Training Manager at British Council, and David Bunker, an EFL specialist, focused entirely on practical rather than theoretical side of the training. The aim was to suggest to teachers a range of activities which could be used with students in class.

The theme was student-centred teaching. The content was suitable for both Middle and High School EFL teachers. The number of participants was about 34 teachers from Ouarzazate Elkela and Boumalne.

British Council provided participants with a set of CD-ROMs, in addition to lunch. The programme was as followed:

Timing	Activity	Topic	Presenter
09:00-10:00	Workshop1	Making Texts Student-Centred	Jason Price
10:10-01:00	Workshop 2	Integrating ICT into Lessons	David Bunker
11:00-01:20	Break		
11:20-02:20	Workshop3	Resource-Free Activities	Jason Price
12:20-12:40	Feedback & Wrap-up		Participants
12:40	Lunch		

The participant expressed their satisfaction with the content and the way the workshop was conducted. Therefore, the British Council experts promised to work with the branch on other themes we judge pertinent to our context.

## 7. MATE-RELO English through Music Summer Camp

Dat: 6th- 17th July, 2009.

Venue: at Kadi Ayad Junior High School Tarmigt, Ouarzazate.

There had been many meetings organised by MATE local branch members. They all aimed at achieving the goals set for the success of the program. The discussions evolved around the procedures of work such as first contact with teachers of English (who were selected according to some pre-definite criteria), headmasters of schools were also involved in the pre-selection process. As a matter of fact the plan was to be implemented when some members of MATE local branch volunteered in the form of school committees. They had a first contact with headmasters of schools who took them to classes where they clarified the objectives as well as the benefits of the camp. Later application forms were handed out to interested students. But the last selection of students was based on certain criteria, such as being from Tarmigt area, from a disadvantaged background family, being a second, third middle school or Common Core student, willing to complete the 30 hour English course, and well-disciplined. Most if not all the people showed concern and enthusiasm.

Another meeting worth of mentioning was the meeting between teachers and students on 22nd June at Kadi Ayad School where enrolment was checked. There were explicit clarification of the program and its aims. Students were also asked to fill in some forms accompanied with their parents' agreement and signature. At the same time, students were given opportunities to ask further questions about the program and express their impressions and opinions. They all reflected a sense of responsibility, willingness and enthusiasm. Generally this marked a positive atmosphere proving to reach success of a first and important phase of the program.

As scheduled, the program started on July 6th. The students were categorized into three levels:

Level I: Two classes: A and B

Level II: One class

Level III: Two classes: A and B

Then books, shirts, CD players, audio CDs, badges, pens and copybooks were distributed to all the participants in the program.

The timetable was as follows:

From 9:00 to 10:30: Core English

From 10:30 to 11:00: break

From 11h to 12h30: Enhancement activities

For the last day, it was a bit longer as it included a party which concluded the whole program.

During the teaching learning process, the following materials have been used: CD players, books (Inspiration 1 for level 1, Inspiration 2 for level 2, Go for it! for level 3), photocopies of song lyrics, data-show and laptops. For enhancement activities, they were mainly focussed on teaching music, through which students were able to repeat and sing.

As for snacks various food was served alternatively: tea, yoghurt, juice, pastries, cookies, bread and cheese. And exceptionally for the last party lemonade, juice and cakes were served. Some students presented some pieces of work such as songs, sketches, public speaking, poems and paintings), which proved their positive feedback toward the carried-out program. Some students in level1 who had never learnt English before made the audience puzzled over!

During the farewell party, to which some parents were invited, the Kadi Ayad school headmaster, the president of the Students' Parents Association, the coordinator, the assistant, the teachers and some students were given floor to express their feelings and impressions. All the participants were highly satisfied with the achievements made during the ten-day program. Their main query was: "Will we be lucky to have another summer camp next year?"

## 8. Classroom Management workshop

Date: 14th November, 2009

Venue: at Mohamed VI High School in Ouarzazate.

The Classroom Management workshop consisted of four sessions based on material from two British Council Teaching English ([www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)) training courses: TKT Essentials and Training Videos. The four

sessions were interactive and aimed to deal with a range of common classroom management issues effecting teachers in Moroccan schools. The Sessions aim to address the following questions:

### **Teacher Roles**

What are the many roles that teachers typically play during a lesson?

What skills and qualities make for an effective language teacher?

What is rapport? How can we establish rapport in our lessons?

### **Grouping Learners**

What interaction patterns can be used in class and how can we vary them?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the most common seating arrangements used in classrooms?

Why is it important to monitor our learners and how can we do it effectively?

### **Correcting Learners & Giving Feedback**

What errors do Moroccan learners make and why do they make them?

What are the best techniques for correcting spoken errors?

What is feedback? When and how can we most usefully give feedback?

### **Games, Warmers & Fillers**

Why should we use game-like activities in class?

What are the most popular ELT games? How can they be adapted according to learner level, age and class size?

The workshop included video clips taken from the British Council Training Videos series

([www.teachingenglish.org.uk/transform/teachers/training/training-videos](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/transform/teachers/training/training-videos)) which included excerpts of actual classroom practice filmed in state schools.

