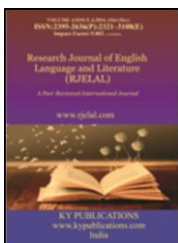




CLASS OBSERVATIONS IN BENINESE TECHNICAL SCHOOLS AND LAURENT CANTET'S FILM "ENTRE LES MURS": AN INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHERS' SELF- DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER TRAINING. A CASE STUDY OF TECHNICAL SCHOOLS IN BENIN REPUBLIC

Sourou Corneille TEBA

Department of English, University of Abomey-Calavi, Bénin



ABSTRACT

This article aims fundamentally at showing that through classroom observations a lot of disciplinary as well as pedagogical and methodological problems could be solved. This paper pairs up the results from both questionnaires and class room observations in technical schools with events from the film "ENTRE LES MURS". The results from the interviews is also taken into account to analyse with problem solving strategies in the film and the practices in different technical schools to see to what extent classroom observations, either self or done by other people, can help teacher to self-develop and become professionally competent for the good of both learners and teachers themselves. Field survey is used and the target population was teachers and students in technical schools in Benin.

Key Words: Classroom, observations, technical schools, self-development, teachers' training

©KY PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Teacher self-development and teacher training require a variety of approaches that teachers can use to enhance their teaching beliefs, attitudes and practices. One way of doing so is to continuously carry out classroom observations. In fact, in order to be more systematic, observers can make use of observation instruments such as checklist, tally sheet, audio recorder, video recorder and so on. Teachers can be visited at teaching, in other words, they are going to be evaluated by themselves or by others who may be teacher advisers, inspectors, deans, peer colleagues ... etc. Teachers should be aware of their teaching so as to improve it. Awareness of teaching can be defined as knowing that teacher development is a reality forever new, an endless growth through problem

solving and an ongoing commitment. Awareness of teaching can be gained through approaches like observations of other teachers' teachings, self-observations, action research and teacher journals.

This paper is mostly and essentially concerned with the observations of teachers' teachings, the observations of teachers' classroom lives which are parts and parcels of the awareness of their own teachings, and contribute hypothetically to their training and self-development. In the accomplishment of this endless task of self-development two conditions seem to be necessary.

On the one hand, observing one's own teachings means that the teacher makes use of appropriate machines that can help in recording his/her teachings that he/she will view and review to find out what have been right and wrong. So,

there is a need for the teachers to dispose of appropriate recording devices. On the other hand, observation of others' teaching supposes that a teacher goes into another teacher's class and watch him/her at work. But in so doing, the visiting teacher will have to leave his own classes and consequently learners will be without a teacher. Therefore, he/she can view pre-recorded classroom lives for his/her self-development.

It is in this frame that I suggest the French film "Entre les Murs" by Laurent CANTET to serve as a pre-recorded classroom life which helps to analyze results from the different questionnaires and interviews involved in this paper work. If at first view, the film mainly deals with disciplinary and interactions matters between teacher and learners, learners and learners and teacher and teacher, it will be good to go beyond this disciplinary and interactive aspect to find pedagogical and methodological facets in it to entail some contribution of classroom observations in form of records to teacher self-development and teacher training.

At this stage, a warning has to be made. I am not rejecting observations by inspectors and pedagogical advisers but rather indicating that both are complementary. This kind of classroom observations done by inspectors and teacher advisers and commonly called class visits, is also of a paramount importance to the development of a teacher.

Background to the study

Teaching in general and language teaching in particular is not an easy job. A good educational system needs qualified and regularly up-to-date teachers. This implies training and self-development of teachers. There are many topics related to teacher training and teacher self-development such as the pedagogy of teaching, the psychology of learners, classroom management, teachers' awareness of teaching, methodologies of teaching the four language skills, approaches of teaching, the role of the teacher in today's language classroom ...etc. This article does not have the pretention to encompass all the aspects of teacher training and teacher self-development. The qualification and skilfulness of a teacher does not only mean to

receive training at a Teacher Training College and rest on one's laurels, but it also means self-development, self-experience, and self-education.

In order to help teachers in their task of self-development, inspectors, teachers' advisers, senior teachers, experienced teachers are being appealed to visit teachers' teachings. Therefore, classroom observations may be seen as the most powerful instrument to reach the goal of teacher development and teacher self-development. As an already engaged teacher without any pre-service training for many years now, I have realised that trained teachers are what people most lack in Beninese educational system today. I am not denying all the powerful effort made by teacher trainers at the different Teacher Training Colleges of Benin or political decision making places. But, those trained teachers are not many and most of them are being retired. In addition, I would remind the reader that Teacher Training Colleges have been closed for many years during the revolutionary period. All the same, no one will forget that the government had stopped recruiting teachers in the system till the year 1990. All these factors have contributed to the situation of unqualified teachers in secondary schools, of the fall in the learners' level, of the breakdown of the whole educational system.

According to DES 2012 estimates, there are at least thirty-five thousand nine hundred and sixteen teachers (35,916) in the general education sector but only three thousand hundred and twenty-two (2,122) of them are really trained. All the rest are without any initial professional training. What is the fate that awaits our children if they are still going to be taught by untrained teachers? Of course, some of them have gained experience, having taught for more than five, ten, fifteen even twenty years.

