

# Competency-based Approach: Chimera or Reality? The Case of the English Manual “At the Crossroads”

*Saïd KESKES\**

## Abstract

The Competency-based Approach has in the last few years witnessed a flashing and vivid development worldwide through its integration into national teaching curricula, whatever the disciplines. Algeria is no exception. Apparently succumbing to this enticing wave coming from the far Canada, the country got seduced and fascinated by this new method that seeks to equip the learners with knowledge and know-how. Under the thrust of the Ministry of National Education, this teaching method has brutally intruded into the Algerian educational landscape. However, the hopes and enthusiasm aroused deserve to be appraised after some years of implementation with the view to bringing more consolidation, adjustments and pedagogical efficiency. This article purports to achieve a two-fold objective: diagnose some of the strengths and limits of the manual and appreciate teacher's opinions on the conditions of its implementation<sup>1</sup>; and apprehend the effective adequacy between

---

\* Enseignant en langue anglaise, université Ferhat Abbas, Sétif

<sup>1</sup> It is certainly useful to sort out the complexity of the Guideline document as concerns the ten missions expected to be fulfilled by the teachers:

- 1- Finalités de l'enseignement de l'Anglais dans le cycle secondaire
- 2- Objectifs généraux de l'enseignement de l'Anglais en 3<sup>ème</sup> AS
- 3- Profil d'entrée en 3<sup>ème</sup> AS
- 4- Objectif terminal d'intégration (O.T.I) : Profil de sortie de l'élève de 3<sup>ème</sup> AS
- 5- Objectif intermédiaire d'intégration (O.I.I)
- 6- L'Approche par compétence une pédagogie de l'intégration
- 7- Apprentissages propres à la discipline : compétences à maîtriser en 3<sup>ème</sup> AS
- 8- Ressources de la compétence
- 9- Projets proposés communs aux deux filières
  - 9.1-Descriptions des projets en termes de ressources

the shown off curriculum designers' pretensions in terms of learning needs translated into the manual content and the perceptions teachers make about them. It goes without saying that the paper has no pretence to fulfil exhaustiveness in terms of evaluation for the literature about curriculum design displays a swarming number of appreciation-criteria. The analyses of the results of the questionnaires reveal teacher's disarray due mainly to the absence of visibility, clarity and inconvenience as to how to implement the new programme. Hence, the need for serious measures to be taken by educational authorities to heap up the malfunctions diagnosed in the instructional guidelines mainly. They also reveal a marked discrepancy between curriculum designers' objectives and teachers' perceptions about them.

## **1. Introduction**

Evaluation of manual implementation is a worthwhile step that has to be performed during the early stage of the process to sound the stakeholders' impressions about the content and the measures taken to ensure the success of its execution. A new programme may be very often a source of misunderstanding and a difficulty for teachers and learners to work with it easily and efficiently. Many mitigated opinions have been voiced, from teachers mainly those practising in the field, about the new programme and its corollary teaching method inspired from what we call the Competency-based Approach. And this article seeks to circumscribe this feeling of disarray felt in terms of the potential malfunctions to be identified by teachers and learners as concerns Coursebook content and while analysis of ministerial instructions contained in Guidelines, and which are meant to

---

9.2-Structures des projets et exemples d'activités

10- Evaluation des acquis

10.1-Types d'évaluation

10.2-Comment fonctionnent l'évaluation des acquis ?

10.3- Gestion des critères d'évaluation

facilitate programme implementation concern teachers' opinions only.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Curriculum Implementation***

Curriculum is a set of materials that includes both content and instructional guidelines (Connelly & Lantz 1991); Richards (2001). It includes also information about how content is designed and delivered, as well as the structure, organization, balance, and presentation of the content in the classroom (Beretta (1990); Brown (1995). Putting new curricula into practice in the classroom is not an easy business if the essential steps have not been undertaken to achieve the full success of this enterprise (Cohen & Ball 1990 ; Careless, 1999a, 2003). Different elements of appreciation participate in the good achievement of curriculum implementation. They are discussed below:

#### ***2.1.1. Stakeholders in Curriculum Implementation***

Though stakeholders concerned by implementation can be identified outside the classroom, embracing institutions, ministries, parents and community in general (Tanner & Tanner, 1995), the scope of investigation will be limited only to teachers and students. Widdowson (1993) stresses the roles to be played by teachers and even learners, if they should be compared to other stakeholders in the educational process, even if the area of their involvement is not yet circumscribed to what he calls to the micro-level of curriculum planning or with the micro-level of classroom practices. It goes without saying as stated before, that the investigation carried out is limited to classroom practises in the Algerian context. The main reason being that in all educational enterprises seeking to bring any pedagogical shuffling as concerns programme contents and manual preparation, Algerian teachers have almost always been secluded from decision making, which justifies partly the reasons for the problems faced when it comes to implementing the English

manual “At the Crossroads” as will be shown by results of the administered questionnaires.