The activities scheduled for the current terms 2008 – 2010

1. The 11<sup>th</sup> annual colloquium

Date: 16th – 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2010

Venue: Zagora city

2. School contest

Date: 9th May, 2010

Venue: Chambre of Commerce industry and services, Ouarzazate.

3. British Council Ouarzazate-Zagora workshop on Drama

Date: 20th March, 2010

Venue: Alfourate Private School in Ouarzazate.

## **El Kelaa First MATE Day, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at Tassaout High School**

### **Theme: "Using ICT in ELT and Teacher Development"**

The Kelaa Seraghna MATE Branch inaugurated its activities by organising its first MATE study and training day on Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup> at Tassaout High school. This event centered upon the theme: "Using ICT in ELT and Teacher Development". Participants reached the overall number of 69. They are from the delegations of Kelaa, Marrakech and Beni Mellal. The activities included three presentations and two workshops.

Mr Hassan El Boustani, the ELT supervisor in Kelaa Seraghna, was the opening keynote speaker. In his speech, he thanked the participants for attending the event. He also thanked the speakers, the organizing committee and the school headmaster for the efforts they invested to make this event possible. He also pointed the importance of ICT for ELT; and that ICTs have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change, reform and quality. He then gave the floor to the school headmaster who thanked MATE for organizing such an important event and expressed his readiness to collaborate for the common good whenever he is asked to. After that, Mr El Boustani asked Mr Abdelkrim Arhlam, MATE Kelaa president, to chair the sessions of the study day.

The first presentation was given by Mr Mustapha El Mouhaddab, a physics and chemistry middle school teacher in Ben Guerir who was awarded first national prize for his ICT creations. In his talk, he presented his ICT latest innovation: a very "low cost" interactive board that can be used in teaching. The presentation was excellent and all the attendees were fascinated; which constituted an added value to the success of the event. The second presentation was given by Mr Blibil, MATE ex-treasurer. In his talk, he laid

stress upon the importance of using hotpotatoes software as a powerful enabling tool in learning interactively.

The following activity was a workshop run by Mr Blibil again. The workshop was about how to handle the six authoring tools of hotpotatoes in ELT classrooms.

The next workshop was led by Mr Amhaoul, a teacher in Ben Guerir and an ICT connoisseur. The workshop was about how to use Interwrite Workspace in designing many interactive activities. The workshops were interrupted by a power failure which lasted a few minutes; but this did not seem to be a spot of bother to the attendees as they displayed understanding, attention and enjoyment.

At about 11:30, the attendees headed for the dining hall to have a tea break. During that time, they exchanged viewpoints and enquired about things they did not grasp during the presentations.

The next activity was a presentation by Mr Akaddar, a teacher in Beni Mellal and an experienced ICT practitioner. His presentation was about Blogging, and how important it is in ELT. He first defined a blog as a frequently updated website that often resembles an online journal; and that it is so easy to create and update as it requires only basic access to the Internet. He then showed the difference between a blog and a website. He also emphasized the importance of using blogging with students. Mr Akaddar presented his talk in a smooth interactive way, which everybody appreciated.

At the end of the event the attendees handed in evaluation forms which they had filled earlier. In these forms they all

expressed their satisfaction with the event and profusely thanked MATE for this initiative and asked for more events as these do help teachers keep abreast with modern and fast-changing trends in the classroom.

In the end, the Kelaa Seraghna local branch would like to express gratitude to the following people for their invaluable support and assistance:

- Mr Hassan El Boustani, the supervisor
- Mr Blibil, ex-MATE treasurer.

- Mr A. Amhaoul, a high school teacher in Ben Guerir.
- Mr Akaddar, a high school teacher in Beni Mellal.
- Mr M. El Mouhaddab, a physics teacher in Ben Guerir.
- Mr Aziz El Ankouri, the Delegate of education in Kelaa Seraghna.
- Moulay Abderrahmane Houssni, Tassaout High school Headmaster.

**Reported by Mohamed Mahzouli**  
**Kelaa MATE secretary general**

## MATE 5<sup>th</sup> ICT4ELT National Conference: Agadir, May 29-31, 2009

**Theme: "ICT for communication and project work:  
Focus on social software and web 2.0."**

MATE, jointly with Souss-Massa-Daraa Academy and MATE-Agadir and in collaboration with the British Council and Connecting Classrooms Project, organized the 5<sup>th</sup> National ICT (information and communication technology) Conference, on May 29-30-31, 2009 at Mohamed Zerktoni Training Centre in Agadir. The theme of the conference was: **"ICT for communication and project work: Focus on social software and web 2.0."**

Similar to the previous four events, this conference focussed mainly on ICT supported teaching and learning activities and projects. The conference aimed to

1. contribute to the emergency plan especially in relation to the use of ICT in education;
2. focus more on pedagogy and teacher professional development;
3. make use of the facilities provided by Genie programme in its second version; and
4. provide the necessary technical skills and tools that would enable the participants to carry out ICT-based activities and projects.