The choice of this topic derived from my personal experience as an English language teacher in technical schools for more than ten years, observing other teachers at work, criticising them without observing my own teachings till I watched the French film "Entre les Murs" and realised that there was something wrong in my own teaching both on classroom management and pedagogical fields. In fact, I was not professionally trained, I just gained experience, having taught for more than ten

years and having been observed and advised by senior teachers, pedagogical advisers and inspectors in my teaching job both as a former part-time teacher.

So, if classroom activities can be recorded and made available to teachers both qualified and unqualified, they will surely profit from others' teaching experience and pedagogy. It is in this range that I have chosen the film "Entre les Murs" by the French director, Laurent Cantet to point out the contributions of classroom observations to the professional development of teachers both on managerial and pedagogical fields.

Purpose of the study

The real character and the success of the film "Entre Les Murs" by Laurent CANTET, strikes my mind and I wonder whether it cannot be of any help to Benin teachers in technical schools. Nobody is supposed to know everything, if teachers can watch recorded observations of classroom lives, even though it is not of their owns, a lot of things will go right or be improved for the good of technical schools on the one hand and for the good of learners and teachers on the other hand. The purpose of this paper is:

- to strike awareness into the teachers and help solve to some extent, the different problems encountered on the educational fields nowadays.
- to show that through classroom observations a lot of disciplinary as well as pedagogical and methodological problems could be solved.

In this paper I am going to pair up the results from both questionnaires and class room observations in technical schools with events from the film with. The results from the interviews will also be taken into account to analyse with problem solving strategies in the film and the practices in different technical schools to see to what extent classroom observations, either self or done by other people, can help teacher to self-develop and become professionally competent for the good of both learners and teachers themselves. To reach the above mentioned goals, the work has attempted to answer the following questions:

Research Questions

The work is based on the following questions

- -What can viewers gain in learning from the strengths and weaknesses, the successes and errors of the visited or watched colleagues by observing or by watching other teachers' teachings?
- -Will the already engaged teachers, without any pre-service training, still wait for government to think about their training?
- How much have they tried to self-develop after leaving Teacher Training College as far as the trained and qualified teachers are concerned?
- How often have they questioned their teaching in order to distinguish their failures from their successes?

Significance of the Study

The ultimate goal of any educational system is the learners' improvement. This improvement, which is of paramount importance in the development process of a country, is mainly ensured by teachers. It is also agreed that qualified teachers are necessary for an education of good quality. This paper neither means teacher training nor teacher self-development, but rather, a contribution to those two facets of a qualified teacher through classroom observations and watching other teachers' experiences. If there are only a few observers i.e. a few inspectors and teacher advisers available to conduct classroom observations for the time being, records like "Entre les Murs" or those of well organised classroom lives can be viewed by teachers to improve themselves, knowing that it is difficult to observe one's own teaching. This paper is significant because self-observations and observations of others' teachings will surely help teachers develop professionally and therefore results in the improvement of the quality of their teaching which will splash onto learners' performance. But, the work also has restrictions, which will be dealt with in the following lines.

The Limitation of the Study

This paper is neither an overall solution to the difficulties encountered by teachers in technical schools nor the absolute solution to the problem of training. In other words, this paper is not to replace the initial training that a teacher needs before entering a school class but an attempt of solution to some of the problems they encounter. It has mainly

used teachers in technical public schools as target population, but the private schools are not considered. Another aspect of limitation to this dissertation is the fact that the film "Entre les Murs" is in French and may constitute a hindrance to the form of this paper.

THE FILM "ENTRE LES MURS" BY LAURENT CANTET

Summary of the plot in "Entre les Murs"

"Entre Les Murs" is a French film by Laurent Cantet, issued in 2008. It is an adaptation of the novel of the same name written by François Begaudeau who is at the same the hero of the film and co-adaptor with Laurent Cantet and Robin Campillo. The film won Palme d'Or at Cannes Festival 2008, what has not been the case for a film since 1987 with the film "Sous le Soleil de Satan" by Maurice Pialat.

The film covers an academic year, opening with teachers gathering for autumn term, introducing themselves to each other and being welcomed by the principal. The latter, with an unsmiling face, wearing rimless glasses supplies the teachers with their time tables, due forms and students lists. "Entre les Murs" ends with an

informal game of football between staff and pupils. The director of the film has taken the story of a young and idealistic teacher, Mr. François Marin, confronted with a multicultural class of the inner-city High School Françoise Dolto.

Mr. Marin and his fellow teachers get prepared for a new school year, armed with the best intentions, they brace themselves in order not to permit any discouragement prevent them from giving the best education to their learners. Cultures and attitudes often clash in the classroom, a microcosm of contemporary France. As amusing and inspiring as the teenagers can be, their difficult behaviours will tend to jeopardise any teacher's enthusiasm for the low-paying job of a teacher. Mr. Marin insists on an atmosphere of respect and diligence. Neither stuff nor severe, his extravagant frankness often takes his learners by surprise. But, his classroom ethics is challenged when the learners contested his methods.