### ***2.1.2. Importance Curriculum Implementation Research***

There is a need to understand the reasons why curriculum implementation research is of paramount importance and more particularly in Algeria where it does not seem to be widely acknowledged or even heard of. Survey of several rationales behind curriculum implementation research (Nunan, 1988; Richards, 2001) will help determine the aspects meant to facilitate or inhibit the process and which are worth integrating, into the questions of the different questionnaires to be administered to teachers and students alike. This seems to be the only way to tap deep into the reasons behind teachers’ and pupils’ sentiment of dissatisfaction while implementing the new English programmes in the Algerian secondary cycle. This is probably due to the discrepancy between theory and practice (Nunan, 1992). In the same vein, Wang (2001) reports that few empirical studies have been conducted that deal with curriculum implementation reporting that much of the contributions have concerned mainly theoretical change and innovation regarding curriculum design (Fullan, 1982; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Kennedy, 1987; Levine, 1980; Markee, 1993) Moreover, the entire process of implementation is portrayed as a “black box” by O’Sullivan, (2002, cited by Hong Wang, *ibid*) where the process of implementation, may enable its stakeholders to determine if any change has actually occurred and to discover the reasons why change was either impeded or facilitated. In our case, teachers and pupils of the first year secondary school will tell what is the situation regarding the implementation of the English manual “At the Crossroads”. Many researches (Brown & McIntyre, 1978; Carless, 2003; Desimone, 2002) have also concerned themselves with peering into the potential reasons behind implementation failures.

## **2.2. Needs Analysis**

Under this section, we are not going to discuss the concept of needs, needs analysis, approaches to needs analysis, needs analysis taxonomies, information about why and when to conduct needs analysis and who are to identify needs, how to collect and analyze data for needs analysis. We assume that all these steps have already been undertaken by Ministerial staff at the head of whom the GSD (Discipline Specialized Groups) groups have been assigned the responsibility to think and take decisions about these crucial and vital elements pre-requisite to curriculum design. It is useful however to say that needs analysis is a useful tool to understand pupils' needs and to help the implementation of educational policies (Munby 1978; Richterich & Chancerel 1980). In recent years, language teaching has become more and more learner-centred that means "Everything starts from him and everything goes back to him. It is not merely in relation to him, but with him, and depending on his resources (time, available cash, personality, etc.) that his learning objectives will be defined, that the methods of judging when and how they have been attained will be selected, and that a curriculum of learning will be made available to him." (Richterich & Chancerel 1980:4-5) Based on this conception, learners' needs need to be analyzed and based on consideration of these needs, learning objectives can be selected and precisely defined, so that administrators of the language institutions and teachers can use the results as a basis to construct or modify existing systems in order to suit the learner the best. The table below succinctly summarizes the three main needs which are at play before elaboration of curriculum. Of paramount importance are the learners' personal needs which logically should achieve "consensus" of satisfaction among the learners' population in terms of a relative compatibility with the content of the English manual "At the Crossroads" as concerns age, cultural background, interests and educational background. Questions of the learners' questionnaire are basically built upon

these four crucial aspects in order to appraise their opinions to appreciate whether conditions of curriculum implementation are gathered or not. And so is the case for the teachers concerned with implementation of the Competence-based Approach. The stake will be to appreciate whether the necessary conditions for a successful implementation have been provided by instructional guidelines or not. Most of the questions of the teachers' questionnaire revolve round these vital areas of programme implementation.