### Programme

<b>Day 1 : Friday, 29 May, 2009</b>	
14:30 - 16:30	Registration and check-in
17:00 – 18:00	Opening Ceremony
18:00 – 18:30	Reception
18:30 – 19:00	<b>1.</b> Keynote speech by Simon Cowton ELT and ICT: the synergy of two powerful tools
19:00 – 19:30	<b>2.</b> Opening paper: MATE online course project Mohamed Hammani
20:00	Dinner
<b>Day 2 : Saturday, 30 May, 2009</b>	
08:30 - 08:45	Orientation & announcements
08:45 – 9:30	<b>3.</b> Moodle as a social constructivist pedagogical platform, Youssef Tamer
09:30 – 10:15	<b>4.</b> An introduction to Mlearning, Abdellatif Zoubair

10:15 – 11:00	<b>5.</b> Get your classroom connected using Web 2.0 tools Mohamed Assabbane
11:00 – 11:30	Break
11:30 – 12:30	<b>6.</b> Connecting classrooms through a virtual learning environment, Simon Cowton
12:30 – 13:15	<b>7.</b> "WEB FORUM" Towards Connecting Moroccan ELT Community, Zakaria Jamaati
13:15 – 14:15	<b>8.</b> Experience sharing
14:30	Lunch
16:00 – 19:30	Excursion
20:00 – 22:00	Social Evening and Dinner Party.

### **Day 3 : Sunday, 31 May, 2009**

08:30 – 08:45	Announcements
08:45 – 09:45	<b>9.</b> The uses of web 2.0 and social interaction sites in teaching and learning English, Daniel Graves
09:45 – 11:00	<b>10.</b> Comment réaliser un tableau interactif et un vidéo projecteur Low Cost. Elmustapha Elmohaddeb
11:00 – 11:30	Break
11:30 – 12:15	<b>11.</b> Teacher's Pet: A tool for creative teachers, Salaheddine Beassal
12:15 – 12:45	<b>12.</b> The real web, Fahmi Elmadani
12:45 – 13:15	<b>13.</b> Web. 2. and social software for teacher development and project work in Morocco, Mohammed Hassim
13:15 – 14:00	<b>14.</b> Experience sharing
14:00 – 14:30	<b>15.</b> Round Table, Feedback & Closing
14:30	Lunch

### Participants

There were about 100 participants including tertiary level teachers, teacher trainers, inspectors, and upper and lower secondary school teachers. The Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- having basic skills in ICT materials use and production
- willing to actively participate in a productive project during and after the workshop
- being ready to cascade information and similar work with colleagues in their area
- first come, first served.

This year's edition of MATE national ICT conference witnessed the participation of teachers from 14 Moroccan Academies which is another evidence of its success and growing importance.

#### **Organizers**

1. Mohammed Hassim
2. Lhoussain Bouchouat
3. Abdellatif Zoubair
4. Mohamed Hammani
5. Hassan Fathi
6. Elmadani Fahmi
7. Zakaria Jamaati
8. Ahmed Atlagh
9. Abdelkader Assafir

### **MATE RELO Summer Camps: Tassaout High School, Kelaa des Sraghna: 13-24 July, 2009**

**Reported by: Abderrahim El Khalil**

Our summer camp came to its end on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2009. It turned out to be a good experience with both its good and tough moments. Not only did we spend two weeks of hard work but also enjoyed nice moments with the kids.

On 5<sup>th</sup> July, about a week before the camp started, we held a meeting with the kids' parents. It was meant to explain what it all would be about. Parents were asked to boost things up by encouraging their children to be serious and to make the camp an occasion for them both to learn and to have fun. It was also an opportunity to introduce the team and share responsibility with them.

The camp started on July 13<sup>th</sup> at 8:30. The 100 kids were excited and ready to get engaged in a 10-day learning process. 20 other students came to school with their parents hoping to find a vacant place.

The first week of the camp was a bit difficult especially with replacing the students who were obliged to leave. We had to enroll 10 other new kids to guarantee complete seats. We also assigned different levels to students who proved to have a high or low level of language learning assimilation. The lists were finalized on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>, July.

The course and enhancement were really a big success. This should be attributed to the enthusiasm of the kids, teachers' professional competence, efficient coordination and successful coordinator's management.

Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, which we may call the "zero bridge day", was one of the kids' best days in the camp. The music workshop and the concert took place in a 140 seats auditorium in our school. The band members were nice to the kids. They brought a big change and created a remarkable atmosphere. And I would like to thank Mr Gdira for his punctuality and sense of seriousness in dealing with such activities.

As for catering, printing and photocopy matters, we arranged things with a local service agent. The latter met most of our expectations in what concerns hygiene, the quality of food and the punctuality of serving kids and teachers. Everyone was satisfied with the snacks; we told them about food grant and we made clear that we were open to any suggestion.

Speaking pedagogy, I'd like to emphasise that the swapping was a great idea. It allowed students to get exposed to different sources of language, profit from the variety of teaching and create ranges of feedbacks. It was good for teachers, too, as it made them avoid seeing the same group throughout the morning session.