Let's have a glance at the synopsis of the film in sequences.

Summaries of the sequences.

Sequences and times	Summaries of the sequences
1. Getting ready: 00:00:00 – 00:04:28	Title of the film. Mr. Marin is drinking his coffee in a snack bar before reaching the college where he teaches. At school, preparation to resume school. Meeting of the school personnel and introduction of new teachers in the staff room.
2. Mr. Marin complaints of time wasting: 00:04:28 – 00:08:08	In a classroom, Mr. Marin is asking for quietness in the room. He says it's a pity they should waste so much time before starting. He then asks them to write their name on a sheet of paper. Esmeralda, a learner, makes him to do the same before her. Back to the staff room, Mr. Marin is preparing his lesson.
3. Explanation text: 00:08:08 – 00:14:25	Mr. Marin studies a text with his learners. He asks them to point out the difficult words. One student, Wei, does not understand the word "Autrichienne" and Esmeralda mocks at him. The teacher uses an English name to make an example. Esmeralda and Khoumba prefer him to use an African name. In the staff room a new colleague, teacher of History, asks whether Mr. Marin will consider teaching Voltaire's Candide as he is interested in interdisciplinary word. Mr. Marin tells him that the level of the students is too low.
4. The "imperfect subjunctive lesson" 00:14:25 – 00:23:19	Classroom: individual work for the students and then Mr. Marin explains the imperfect of subjunctive. Learners find that this tense is unnecessary to learn.

	Souleymane asks his teacher if the rumour saying that he is a gay is true. Mr. Marin says no. Souleymane takes pictures with his classmates in the playground.
5. Learners' lack of concentration and lack of respect 00:23:19 – 00:27:20	Classroom: Mr. Marin wants his students to concentrate. He says that they are not able to concentrate for a few minutes. Koumba protests. At the teachers' room a teacher tells, in anger, his frustration with students who have no interest and lack of respect.
6. Koumba's letter of apologies 00:27:20 – 00:40:32	Classroom: Koumba refuses to read. Mr. Marin asks the class to judge Koumba's behaviour. Boubacar does and qualifies this behaviour as being insolent. Esmeralda reads the text from Le Journal de Ann Frank. Then Mr. Marin asks the learners to write their self-portrait. At the end of the course, Mr. Marin asks for Koumba's apology. She is reluctant but does it. She is also asked to write an essay on "respect". Later in the corridor she confesses she is sincere. Mr. Marin gets angry.
7. The new instrument of discipline 00:40:32 – 00:46:00	Meeting with the principal in the staff room, the teachers and some parents of students discuss the new points system of discipline. The meeting ends on the discussion of the rising price of drinks and coffee. Mr. Marin finds in his cupboard in the staff room a letter of Koumba.
8. The self-portraits 00:46:00 – 00:56:30	The students write their self-portraits. An off-voice reads Koumba's writing about respect. Esmeralda, Wei and Rabah read their portraits to the class. Esmeralda is sitting beside Koumba because they quarrelled. The headmaster comes to the class with a new learner, Carl. At the end of the lesson, Mr. Marin talks with him.
9. Meeting with students' parents 00:56:30 – 01:02:38	Mr. Marin meets the parents of Wei, Nassim, Arthur and Souleymane.
10. Souleymane's photos 01:02:38 – 01:09:11	In the computer room, Mr. Marin asks the students to make their self-portrait more personal. Souleymane shows the teacher some photos of his mother, and then Mr. Marin asks the class to admire Souleymane's work. Koumba and Esmeralda are friends again. Carl reads his presentation to the class.
11. Teachers' solidarity towards students' parents. 01:09:11 – 01:12:00	A teacher tells his colleagues that Wei's mother has been arrested because she has no regular papers and will return to her country. Teachers propose to collect money to afford a lawyer. Shortly after, a teacher announces she is pregnant.
12. Three minutes to convince: 01:12:00 – 01:20:10	In to playgroup the students play football. During the match, Souleymane and Carl fight. In the classroom: Nassim talks about his passion for football. Boubacar intervenes to provide support for the football team of Côte d'Ivoire. Carl says that he supports the France team. During the discussion Souleymane gets angry and for lack of respect Mr. Marin takes him to the principal. He suddenly becomes mute.
13. Students valuation meeting: 01:20:10 – 01:26:31	During the evaluation meeting, the two students' representatives, Esmeralda and Louise are not attentive and they chat. Esmeralda is obliged to leave the room because she was giggling. The teachers discuss about Souleymane and his attitude, Mr. Marin pleads for him but he adds that he is limited to explain his weakness at school.
14. Les "pétasses" or the	Classroom: Mr. Marin explains the versification to the students. Cherif and