Ownership	Kind	Source
Learners' Needs	Personal needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Age</li> <li>● Cultural background</li> <li>● Interests</li> <li>● Educational background</li> </ul>
	Learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learning styles</li> <li>● Previous language learning experiences</li> <li>● Gap between the target level and the present level in terms of knowledge</li> <li>● Gap between the target level and the present level of proficiency in various competence areas (e. g. skills, strategies)</li> <li>● Learning goals and expectations for a course</li> </ul>
LEARNERS' NEEDS	Future professional needs	Requirements for the future undertakings in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge of language</li> <li>● Knowledge of language use</li> <li>● Second language competence</li> </ul>

<b>Teachers' Needs</b>	<b>Personal needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Age and sex</li> <li>● Cultural background</li> <li>● Educational background</li> <li>● Teachers' language proficiency</li> </ul>
	<b>Professional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preferred teaching styles</li> <li>● Teacher training experience</li> <li>● Teaching experience</li> </ul>
<b>Administrators' Needs</b>	<b>Institutional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Socio-political needs</li> <li>● Market forces</li> <li>● Educational policy</li> <li>● Constraints (e. g. time, budget, resources)</li> </ul>

**List of Needs Identified in Needs Analysis Literature**

### **3. Method**

#### ***3.1. Participants***

##### ***3.1.1. Teachers***

The population targeted is secondary school English teachers and pupils, who are concerned with the implementation of the newly adopted syllabus. This population covers all the High Schools (Lycées) located in the Wilaya of Sétif (second largest national district in the country), and the number of which equals 78 educational institutions employing 180 English teachers, the fifth of whom (1/5) represent the sample of investigation, i.e., 36 English teachers received the questionnaire. A relatively fair

geographical coverage in terms of High Schools distribution has been attempted to reinforce sampling credibility and validity to allow teachers of English of different regions of the Wilaya of Sétif to take part in this exploratory research.

**3.1.2. Instrument and Data Collection Procedure**

The descriptive method was purposely adopted to achieve a set of attempts; for instance, to encourage teachers to be highly professional in their appreciation of the Guidelines book content. The descriptive method was fulfilled along with an analytical approach of the data collected. In collecting the data we used a preliminary investigation survey and a questionnaire that were addressed to the 36 teachers of English. Educational officials have not been solicited to take part in this investigation to avoid any kind of misunderstanding and subjective interference in terms of viewpoints expressed. Voicing opinions has been granted for teachers, the last stakeholders to consume the product. Content of the teachers’ questionnaire revolve around important axes related to the English manual “At the Crossroads” such as topics, content illustration, social and cultural context and more importantly to the implementation recommendations reported in the teachers’ guidelines book.

**4. Results of Questionnaires**

**4.1. Teachers’ Questionnaire on Coursebook Content**

**4.1.1. Are the Coursebook topics attractive to pupils?**

Answer Quality	Attractive	Not attractive
Number of Teachers	07	29
Percentage	19.44%	80.56%



#### **4.1.2. If yes, which topics are attractive?**

**Unit 1:** ‘Getting Through’: Computing

**Unit 2:** ‘Once Upon a Time’: Narrating

**Unit 4:** ‘Eureka’ : Invention, Discoveries, Science and Technology

#### **4.1.3. If Yes, Why?**

7 teachers provided reasons why they found topics to be attractive:

- Corresponding to the pupils needs and stimulate their interests
- Relating to the immediate environment
- Motivating and allowing interaction because connected with the age of information technology
- Dealing with computers and tales, which are highly appreciated by learners.
- Treating current topics and facts
- Up-to-date interests
- Informative and educational

#### **4.1.4 If no, why?**

29 teachers have found the topics unattractive simply because they might prove to be beyond pupils’ reach in terms of comprehension, being mostly connected with literature topics: Charles Dickens and Chinua Achebe.

#### **4.1.5. Is the Coursebook visually attractive in terms of illustrations?**

Answer Quality	Attractive	Not attractive
Number of Teachers	16	20
Percentage	44.44%	55.56%

Almost equal balanced opinions appear, those negative ones seem to be slightly predominating. This reveals absence of clear-cut positions as regards this particular aspect of Coursebook design.

**4.1.6. Which pictures are interesting for them?**

Answer Quality	Interesting	Not interesting
Number of Teachers	29	07
Percentage	80.55%	19.45%

Almost all teachers have found pictures interesting for the following reasons:

- Drawing have vivid colors
- Stimulating, provoking interest
- Authentic and challenging to the pupils’ knowledge and conceptions
- Visual aids interesting
- Enthusiastic, drawing pupils’ attention
- Some units are totally introduced through pictures ( Unit 2: Once Upon a Time)
- Full of maps, graphs, tables, drawings.