The books were very inviting, though sometimes challenging for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade middle school students. We agreed upon the fact of letting a free margin for teachers to deal with the content and pace in accordance with the kids' degree of engagement. We also opted for communication, interactive target language and culture spot. The summer camp was a light-hearted environment. Games, songs, role-plays, discussions, listening and easy reading comprehension were prevailing in the learning process. We did not want our students to feel stressed, but to be present with their emotions, bodies and cognition all at once. Teachers had the privilege of using multimedia classrooms while enhancing the already given course. Interactive videos were very helpful in this respect.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July, we organized an outdoor activity under the trees. The kids sang in chorals and played games. They liked it very much. It looked like a scout camp. The objective was to bring a change through going crazy.

The closing ceremony was really fantastic. There were more than 130 people present: the kids, MATE branch board, guests, a journalist, and some headmasters. The kids contributed with songs, poems, acting, a sketch and words about their overall impression on the summer camp. We also invited some parents to give a word on their part. We gave certificates to all the kids in a celebration-like setting. Two representatives of the delegation spoke in favour of the camp. We thanked all the participants and called for a new summer camp in 2010.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms Ruth Petzold and also all those responsible for the US embassy's cultural programs for the concern they have towards underprivileged students. I would also like to thank all MATE national board members for their confidence in the team here. We are surely doing our best to meet their expectations and I believe they are undergoing tougher experiences to run 5 camps, too. I want to assure them that they can be proud of the summer camp here.

### Introduction

This paper, which is a written version of the talk delivered on a MATE Day in Casablanca on March 1st 2009, reports research-based evidence of the relationship between reading and writing. It also provides a framework of a 'new' look at the concept of comprehension within which it suggests some classroom activities. It ends with a case study which illustrates the targeted view of the relationship under focus.

### Research-based evidence

Research has shown that there exists a close relationship between reading and writing. Krashen (1989) argues that reading exposure, i.e. reading for pleasure, indirectly increases competence in aspects of literacy as it enhances reading comprehension, builds vocabulary, improves writing style, and develops grammatical competence. He corroborates his view with empirical studies which support the role of reading in the aforementioned aspects. Smith (1983) holds the same point of view when he writes that "... it could only through reading writers learn all the intangibles that they know" (p. 558). Hafiz and Tudor (1989) take Krashen's (1984, 1989) premises as a starting point for their research. The two researchers then validate these premises and discover that the group that read for pleasure significantly outperformed the two other groups that did not after a three-month interval, particularly in writing.

In a comprehensive synthesis of research on reading/writing relationships in L1, Stotsky (1984) reviews both studies examining the influence of writing on reading and those examining the influence of reading on writing. She has come to the following conclusions:

"... the correlational studies show almost consistently that better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material), better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers" (ibid., p.16)

Similar views have been supported theoretically, empirically, and pedagogically in a collection of papers edited by Jensen (1984, see Sections I, II, and III, respectively).

Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuhlen (1990), who draw on the conclusions by Stotsky (ibid., see above), put the L2 threshold level of proficiency as a condition for transfer of literacy skills across languages and the interaction between the language proficiency and cognitive processes for the transfer across modalities.

From pedagogical and empirical perspectives, research studies have confirmed the reciprocal effect of reading on writing. Zamel (1992) claims that reading should be given due attention and should be geared towards facilitating composing processes. Similarly, Dubin and Olshtain (1980) call for a type of classroom pedagogy in which the two skills are interwoven with one facilitating the other. Empirically, Tsang (1996) provides enough evidence for the existence of a positive effect of reading and writing on writing performance, mainly on certain aspects of writing such as content, agreement, tense, number, etc. but has not been so effective

in other aspects such as organization, vocabulary and mechanics. It has also been empirically shown that good readers are generally good writers (see Cox, Shanahan, and Sulzby (1990) on the use of cohesive ties and cohesive harmony; Nemassi (1993) on inferencing cohesive ties and writing quality; and Boutwell (1983) on shifting between reading and writing and rereading and rewriting during the process of composing; inter alias). Murray (1982) has found that reading and writing go together in the act of reading. He calls the monitor used by writers when they revise their written chunks or sentences "the other self". "... the act of writing is inseparable from the act of reading. You can read without writing, but you can't write without reading", Murray writes (p. 141).

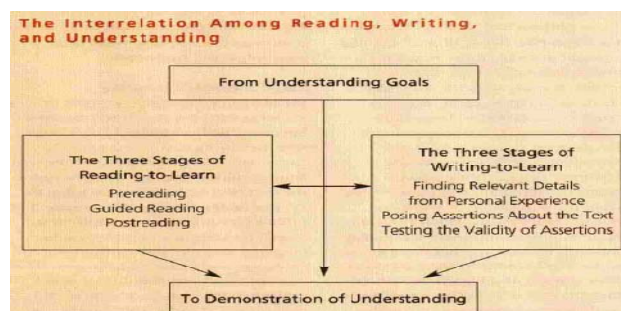
Similarly, Tierney and Shanahan (1991), in a review of several process-based correlational and experimental studies, report that these studies show that writing instruction results in reading achievement, reading improves writing performance, and combined instruction leads to improvement in both reading and writing. In this same vein, Shen (2009) conducts an empirical research study to investigate the reading-writing connection at the college level. Her explicit instruction of text structure and the students' reflective reading journals result in providing proof for the two skills being mutually reinforced in an EFL classroom. She also concludes that her findings go in accord with:

"previous studies which have suggested that reading and writing should be mutually reinforced; that is, reading helps writing with the stimulus, structures, feeling and prior experience (schema), just as writing helps readers look back what they read (metacognitive skills)." (ibid., p. 103)

The above studies provide enough evidence that reading plays a very important role in enhancing writing abilities. They also suggest that mental processes involved in the transfer of reading abilities may be similar to those involved in the transfer of writing abilities. This, in turn, suggests that as there is an effect of the threshold on reading, there should be a similar effect on writing as well (Bouziane, 2002). Practically, the relationship between the two skills can be brought into the classroom through activities.

### A new look at comprehension

Jacobs (2002) explains that understanding involves more than 'doing' or 'knowing'; rather, it involves "choosing topics into which students can find their own points of entry; directly telling students the goals for their understanding; and developing assessment systems that allow students to demonstrate their understanding." (ibid.: p.58). She illustrates her model in the following figure:



The above figure shows the interwoven arrangement of reading, writing, and understanding. The author claims that “the cognitive processes involved in the stages of comprehension ... are virtually the same as the cognitive processes involved in the three-inquiry stages that promote effective composition.” (ibid.: 61). The three stages of reading-to-learn and those of writing-to-learn help learners to move from understanding to demonstrating understanding. Put simply, Donat (2006) describes comprehension to be when “[T]he children must understand what they read and be able to apply the information in other situations.” (p. 311). It is this demonstration of understanding that needs further attention in the Moroccan context.

In a succinct article, Rinvolucri (2008) claims that the comprehension questions asked in a second language learning setting seem less natural because they are asked by the teacher while in a natural setting, it is the listener or reader who normally asks questions especially for clarification requests. He explains that the texts that second language learners read or listen to undergo a process of deletion – removing insignificant details-, elaboration – building ‘inner’ picture of the incoming information-, and transformation – framing it with previous experiences-. Alternatively, he recommends some types of comprehension questions that encourage the activation of these processes. It is within the framework of this new concept of comprehension that the subsequent part suggests some activities to implement.

**Alternative activities**

The following activities will promote integrating the two skills in one class (see details of these and more activities on <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>).

Shifting across genres: from a dialogue to a paragraph, from a poem to a text, from a narrative to an expository / argumentative text ... and vice versa

Changing points of view: telling a story from a different perspective or arguing against something for which a text argues or vice versa. Changing a point of view in reporting and commenting on news.

Text summarising

Text expansion – from summary to full text

Sentence combining – providing a text in short sentences (kernel sentences) and asking learners to combine those sentences using linkers and other devices;

Reproducing a text in a different form such as a poster, a picture, a cartoon, etc. Students should explain why / how their new representation of the text matches the original passage, preferably in writing;

Duplicating a survey (see the case study below);

Writing comic strips and asking the learners to evaluate one another’s product;

Parallel writing with necessary modifications (shifting personal pronoun, shifting tense, shifting topic);

Finishing a story,

Etc.

**A case study:**

**Children’s Television Viewing Habits in the UK**

Parents and teachers throughout the country often express concern about the amount of hours that children spend in front of the television.

According to recent statistics, teenagers watch between 2.5 and 3.2 hours of television every day. Many children watch television in the mornings over breakfast but most viewing takes place after school in the evenings.

Peak viewing times for teenagers are between seven and nine o’clock. They watch soap operas, music programmes and quiz shows. Between the hours of four and six, when the programmes are specifically aimed at children, the viewing figures are much lower.

Girls watch more drama series, documentaries and news programmes. Boys watch more science fiction and sport.

Television plays an important part in the lives of children. They are affected by the images they see and they find role models in their favourite programmes. What parents and their children have to consider is how much time should be spent watching television and which programmes are suitable or unsuitable.

Even if a teacher extensively uses this text; i.e., explains every vocabulary item, tackles different issues / themes in the text, asks comprehension questions dealing with different cognitive thoughts –including inferencing and thought-provoking questions-, s/he has not given her/his students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding (as described above). A suggestion can be to conduct the same survey within the classroom. This table can be assigned to each student to fill in:

	You	Your partner
1. Do you watch TV every day?		
2. Have you got a television in your bedroom?		
3. Do you ever watch television before going to school?		
4. Do you think you watch too much television?		
5. Does anyone restrict your television viewing?		
6. Do you have a favourite television channel?		
7. Do you watch more television at the weekend?		
8. Do you watch educational programmes?		
9. Would you find it easy to stop watching TV for a week?		
10. Do you think children in Morocco watch too much TV?		

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/lesson-plans/young-people-television>

[http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/files/teacheng/tv\\_worksheets.pdf](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/files/teacheng/tv_worksheets.pdf)

As a follow-up to the survey, students can be assigned different activities to demonstrate their understanding:

they get inspired from the text and then write quite a similar article to report the findings of their survey.

they can negotiate which picture can suit the article if it is appearing in a newspaper.

they can negotiate which graph / visual representation will be the most significant to suit an article which will appear in a school magazine.