<p>“skank”: 01:26:31 – 01:33:34</p>	<p>Souleymane stop the teacher to complain about the results of the evaluation meeting that Esmeralda and Louise gave them. Mr. Marin asks for the delegates’ role and he was very embarrassed by their behaviour during the evaluation meeting and he said that they behaved as “skank”. The discussion goes wrong and Souleymane leaves the classroom furious. He hurts Koumba involuntarily with his bag. Then Mr. Marin writes the incident report and talks about it with the director. Koumba joins Mr. Marin to explain that if Souleymane is excluded from college, his father will send him back to Mali. In the school canteen, Mr. Marin, nervous, smokes a cigarette.</p>
<p>15. Mr. Marin’s futile explanation of the work “Skank” 01:33:34 – 01:38:21</p>	<p>In the stairs, the Teaching Counsellor reports to Mr. Marin that the two delegates complained about his insulting them as “skank” and he has to take it into account in the incident report. In the playground, Mr. Marin meets the girls and tries to explain what he meant by “skank” but in vain. Instead, he is shouted at by Carl who treats him as a “enculé”. Disarmed, he leaves the group. In the corridor, Koumba joins Mr. Marin to explain that if Souleymane is excluded from college, his father will send him back to Mali.</p>
<p>16. Mr. Marin’s anxiousness: 01:38:21 – 01:45:34</p>	<p>In the school canteen, Mr. Marin, nervous, smokes a cigarette. In the staff room, teachers discuss the incident and the consequences on Souleymane. Mr. Marin becomes anxious about Souleymane’s probable exclusion from the school and tries to plead for him. He also points out that all the twelve (12) disciplinary committees they held last year led to learners’ exclusion. He goes to the principal’s room to complete his report by adding that he insulted the girls.</p>
<p>17. Souleymane’s exclusion: 01:45:34 – 01:53:51</p>	<p>In the library room, the disciplinary council meets in presence of Souleymane and his mother. Souleymane interprets the speeches to both his illiterate mother and the councillors. They are asked to stay out while they vote. The council decides that Souleymane should be excluded from the school, so he leaves with his mother. Mr. Marin is deeply upset.</p>
<p>18. Assessment of the year: 01:53:51 – 02:02:08</p>	<p>Classroom: The last day of class, Mr. Marin asks his students what they have learnt during this school year. At the end of the class, he gives each student a booklet with their self portraits. While everyone is out, a student, Henriette tells Mr. Marin that she has learnt nothing and she doesn’t understand what she has done in school that year. In the playground, there is a football match between students and teachers. An empty classroom ends the film with screams and voices from the playground.</p>
<p>19. Generic 02:02:08 – 02:04:20</p>	<p>End credits with muffled noise of the courtyard.</p>

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research has been implemented with regard to a descriptive and evaluative methodology. A survey design has been used to select and study samples from the research population. This methodology has the advantage to facilitate the

discovery of the relative incidence of distribution and interrelations of variables of the study. It is composed of two main parts. The first part includes the presentation of the research population, the sampling design and the research design. The

second part deals with the instruments used for data collection and the methods of analysis.

Research Population

The above table summarises the different respondents involved in the study.

Table 1: Number of the expected target population

Schools Respondents	Lycée Technique commercial P/N	Lycée Technique Coulibaly Cotonou	Lycee Technique Agricole de Medji	Lycee Technique d'Adja- Honme	Lycee Technique de Bohicon	Lycee Technique de Djoujou	Lycee Technique agricole d'Ina
Teachers	07	06	04	03	05	03	02
Learners	35	15	12	15	30	25	30
Interviewees	02	03	01	01	02	02	01
Total	44	21	18	10	37	30	33

Since the content of this article is not only disciplinary but also trans-disciplinary, I think that, for a good research sake, it is better to involve in the research population. This means that questionnaires to English teachers are designed in English. Learners are not left out in the collection of data. Though, they are not the most concerned by classroom observation, I have addressed them 162 questionnaires. The hundred and sixty-two (162) questionnaires issued to learners have been collected since I helped them so as to be able to answer the questions appropriately. Not that I guided them in choosing their responses but I rather helped them by giving explanations to questions that seemed difficult to them. It means that twelve (12) questionnaires have not been answered. This is due to the fact that learners were told that they were free of being administered questionnaires. So seventy-four point zero seven percent (74.07%) of the questionnaires have been collected and then be presented

Besides, some interviews are also planned to be conducted with some schools' administrative boards for more practical information from them. I have interviewed some principals, vice-principals, teachers' advisers and inspectors in the selected schools. The reason for administering questionnaires to teachers and learners on the one hand and interviewing heads of school and other resource persons on the other, is that findings from both sides will surely be complementary. It also seems obvious that teachers may not show sincerity

filling in the questionnaire, so information from interviews is welcomed.

In all, I have issued 30 samples of the questionnaire to teachers added to (162) learners questioned and the twelve (12) administrative board, teachers' advisers and inspectors were interviewed.

Teachers.

In the frame of data collection, teachers must know what is expected from them as teachers. They have to be qualified and self-developed so as to be more competitive while teaching because the failure or success of learners does not only depend on learners but most on their teachers. Even though learners are not the most concerned with this, information are sought from them for confirmation purposes of data collected from teachers.

Administrative board, teacher advisers and inspectors.

Principals are sampled in this data collection because reports are firstly made to them. As for teachers' advisers, they are the ones to really know what is expected from teachers, what they actually do in classes, how they behave when they are faced with discipline problems ... etc.