**4.1.7. Are topics up-to-date for your pupils?**

Answer Quality	Up-to-date	Old fashioned
Number of Teachers	33	03
Percentage	91.66%	08.34%

**4.1.8. Do the topics of the Coursebook encourage pupils to voice opinions, views and talk about themselves?**

Answer Quality	Encouraging	Discouraging
Number of Teachers	11	25
Percentage	30.55%	69.45%

**4.1.9. If yes, on which aspects?**

- The Competency-based Approach urges the learners to write and express their opinions as in task 6 on page 57 where the pupils are encouraged to write a poem on their country
- Unit 1 provides a real opportunity for learners to make pen-pal friends
- Many topics correspond to the pupils' needs (computers, story-telling, pollution, role of youth to face social issues, etc)

**4.1.10. If no, tell why**

- Teachers very often need to give further information especially when the instructions are not clear enough.
- Time constraint and size of the class make it hard to apply the approach successfully
- Pupils need help from teachers to get engaged in interaction because the content of the book fails to provide the needed motivation.
- Teachers complain about the lack of accurateness and consistency in the Guidelines book to apply the new approach

**4.1.11. Are there cultural features in the Coursebook that pupils found difficulties to understand?**

Answer Quality	Yes there are	No there are not
Number of Teachers	34	02
Percentage	94.44%	05.56%

Almost all teachers believe it is the case. That is there are cultural features that pupils do not manage to cope with.

**4.1.12. If yes, what are they?**

Almost all teachers give the same reason highlighting the difficulty that might be faced by pupils with Unit 2 entitled "Once Upon a Time" for the reasons stated earlier pertaining to foreign literature authors (See question n°5)

**4.1.13. Does the Coursebook teach real situation language?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	25	11
Percentage	69.44%	30.56%

If the majority of teachers believes Coursebook content to be rather adapted to real situation language, it nevertheless points out that real life language functions are not introduced in authentic texts. Hence, teachers' obligation to carry out adaptations

**4.1.14. Do coursebook exercises pave the way to genuine communication?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	12	24
Percentage	33.33%	66.67%

It is clear that a great majority of teachers think that exercise content does not favor communication to take place in the classroom.

**4.1.15. Justify in case the answer is negative**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	12	24
Percentage	33.33%	66.67%

Teachers who answered negatively claim that in spite of the existence of some exercises capable of creating interaction such as those about invitations, formal letters of apology, informal notes of apology (pages 14 and 15), which admittedly encourage individual work rather than pairing. Such a state of fact compels teachers to bring adjustments and adapt the exercises to make them more manageable.

#### ***4.1.16. Are activities adapted to the size of the classes?***

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	00	36
Percentage	00%	100%

Unanimously, teachers agree that the activities are not adapted to class size. Hence, the goal of large scale individualized instruction claimed back by the Competency-based Approach.

From the different results reported above, it can be concluded that, as far as course content is concerned, that the Coursebook is not completely suitable for use as it does not accomplish its objectives.

### ***4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire on Coursebook Guidelines***

#### ***4.2.1. Introducing Guidelines***

Teachers' questionnaire purports to sort out the stake at issue, the Gordian knot that relatively prevents a better comprehension of the manner with which English can best be taught with the Competency-based Approach. The questions revolve round some of the ten rubrics reported in the Abstract, which in our opinion might prove to be real and serious sources for teachers' incapability to put into practice the Competency-based Approach. At the first blush, rubrics 1, 2, 3, and 4 have been evacuated as groundwork, being merely concerned with the 'finalities' of teaching, an objective which is beyond the teachers' concerns and very often subsumed within the ministerial foreign language educational policy, touching different domains embracing linguistics, communication, methodology, technology, socio-cultural and socio-professional issues, pupils' entry profiles in the 3<sup>rd</sup> AS; and what might be called the pupils' leave profiles (called also Integration Terminal Objectives) introduced in rubric n°4. We have deliberately opted for scrutinizing into the guidelines closely concerned with how lesson deployment should actually happen with the Competency-based method that is rubrics 5 and

6 while 7, 8, 9, and 10 have been eliminated from this research for being simply concerned with the listings of themes, resources, projects and finally evaluation. Our very first interest prompts an analysis of the Competency-based Approach as a process act and not as a finished product. In other words, we are wondering whether the teachers perfectly understand the guidelines and more importantly whether they are capable to achieve their articulations, *sine qua non* and necessary condition for lesson coherence. The construct validity of the questions of this questionnaire rely on contents of rubrics 5 and 6. Let us proceed to a detailed revisit of these rubrics:

Rubric 5: The Competency-based Approach is a pedagogy of integration based on lesson moments dealing with ‘Discovery’, ‘Observation’, ‘Application’, ‘Reformulation’ and ‘Control’. It is based on a concrete apprenticeship entailing problem solution with a view to creating conceptual networks. These attainments and experiences are to be reinvested and gone into service of more complex competencies relying upon:

- Apprenticeship situations (Project Outcomes) which facilitates knowledges, know-how and know-being. The apprenticeship situation should be collectively adjusted to achieve a pedagogical objective and experimented in the classroom for being reinvested elsewhere. The apprenticeship situation finally consists of a ‘support’, a ‘task’ and an ‘instruction’<sup>2</sup>.

- Integration situation called also reinvestment situation (Learners’ Outcomes)

- is close to the pupil’s daily life,
- exploits authentic documents,
- is motivating and meaningful to the pupil,
- conveys positive values,
- uses instructions (consigne),

---

<sup>2</sup> This is our translation in English. In the French written Guidelines, the term is “consigne”

- addresses itself to the pupil individually,
- takes place inside a communicative situation,
- allows the pupils to integrate their attainments and experiences,
- checks the pupils' competence,
- let the pupil solve a problem individually,
- leads the pupil to integrate knowledges and know-how learnt in class, and
- allows the pupils to assess their attainments.

These two situations have to include intercultural elements

Rubric 6: All these practices should lead to the mastery of three competencies at the oral and written levels, sometimes interdependent and complementary, calling for

**1. Oral interaction (Competence 1)** which seeks to allow the pupils to:

- produce a speech act,
- use the right pronunciation,
- use the right intonation,
- use the corresponding structures,
- use the corresponding vocabulary, in order to
- negotiate,
- persuade, give opinion,
- speak,
- give the floor in a debate or while solving a problem collectively

**2. Interpret messages (Competence 2)** where the learner must understand and interpret:

- a speech act,
- a written act, in order to
- be informed,

- answer some questions,
- justify a response in a communicative situation

**3. Produce messages (Competence 3)** where the pupils must produce written messages of different types:

- descriptive,
- narrative,
- argumentative,
- Injunctive (Injonctif in French) corresponding to a given communicative situation.

#### *4.2.1.1. Analysis and Discussion*

In fact, this programme, which is far from being a sinecure, is followed by a listing of titles of apprenticeship and integration situations as well as with another listing of oral interaction activities on knowledge, linguistic contents, know-how, know-how technology, know-being and common projects for the scientific and literary streams. Another listing describes projects in terms of resources and last but not least five project diagrams entitled “Language Outcomes” consisting of five columns, having each its own proper listing under the following titles: ‘Themes’, ‘Functions’, ‘Grammatical Structures’, ‘Vocabulary Building’ and finally ‘Pronunciation Spelling’. To conclude, it can be said that the programme is in fact all but a series of listings which, instead of providing the would-be pupil with a synthetic project-type, integrating coherently all seemingly spread out traits of elements that any project should have. It is certainly true that rubrics 5 and 6 comprehend apprenticeship and integration situations articulated round three competencies that have to be acquired by the pupils, nevertheless, concrete and realistic examples that could consistency to the recommendations reported in teachers’ Guidelines are markedly lacking. Even the documents meant to bring some assistance to the teachers to cope with problems inherent to foreign language teaching are not convincing, reduced to a series of instructions, counsels and recommendations. These



are the findings of my personal inquiry. It is high time to let the real stakeholders voice their opinions on the issues I raised, analysed and discussed earlier.