To share good practices, samples can be put up for appreciation on school / class bulletin boards, class blog, or on any accessible point for the whole class.

Other activities through which students can demonstrate their understanding are:

Guess the next word(s): teacher reads parts of the text and pauses before words / or parts of the text that learners can guess;

Dicto-comp: Teacher dictates (a) sub-part(s) of the text and students complete the other sub-part(s) in their own words;

Students write a scenario for casting film stars to act different characters;

Students write (fictitious) interviews of the characters in the passage being read;

Dramatizing parts of the story (or de-dramatizing them);

Students debate/discuss topics/ideas/arguments in a reading passage and then report the main trends in their debate;

Comparison activities: discussion of the differences among versions of the same story;

Meta-text activities: students report why a picture (does not) fit(s) in a reading passage, which comprehension questions to ask for reading between / beyond the lines, how the structure of the text has (not) helped them understand it, the role cohesive ties – especially connectors – have played in their understanding, how vocabulary has facilitated (or hindered) comprehension, etc.

Content transfer: Students refer to the text to write about their / or their peers' or relatives' previous experiences;

Etc.

This article has overviewed the relationship between reading and writing as reported in empirical research-based studies and has provided a framework of comprehension in which

learners are to be encouraged to demonstrate their understanding. It ends with suggesting activities that will help teachers give more attention to the post-reading stage and especially include writing activities at this stage.

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The following article is a summary of a presentation and a workshop for teachers of English in Salé and Fkih Ben Salah (December, 2009).

### Introduction

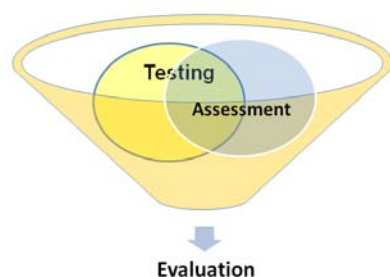
No one would argue about the importance of assessment in teaching English or any other subject. Assessment in efl in particular should not always be given a perfunctory thought by teachers of English but it should have a parallel function to teaching and learning. Where testing / assessment remains a traditional ritual in its form and practice, little would be expected to improve students' performance and acquisition of any communicative competencies or knowledge; it is therefore highly required that innovative approaches to assessment are to be implemented gradually and systematically in the day-to-day classroom practice.

### Defining concepts:

Concepts such as *testing*, *assessment*, and *evaluation* are frequently used interchangeably and sometimes confusedly. Briefly stating that testing refers to standardised tests whether they are teacher-made or state-wide administered. They aim at evaluating the final learning achievement of testees or getting a snapshot of students' acquired proficiency level in a given time. While assessment (*formative, authentic, dynamic, alternative, performance, and self assessment*), though it may make use of different tests, focuses on improving teaching and learning experience in general. It is regular and feeds into classroom teaching and learning.

For more clarification, we include the following **funnel diagram**. It depicts the view that both assessment and testing meet in the shaded area and differ in other parts – and both lead to a more encompassing process which is called evaluation.

### Funnel Diagram



Chaddoudi - 2009

### Purpose of assessment

It is very important to think of assessment and testing as a shared responsibility among school administrators, teachers, students and parents. All partners want to see and justify the efforts made and the money put into the process of evaluation, and consider the exam results that it yields.

Teachers are most of the time directly held accountable for the success and failure of their students since they are the ones who are directly responsible for implementing the curriculum and doing the assessment. Some teachers however think that their job is simply to teach and not test; if they are

to test, it is simply a matter to inform the school administration of students' achievement by the end of the term after covering a set of units of the syllabus. But the best assessment practice is where teachers, fully aware of the value of assessment in class, integrate assessment to teaching and learning.

Defining the purpose of using assessment in your class will guide you throughout the teaching / learning experience, and will help your students understand assessment as a form of learning and not as a form of punishment and penalization . The test samples that syllabuses often provide are unsatisfactory and do not reflect the real assessment needs of students. So teachers are well positioned to determine those needs and find satisfactory answers to the keys questions related to classroom assessment – Why assess (determining purpose)? How to assess (seeking assessment designs and procedures)? What to assess (selecting content to be assessed)? When to assess (determining the frequency of assessment)?

The general goal of assessment is to improve teaching and learning but different teachers may set different purposes for assessment during a school year of instruction. There are times when teachers think of assessment as a tool to:

- get an accurate picture of their students' competence
- measure their acquisition of discrete learning items.
- use the information drawn from scores to improve teaching
- satisfy an administrative requirement
- want to know the best students in class
- see if students can pass the exam

A key concept coined by Arthur Hughes (1989), an expert in language testing, is what he labeled the **washback effect** of testing: this washback can be positive or negative. The concept relates to test consequences and teacher reflection - positive washback gives evidence that teaching is effective and efficient, and that leaning is progressing in the right direction.

Negative washback, on the other hand, informs the teacher of the drawbacks of his/her methodology and explains the learning difficulties students face. So positive washback boosts and maintains teaching and learning procedures while negative washback prompts teachers to work on more effective teaching methods and help students implement more successful learning strategies.