Instruments of the analysis

The gathering of information from teachers, teachers' advisers and inspectors has been done through different instruments. For this paper, I have designed questionnaires for teachers and learners and arranged interviews with administrative board, teacher's advisers and

inspectors. Here is the description of the instruments involved.

Questionnaires.

Questionnaire to teachers

The teachers' questionnaire is composed of three main parts.

The first part concerns the background characteristics of the teachers and is made of three (3) questions. The first question is about the group to which addressee teachers belong. In the second one, I have tried to know their academic and professional qualifications whereas the third one seeks to know how long they have been teaching.

Questionnaire to learners.

Twenty-one (21) questions divided into two groups compose the questionnaire addressed to learners. The first group is about the disciplinary aspect while the second one treats of the classroom observation matters

Classroom Observations and Interviews.

My observations of classes were held in four technical schools including: "Lycée Technique of Porto-novo, Lycée technique Coulibaly of Cotonou and Lycee Agricole of Sekou". In all these schools, I have observed teachers in a classroom situation.

Observations were based on some criteria which are: the use of the board, how the teachers distribute questions to learners, learners' reaction, the TTT and STT, how learners concentrate on the task given by the teacher.

Above all, I have used an observation checklist on the role of a teacher, from *The Good Language Teacher* by Luke PRODROMOU, in *Teacher Development Making the Right Moves* edited by Thomas KRAL.

The role of the teacher observation checklist I have used is as follows:

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER Observation checklist		
Questions on the observation checklist	Options	
a. Was the lesson mostly testing or mostly teaching ?	Testing	Teaching
b. Did comprehensive questions check comprehension ?	Yes	No
3. Did the teacher give reasonably accurate answers to students' questions ?	Yes	No
4. Was the teacher's reaction to student errors encouraging or discouraging ?	Encour	Discour
5. Was the teacher sarcastic ?	Yes	No
6. Did the teacher shout for no good reason ?	Yes	No
7. Was the teacher friendly ?	Yes	No
8. Was there any humour in the lesson ?	Yes	No
9. Were the students relaxed ?	Yes	No
10. Did the teacher use the students' names enough ?	Yes	No
11. Did the teacher look at students as he/she was speaking ?	Yes	No
12. Did the teacher vary his/her position in the room according to the activity ?	Yes	No
13. Did the teacher indicate how much time students had to do an activity ?	Yes	No
14. Did the teacher use the board to record useful information ?	Yes	No
15. Did the teacher use checking techniques to focus students' attention? (like questioning, elicitation)	Yes	No
16. Did the teacher give students individual attention ?	Yes	No
17. Did the students get the opportunity to use English to talk about topics that interest them ?	Yes	No
18. Did the teacher speak differently to "weak" and "good" students ?	Yes	No
19. Did the teacher's voice vary sufficiently to make his/her meaning clear and command students' attention ?	Yes	No
20. How many different roles did the teacher adopt during the lesson ?		

NB: Preferable answers are in bold.

Interviews

For interviews, I have made use of interview sheets to both principals, heads of teachers and the teacher’s advisers. Some of the interviews are recorded while others are not.

Administrative Board, teacher’s adviser and inspectors.

The interview sheet to principals and headmasters is made up with fourteen (14) questions divided into three main parts. The first part is composed of three (03) questions related to the general information on the interviewees. The second part, composed of six (06) questions, helps me to know how the interviewees manage disciplinary matters in their schools, the means they dispose of, how often and their reasons of appealing to disciplinary committees, what they suggest to contain hot headedness of the youth that leads most students to indiscipline and impoliteness in their schools today; whether and how often teachers in their schools are visited; what are the reports teacher advisers and inspectors leave them about the observed teachers; whether they organise training towards the observed teachers as far as their shortcomings are concerned.

The third part, made up with four (04) questions related the film “Entre les Murs” want to know whether the interviewees once viewed the film, whether they would like to view it or dispose of it in their schools for teachers and the reasons why they would; whether they dispose of devices of reading audio-visual records in their schools.

Frequency at which teachers observe their own teaching

Table 2: Frequency at which teachers observe their own teaching/Peer teaching and class visits

	Frequency				Percentage			
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
How often do teachers observed their own teaching?	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
How often do teachers observe other teachers’ teaching ?	00	00	10	20	00	00	33.33	66,66
How often are teachers visited by inspectors/teachers’ advisors	00	02	05	23	00	6.66	16.66	76.66
Total of teachers	00	02	06		00	06.66	20	

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS AND THE FILM “ENTRE LES MURS”

This section is mainly concerned with the presentation and the discussion of the data collected in order to point out the contribution of this paper to teachers’ self- development and teacher training.

Presentation of the findings

This presentation takes into account the responses from the questionnaires to teachers and learners on the one hand and data from the interviews and observations of some classes and on the other hand. Furthermore, an analysis of all these data is conducted in a methodical way. For discipline problem

Twenty-nine (29) out of (30) questioned teachers recognize that they sometimes insult their learners.