*4.2.1.2. Teachers' opinions on Guidelines Content*

As aforementioned, the questions concern rubrics 5 and 6 for the reasons already stated. However, we have reported what have seemed us to be the ten most important questions:

***Question 1: Is it realistic to design a project obligatorily integrating five moments : discovery, observation, application, reformulation and control?***

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	02	34
Percentage	05.55%	94.45%

***Question 2 : Do you encounter difficulties to satisfy specifications of an apprenticeship situation which, besides seeking to favour the acquisitions of knowledge, know-how and know-beings, has to be concrete and based on the resolution of a problem?***

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

***Question 3: Do you face difficulties to satisfy specifications of an apprenticeship situation that has to be treated collectively in class to be invested elsewhere, requesting a support, a task and an instruction?***

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**Question 4: Is it realistic to design a situation of integration federating simultaneously twelve traits:**

- being close to the pupil's daily life,
- exploiting authentic documents,
- motivating and meaningful to the pupil,
- conveying positive values,
- using instructions (consigne),
- addressing itself to the pupil individually,
- taking place inside a communicative situation,
- allowing the pupils to integrate their attainments and experiences,
- checking the pupils' competence,
- letting the pupil solve a problem individually,
- leading the pupil to integrate knowledges and know-how learnt in class, and
- allowing the pupils to assess their attainments.
- integrating intercultural elements

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**Question 5: Do you think that Competence 1 objectives achievable, in terms of**

**5.1. oral performance of utterance?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**5.2. using good pronunciation?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**5.3. using good intonation?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**5.4. using appropriate structures?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**5.5. using appropriate vocabulary?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	36	00
Percentage	100%	00%

**Question 6: Do you think that Competence 1 objectives achievable, in terms of oral performance of utterance simultaneously requiring several language functions such as: negotiating, persuading, giving opinion, taking a floor, leaving a floor, resolving a problem collectively?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	06	30
Percentage	16.65%	83.35%

*Question 7: Do you think that Competence 2 objectives achievable, in terms of learners' capacities to understand and interpret an oral or written act in order to be informed, answer questions and justify a response in a communicative situation?*

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	06	30
Percentage	16.65%	83.35%

*Question 8: Do you think that Competence 2 objectives achievable, in terms of learners' capacities to perform in a communicative situation, messages of the following types*

**8.1. Descriptive?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	30	06
Percentage	83.35%	16.65%

**8.2. Narrative?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	32	04
Percentage	88.90%	11.10%

**8.3. Argumentative?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	06	30
Percentage	16.65%	83.35%

**8.4. Expositive?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	25	11
Percentage	69.44%	30.56%

**8.5. Injunctive?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	30	06
Percentage	83.35%	16.65%

**Question 9: Do you think that Competence 3 objectives achievable, in terms of learners' capacities to perform simultaneously, in a given communicative situation, a combination of different types of messages according to the different discourse types taught?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	00	36
Percentage	00.00%	100.00%

**Question 10: The Competency-based Approach claims back an integration-based pedagogy. In which respect are you able to perform a situation integrating simultaneously Competencies 1, 2 and 3?**

Answer Quality	Yes	No
Number of Teachers	00	36
Percentage	00.00%	100.00%

**4.2.1.3. Analysis and Discussion**

What can be sorted out from the data obtained by means of the teachers' questionnaire? The striking feature immerging seems to be related to the teachers' incapacity to cope with combined 'competencies' rather than when committed to dealing with 'fragmented' or 'broken up' abilities. This is clearly shown with the questions 8 and 9 related to competences 1, 2 and 3 for the apparent reason that they concern themselves either with a communicative act apprehended individually or a message of one kind only as displayed in the different tables related to questions 8, and 9. Question 5, on the other hand, corroborates such a

tendency, because the pupils' challenge involves performing one single oral act. The insights tend to confirm the teachers' lack of preparedness in the implementation of the approach. A marked and significant contrast can be observed with the questions about what is called an integration situation<sup>3</sup> where the stake is rather daunting and complicated requesting simultaneous satisfaction of thirteen (13) different communicative requirements (see question 1, 2, 3, and 4). Here almost all data seems to confirm the teachers' scare, straying and bewilderment to coping with the new challenges brought out by the Competency-based Approach. Question 10 definitely reveals the teachers' impression that the ultimate goal that CBA sets itself to accomplish with the new reform to be quite impossible to achieve. Does CBA not seek, in the end of the long run, to equip Algerian learners of English with the capabilities to perform simultaneously competencies 1, 2, and 3, if a communicative situation requires it?