### Tips for teachers

In a more innovative EFL teaching environment, students are viewed by their teachers as contributors and important *investors* in the learning process. They cannot be subject to forms of assessment where they have no voice. Creating authentic assessment formats as much as possible for your students would certainly help them bridge the gap between classroom instruction and the real world. They would

understand that your teaching is in harmony with your assessment designs and that assessment is principally meant for learning. By doing so you will increase their motivation and the assessment results would give them a sense of achievement and a sense of direction to better learn English in and outside the classroom.

Nonetheless, traditional testing is still common everywhere. So students have to learn how to sit for an exam (Baccalaureate for example); they have to receive basic training in reading comprehension and learn the effective ways and strategies how to answer the questions; they have to learn how to go about the process of writing since it is a major component of the final exam, and finally they have to get enough grammar practice in preferably contextualized situations. The following tips may seem important for teachers embarking on assessment and testing in their classes:

<p><i>*Tell students about your assessment methods.</i></p> <p><i>*Inform them when you want to assess.</i></p> <p><i>*Provide them with training to help them become familiar with your test content and format.</i></p> <p><i>*Arrange items in a sequential order.</i></p> <p><i>*Ensure discrimination by including easy as well as challenging items.</i></p> <p><i>*Use a variety of test techniques.</i></p> <p><i>*Have recourse to collaborative reviewing and editing.</i></p> <p><i>*Devise a clear and objective marking scheme.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Test items should not be tricky.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Test items should be of appropriate length.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Test-taking time should be justified</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Test items should not overlap.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Test sections should be balanced in scoring.</i></p>
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### Test Construction

As for test construction, teachers are really in bad need of training on how to design tests that are relatively both *valid* and *reliable*. A good test should meet principles of:

- (1) **Validity**: that is giving an approximative reflection of course content;
- (2) **Reliability**: being consistent and systematic in situations of test and retest or in terms of yielding results;
- (3) **Practicality**: being feasible and manageable;
- (4) **Beneficial washback**: meaning that the test should have a positive impact on learning.

Teachers have to find texts that are new, appealing, and authentic and devise items that are authentic and of general truth; their tests can range from simple quizzes through presentations and interviews to mini-projects and students' portfolios.

### Conclusion

It is obvious that both assessment and testing are forms of evaluation of both teacher and students in their interaction to see and understand the progress made in learning English. Teachers are often by their very position entitled to be controllers of this process of evaluation during instruction or at end-of-term intervals. Students can also, in innovative teaching environments based on dynamic assessment, be given an opportunity to self-assessment which is often a milestone towards promoting learner autonomy.

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## Building a professional milieu for the teacher's learning community: Theory into practice

*Kirstin Bratt, Penn State University & Youness Elbousty, Daniel Webster College*

### Introduction

Within the Professional Learning Community milieu (PLC), teachers develop and apply common assessments, discuss their teaching, and conduct peer observations. Under the purview of the PLC, educators develop consistent, systematic procedures to support students and solve academic issues. In peer observations, teachers observe each other and conference among themselves about best practices and feasible methods of implementation. All the forgoing concepts undergird the common goal of a successful learning community, where the values and goals of the school become commonly shared among the faculty, students, and surrounding community (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; Freidus & Grose, 1998; Hord, 1977, 1997; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; 2006). Linda Darling-Hammond (1995) postulates that the PLC is an essential component for school improvement, helping school personnel stay cohesive and focused on teaching and learning issues. Anderson and Larson (2009) argue the exigent need for this coordination, especially for schools in impoverished communities.

Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) postulate that, "a core characteristic of the professional learning community is an undeviating focus on student learning" (p. 9). McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) concur that it is crucial that teachers examine student work together. Under the Professional Learning Community construct, students will benefit from the ongoing collaboration of their teachers, as they master the intended outcomes of the curriculum and transfer that learning to different milieus (Elbousty & Bratt, 2009). As DuFour and co-authors (2004) state: "We contend that a school truly committed to the concept of learning for each student will stop subjecting students to a haphazard, random, de facto, educational lottery program when they struggle academically" (p. 33).

Astuto and co-authors (1993) further explain that within a learning community, teachers and administrators continuously seek learning and act on what they learn. In an ideal learning community, teachers are engaged in deep levels of inquiry, primarily focused on students' learning.

They devise strategies to assist struggling students. Most importantly, they work together for all students rather than relegating responsibility for individual students with a single teacher.

The PLC evaluated here is located in an urban high school on the East Coast of the US. This professional learning community has very specific goals: to encourage collaboration and ensure student success. With the support of the principal, the teachers have a common planning hour during which they calibrate assessments, discuss curricular decisions, develop plans to assist failing students. They collect, compare, and disaggregate student data to ensure student success. To better their teaching craft, they visit one another's classrooms for peer reviews to learn new techniques and critique their colleagues.

Our survey was administered during the second month of the PLC's second year. Survey questions elicit responses about teacher attitudes toward collaboration and other tenets of the PLC. Of the nine teachers solicited, five women and one man responded; their years of teaching experience range from one to thirty years. The survey includes multiple-choice and essay questions.