- Half the questioned teachers opt for punishing learners in case they insult or shout at them. However, more than a third of them say that they should take it easy and report the case to the school authorities, while some but not many opt for sending them out.
- Less than a third of the teachers affirm that sending learners out can help them in managing their class. 25.33% of all the teachers think that it makes them change. But these two arguments are rejected by other teachers who think that it rather comforts the learners in their position or doesnot have any impact on them.

- All of the teachers never observe their own teaching.
- -Twenty teachers out of thirty (30) say that they never observe their peers' teaching, and only ten (10) sometimes, observed the peers' teaching.
- Most of the teachers are never been inspected, either by inspectors or by teachers' advisers. But more than a quarter of the respondent teachers still confess that they have never been inspected.
- Unanimously, all the respondent teachers recognise that they gain something from classroom observations.

The respondent teachers say that through classroom observations, they can gain professional development, narrow the gap between the view they used to have about teaching and the reality as well as self- knowledge. Unanimously, teachers testify that classroom observations contribute to their self- development in a way that they help teachers gain experience, observe pedagogical attitudes, compare teaching methodologies and observe classroom managerial attitudes as well. It also helps them readjust their teaching, check the three dimensions of teaching and remediate their teaching methodology.

Unanimously, all of the respondent teachers affirm that their schools do not dispose of electronic and communicative devices such as taper recorders, VCD readers, DVD readers which can help them view some records or compact disks. The teachers confess that they would appreciate the existence of class observations in form of a tape or a CD in their respective schools.

Learners' responses to questionnaire

- Slightly more than half of the learners confess that they are learning in a fearless atmosphere. But it important to mention that 27.77 think that the atmosphere in their classrooms is hostile..
- All the learners, except nine, affirm that their teachers are sometimes visited by inspectors or teachers' advisers.
- More than half of the respondent students say that they are serious during a classroom observation while 39.44% of them affirm

being more serious. Only 6.11% of them confess to show the same attitude.

- Students say that their teachers make them work individually, in pairs and in groups so that they discover knowledge by themselves during class observations as well as they explain the lesson more. Very few of them say that teachers just make them copy the lesson.
- Overwhelming number of learners wish their teachers to be visited. However, 13.88% of them do not.

Out of the 150 students that wish to see their teacher being observed, 120 say they wish so because it will oblige teachers to give the best of themselves; 97 of them also agree that it will make the teachers prepare the lesson correctly and finally 46 of those learners wish it because it will make their teacher progress in the syllabus.

Interviews and observations of some classes

Interviews

Administrative board, teachers' advisers and inspectors

All the interviewees targeted for this paper are civil servants and principals of schools. In addition, they all have been in the profession for more than twenty years.

Unanimously, they affirm that teachers are often observed at teaching once a trimester. None of them have viewed the film "Entre Les Murs" before so they wish they would happen to view it. Furthermore, they would appreciate its availability in their schools for the good of their teacher too because it would certainly contribute to their improvement, self- development and would also help them experiment another way of managing classroom difficulties as well as readjust their methods and pedagogy of teaching. They also affirm that they help organise training for their teachers through the head teachers of each subject when visitors reproach something to the teachers

As for interviews with teachers' advisers, teachers observe neither their own teachings nor their peers' correctly. Teacher advisers say that when teachers are not all eager to be visited, some of them always dodge when they hear teacher advisers are around; all of the teacher advisers we

have interviewed say that their job is very difficult due to the spread of the zone of intervention and the few number they are on the ground, added to the fact that four out of the eleven they are in Ouémé-Plateau department are being retired now. A teacher adviser even confesses that this can also explain the fact that some teachers have never been observed for more than two or three years. Problems encountered in visiting classes go from teachers' avoiding being observed on a real aspect of teaching, because they think that they are being bothered by visitors. Teacher advisers wish the authorities would reduce their teaching hours so that they can be really free to visit and counsel teachers. In fact, as qualified teachers, pedagogical advisers also teach fourteen (14) hours a week in a school, which prevent them from visiting colleagues regularly.

Observations of some classes

Problems noticed during the observations of the classes visited run from the use of the board to the distribution of teachers' glances towards their learners. It comes out that teachers badly use the board; some of them are ill-dressed; they badly use the space of the room; they do not distribute equitably their glances to learners when they are conducting lessons.

Analysis of the findings and the film "Entre les Murs"

Analysis related to the questionnaire responses and the film "Entre les Murs"

This part of the analysis focuses on the data collected from the different targeted populations I have encountered. A meticulous analysis of their answers helps me to conclude that Beninese educational system at the technical secondary level is being emptied of experienced civil servant teachers. Under contract teachers – ACE and ACL – are most the ones teaching in technical secondary schools. This is due to the rupture formerly observed in the recruitment of teachers by government more than two decades ago. This is the tip of the iceberg. Most of them lack professional qualifications, another very important factor of the profile a teacher must satisfy before entering a classroom. For more than ten years Teacher Training College have been closed but learners need teachers in

classes which have become overcrowded. Thus, unqualified teachers had to take care of the classes. This gave rise to the fall of learners' level.