## **5. Conclusion**

This modest exploratory survey indicates that CBA, per se, is not blameable as a method of teaching. It is rather the hurriedness with which such a method has been 'imposed' without preparation at the classroom level where the teachers are the real actors of its implementation. It is important to report that this study has taken place six years after the introduction of the CBA as a new English teaching approach in Algeria. The survey might as well reveal the somewhat uselessness of Guidelines<sup>4</sup> when the approach intruded into the Algerian foreign language learning landscape. We may even and by implication consider that the approach, after many years of its appearance, remains misunderstood by some teachers, given the data obtained and discussed. The call we can make is that elaboration and design of new curricula should rely on both lay-teachers having capitalised

---

<sup>3</sup> English translation of the French version 'une situation d'intégration'

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines is a book meant to bring help and aid to teachers to improve the CBA workability and applicability.

many years of teaching experiences at the level of the Algerian intermediate and secondary schools and more importantly university expertise through actors specialised in material and curriculum design to enlighten the many Inspector general, decreed or ‘enthroned’ *de facto* as mastering a profession for which they are not well prepared, academically speaking. Long classroom teaching experience is not enough and can never make the sole valid criterion for many to request an eligibility to become a General Inspector of English and potentially member of what our Ministry of National Education has called the GSD<sup>5</sup> groups. Paradoxically, in our country, only primary and intermediate inspectors of foreign languages undergo a formation cycle sanctioned very often by a written research project defended *viva voce* in front of an examining board, while secondary level inspectors general do not. A new strategy should rely on teachers having access to high quality curriculum materials, developed by people with expertise in content and pedagogy, as well as sufficient resources and time to design, test, and refine the materials for use in classrooms with diverse students. Teachers need to work together with professional developers to know how the curriculum will be used with students and the milestones that will be met at different points in the implementation process. It is crucial that school officials acknowledge that implementing curriculum takes time, resources, and a commitment to reform.

**Acknowledgement:** I would like to particularly thank Dr Belouaham Riadh for having allowed me to partly reproduce some of the questions of the Teachers’ Questionnaire on Course Content reported in his Doctorat d’Etat Thesis (2008), entitled “The Suitability of the First Year Secondary School Coursebook “At the Crossroads” to the Algerian Teaching Environment”

---

<sup>5</sup> GSD: Groupe Spécialisé Disciplinaire

## 6. References

Belouaham, R., "The Suitability of the First Year Secondary School Coursebook 'At the Crossroads' to the Algerian Teaching Environment", Mentouri Constantine University, 2008.

Beretta, A., Implementation of the Bangalore Project. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(4), 1990, pp.321-337.

Brown, S. et McIntyre, D., Factors influencing teachers' responses to curriculum innovation. *British Educational Research Journal*, 4(1), 1978, pp. 19-23.

Brown, J.D., *The elements of language curriculum*, Boston, MA : Heinle &Heinle, 1995.

Carless, D., Factors affecting classroom implementation : Task-based curriculum renewal in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 8(4), 1999a, pp.374-382.

Carless, D. (2003). Factors in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. *System*, 31, 484-500.

Cohen, D.K. et Ball, D.L., Policy and practice: An overview. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(3), 1990, pp. 233-239.

Connelly, F.M. et Lantz, O.C., Definitions of curriculum: An introduction, in A.Lewy (Ed.), *The international encyclopaedia of curriculum*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1991, pp. 15-18.

Desimone, L., How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 2002, pp.433-479.

English Manual "At the Crossroads". Ministry of National Education Algeria, 2003.

Fullan, M., *The meaning of educational change*, Toronto, OISE Press, 1982.

Fullan, M. et Stiegelbauer, S., *The new meaning of educational change* (2nd ed.), New York, Teachers College Press, 1991.

Guidelines, Ministry of National Education Algeria, 2003.



Kennedy, C., Innovating for a change : Teacher development and innovation, *English Language Teaching Journal*, 41(3), 1987, pp.163-170.

Levine, A., *Why innovation fails*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1980.

Markee, N., The diffusion of innovation in language teaching. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics: Issues in second language teaching and learning*, 13, 1993, pp. 229-243 et p.275.

Munby, J., *Communicative Syllabus Design*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Nunan, D. *Syllabus design*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.

Nunan, D., *Research methods in language learning*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Richards, J.C., *Curriculum development in language teaching*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Richeterich, R. et Chancerel, J.L., *Identifying the needs of adults learning a foreign language*, Oxford, Pregamon Press, 1980. Rivers, WM.1981.

Tanner, D. et Tanner, L.N., *Curriculum development : Theory into practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall, 1995.

Wang, H., *Integrating grammar instruction with communicative approaches for esl students in China*. Unpublished master's research essay, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 2001.

Widdowson, H.G., Innovation in teacher development, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 1993, pp. 260-275.