### **Results**

Survey results indicate a wide range of responses, with the majority of the teachers indicating positive experiences in the PLC. To the question, "Do you think that collaboration strengthens your department?" All of the teachers mark positive responses (ranging from "absolutely" to "very much" to "somewhat"). Among the benefits of collaboration, the teachers express that they gain insights for curriculum, classroom management, motivation, and learning disabilities. They claim strong group efficacy, explaining that they provide empathy, stress relief, and complementary strengths for one another. By working together, they solve problems collectively, save time and energy, and benefit from constructive criticism. They also describe the acquisition of new skills and generation of new knowledge from their collaboration. When asked about the drawbacks of collaboration, four teachers respond that there are no drawbacks. However, two of the teachers respond by identifying problems. One says collaboration wastes time and creates more work. Two write that they work harder than their colleagues. One complains that colleagues are too "chatty" and "unfocused."

When asked about the optimal conditions for collaboration, the teachers share that they prefer to work in small, homogeneous groups. They prefer to work with someone who is consonant in approach, easy to communicate with, and responsive to collaboration. A teacher states, "I would rather work with one or two than work with a crowd because a lot of ideas are lost." Another teacher states a preference for working with someone who is similar in "work ethic, understanding of curriculum, and realistic expectations." Another writes, "We should have similar views, ideas, goals, and be able to discuss clearly what we want and why it's important."

### **Discussion**

The survey indicates mostly favorable responses to the Professional Learning Community. Clearly, the construct is seen as beneficial. Some teachers have not embraced the PLC construct, but the majority has found it relevant to professional development. The teachers confirm what research indicates: that when teachers work together, they share different perspectives and practices that make a collaborative environment useful and productive.

Because the school benefits greatly from collaboration, we might seek further ways to convince teachers of the efficacy of community building. They must see results when they make the effort to collaborate, and the community must make every effort to use their time wisely, treating time as a valuable resource. As we begin to understand why teachers prefer to work alone, we can anticipate thoughtful and reasoned resistance that will help us to re-evaluate and negotiate our plans for community building, embracing collective efficacy.

We have witnessed several barriers to the progress of the PLC, and we see firsthand that change nearly always encounters resistance. The resistance seems to come in two forms: one active form of resistance by which the teacher rejects the idea of working collaboratively, and then a passive form by which the teacher chooses to work with one or two colleagues while excluding others. We contend that resistance is a strength of the process. When met with responsive dialogue, resistance can be used to guide the creation of the PLC and identify the continuing needs and limitations of the model.

Teachers who resist actively express a sense of frustration about fairness and equity, stating that collaboration with colleagues causes more work for them rather than ameliorating their difficulties. Such feelings of unfairness, no matter how large or small, pose significant threats to the development of the learning community.

Those who resist passively claim to be supportive of the PLC, stating that they do work collaboratively; however, they say that they collaborate only with a few colleagues whose ideas are closely consonant with their own. These types of exclusionary collaborations threaten the development of the learning community. While this sort of close collaboration can be productive and supportive for teachers, it is not part of the democratic process that the PLC encourages. The PLC must welcome all colleagues, including those who are resistant to collaboration. In a democratic institution, as a public school must aim to be, the teachers embrace plurality and differing opinions, seeking consensus with those whom they disagree.

Even if we heartily disagree that working in isolation produces best results, we understand habitual behavior strongly determines teacher practice. We understand that collaboration does not come easily to many teachers. Yet there is no reason to defend teacher practice if it continues at the expense of student learning and achievement. If collaboration is the key to productivity in teaching, then we must make every effort to assure that the PLC is supported and thriving.

## Conclusions

Although many teachers state their willingness to participate in a Professional Learning Community, the reality is often that a great deal of internal resistance disrupts the creation of these collaborative efforts. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) argue that the ethos of teaching must change, from a conservative, individualist perspective to a focus on innovation and collaboration. In spite of our findings that indicate teachers can be ambivalent about the benefits of collaboration, we continue to argue that the formation of the learning community and the collaborative efforts of teachers are essential to the success of public school students.

The idea of shared values and collective learning is difficult to implement, though we continue to believe it is worth the effort. Sometimes, finding consensus regarding a shared vision seems nearly impossible because teachers are accustomed to highlighting differences and individuality. Insisting on consensus means asking people to give of themselves and to make compromises with one another. In some cases, creating a shared vision may seem too much of a compromise or capitulation.

If the PLC is established successfully, the school culture becomes grounded in collaboration, whereby both knowledge and power are equally shared and distributed among the members of the learning community (Bratt & Elbousty, 2010). In this milieu, teachers work together continuously to assess student strategies, assist each other in developing methods to improve student achievement, discuss issues openly, create a supportive environment conducive to achievement, and confer about their pedagogical approaches (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Hord, 1997, 2009; Toole & Louis, 2002). We argue that establishing a successful learning community improves student achievement, ensuring the success of the learning community. When we ask how we can best encourage students to learn, we can depend on the community of teachers to seek an answer collectively, thus enhancing and encouraging its commitment to collaboration.

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