Tense classes are another problem in technical secondary schools, even though most of the teachers affirm that the atmosphere in their classrooms favours learning. The atmosphere in the classrooms is tense, hostile to learning. I do not doubt this assertion because most of the teachers are professionally unqualified, which means that they may not even know anything about a hostile atmosphere to learning or teaching. Only 24.66% of the teachers affirm that they do not insult learners, that is to say that about two thirds insult learners. All the same, there are teachers who send learners out because the later insult or shout at them: They think sending learners out will make them change or help in managing the class. I take a contrary view since this is not always true because some results prove it as eighteen point sixty-six (18.66) percent of the same teachers mean that it has no impact on learners while other twenty percent (20%) insist that it rather comforts them in their position. What about 'classroom management courses' at the Teacher Training College then? Teachers really need to be trained. I do not mean the cyclical training organized by DIP or by DDESFTP, but training at a TTC which will take those teachers for a whole one or two years, as it is the case with us now.

Teachers have never observed their own teachings added to the sixty-six-pointpercent (66.66%) that have never observed others' teachings. It is a dangerous state of things. What about the annual gatherings organised by DIP and DDESFTP? My immediate solution to this problem of qualification is classrooms' observations. As a matter of fact, a teacher may become a good teacher by observing his own teaching or his peers' ones. This will help him to improve a lot. For example, instead of sending systematically a learner out for misbehaviour, he can proceed as M. Marin does during the explanation text sequence towards 00:03:40: students pointing out difficult words from the reading text, Mr. Marin's methodology is very interesting. He gets his learners to find/guess the meaning of difficult words. He always seizes all the situations created by learners to stop the course of

his lessons and changes them into exploitable situations, a sort of socio-constructivism.

In the same sequence but at 00:04:00, when learners cannot find the rationale of the use of the imperfect subjunctive, he does not get angry but rather patiently makes them get through. For the worst situations, he simply leaves them so as not to waste all his time. This is a diplomatic way of dealing with the timing. When a teacher plans his activities, he must do his best to stick to the timing. At the first view, "Entre les Murs" deals with disciplinary concerns. More than half of the respondent teachers say that they will punish or systematically send learners out for misbehaviour and indiscipline. I think that it should not be the case but rather, the teacher must get the whole class to analyse and judge the default learner's attitude, as Mr. Marin does when Khoumba refuses to read and shout at her teacher: Sequence 5. Moreover, beyond the attitudinal aspect of this sequence, there is an aspect of laziness, something which is nowadays frequently noticeable among learners. Mr. Marin's students have been given an extract to read at home but none of them have done it. Nevertheless, he does not send his learners out for that onus contrary to the respondent teacher who appeals to a disciplinary committee for that matter.

In fact, sending learners out is not of the prerogatives of a teacher. Benin is a country where neither teachers nor learners really know their right and duties. In developed countries where they do, such a thing will never happen. Otherwise, the learner's parent will sue the teacher in a court. Only a discipline prefect can decide to send a learner out. This is the reason why Mr. Marin does not send only Souleymane out but he himself follows him till to the principal's office: Sequence 12.

Therefore, teachers who appeal to a disciplinary committee for laziness should stop immediately. So, should also do those who systematically send their learners out for insult or shout reasons. Teacher must try as much as possible to stay in the spread of what laws give them as prerogatives. It is Mr. Marin's role and right to force Khoumba to read. All the same, it is not obvious that every teacher will leave the treatment of Khoumba's attitude to the end of the lesson as Mr. Marin does

it. Actually, only few questioned teachers affirm they will take it easy and report the case to the school authorities later: The respondents who think of sending learners systematically out should ask the default learners to meet them at the end of the course as Mr. Marin as Khoumba.

Analysis of the observation of some classes, interviews and the film "Entre Les Murs"

If most people think that the film "Entre les Murs" deals with attitudinal aspects of the different actors in secondary schools, that is beyond this. There is something different, related to pedagogy, methodology, the use board, the use of the space of the room.

From the observation of classes and the interviews, the following aspects are pointed out:

- Teachers badly use the board;
- Some of them are ill-dressed;
- They badly handle the space they dispose of in the room;
- Teachers do not distribute equitably their glances towards learners;
- Classrooms are overcrowded.

As a matter of fact, the use of the chalk board is a serious problem in schools. I think that teachers should also learn to use efficiently the board especially dealing with learners aged 12 to 16, whose spirits are in perpetual wandering. The board and chalk help to organise methodically the progression of learning, to organise its different steps into a hierarchy. Thus, Teachers are generally advised to divide the board into stable zones and unstable zones. The former has to contain the classical steps of the lesson as it progresses and the latter will contain elements which punctually help in the explanation and understanding of the lesson and must be cleaned once the explanation is given. In most of the classrooms visited, teachers do not use their board efficiently.

They should also avoid what Mr. Marin does when he writes his example sentence "*Il faut que jesoisenforme.*" Mr. Marin writes the sentence through the borders of two consecutive columns of his board, which is not too much pedagogical. Inattentive learners – and there are many in his class – will get confused later and mix up everything. Another misuse of board is the one related to the

size of the board as seen with the inspection lesson teachers have conducted. They have divided the board into three columns and indeed they are deceived while conducting the second activity of their planning. This suggests that teachers ought to take all these aspects into account while preparing the lesson.

As far as the dressing is concerned, it is a truism to affirm that dressing is a language. This means that consciously or unconsciously, a teacher in a teaching situation puts in learners' spirits ideas more or less confused on the social ranks and the notion of equity when he or she is ill-dressed. A well trained teacher is the one that pays attention to his way of occupying the space of his classroom, what Edward T. Hall defines as *"The study of the perception and use of space by human. ... It fundamentally treats of the notion of distance out of the field of consciousness"*

In Benin technical schools and particularly large size classes, it is quite impossible to respect scrupulously this notion of 'territoriality' where a teacher appropriately occupies the space so that his physical presence and above all, that of his voice, can be equitably felt by all his learners. He goes round the class through a unique trajectory. Those of his learners who seat far from his path have also the impression of being far from the learning at stake. It is obvious and easy to see some students doing something very different from the activity the teacher asks them to do. For example at 00:07:21 of the film "Entre les Murs", Souleymane is rather playing a game with his mobile phone while the teacher asks them to write their name on a sheet of paper. Another illustration of the distribution of the glance in the film appears at the 00:15:03 when Henriette demands Sarmatha what the time is. Due to the respect of the distribution of glance, Mr. Marin knows and reprimands Henriette, who therefore is definitely aware of the teacher's having a glance at her. Another aspect of the observation of the classes visited is the lack of essential classroom objects for learners: no dictionaries, no visual aids available for learners in the classes. It is a more serious problem since it may happen that learners and even teachers want to check meaning of words. The class has to be stopped so that the teacher

sends for a dictionary. School authorities and principals have to think about supplying their classrooms, especially the language ones, with necessary and essential school materials.

I have been very surprised and indignant at seeing learners not listening to their teacher. As soon as the bell rings for breakfast time, learners will systematically leave Mr. Marin in the classroom no matter what they are doing as lesson. This raises another problem teacher has with planning and timing their lessons. Teacher should bear this in mind. Contrary to all the classes I have visited, where the students would stay in the room beyond ten o'clock for morning lessons and five o'clock for afternoon classes, in the film, whenever the bell rings, learners pick up their belongings and leave. This state of thing can also be understood when people read the psychology of children especially the one of the pre-pubescent.

The lack of professional training of teachers leads to many problems on both the teacher' and the learners' sides. *One can imagine easily here all the ordinary damages brought about when the teacher's awkward behaviours are followed up with verbal threats and insults.* Mr. Marin pays the price of his impertinence when he dare treat the students' delegates as "skank" following the latter's bad attitude at the class meeting. Mr. Marin is forced to consider the impact of his word on the atmosphere in which Souleymane's incident occurs: Sequence 15. To sum up, let's cite Professor Gabriel BOKO who says *"It is important that a teacher know and no more forget that his dressing, his way of considering each learner, his way of distributing glances and floor in a class, his way of managing his interactions with each and all the learners maybe and is often determinant to the mental and intellectual blossoming of each learner."*

On the disciplinary field, I have not met any impoliteness during the observations of classes and the contrary will be surprising because of the nature of the human beings. Human beings become suddenly more serious when they know that they are being observed at doing something, particularly by a stranger and this is natural. More than four fifths of learners are serious during class visits, not only most teachers make learners discover

knowledge and make use of the different teaching/learning strategies but learners questioned also affirm that teachers explain more their lesson during class visits. It is for learners' benefits and this is why they find reasons to wish their teachers to be regularly visited I am conscious that I cannot get the entire reactions, the whole undesirable behaviours from the learners the more so as the recordings and observations are not secretly done. So, for a truly bad behaviour on part the students, I have neither observed any, nor have I observed any insult from teachers towards students, and the reasons are the same.

However, I have seen from the different instruments used for the observations that teachers make a lot of mistakes. This is the unconscious character of their teaching personality. It is due to the non-qualification, the lack of training on the one hand. It is mostly due to the fact that teachers do not observe their own teachings nor regularly the ones of their peers on the other hand. The vast majority of the respondent teachers confess that they never observed their own teachings. Many factors can explain this state of thing. First, it may be due to the unavailability of the recording materials. Teachers earn insufficient wages that can hardly allow them to buy any. Second, they are not even aware of the importance of exploring their teachings. Final, let's point out that some do not know they can do so.

My quest of data collection somehow awoke teachers' attention of the benefits of the awareness of their own teachings and unanimously since the respondent teachers affirm that they can gain something from observations, either their own or their peers'. Indeed, quite the total respondents say that through classroom observations they can gain professional development, they can recognize their errors from their failures and therefore narrow the gap between their imagined view about teaching and reality even though only thirty-eight persons – but more than the half – say they can gain self-knowledge.

SUGGESTIONS TO SCHOOL ACTORS

The results of this study indicate that slightly less than three quarters of teachers in technical schools are not professionally qualified, laying

therefore a doubt on the quality of the training given to learners. In addition, they are not well mould with experience and some of them confess not having been inspected nor observed by their peers. This constitutes a hindrance to the improvement of the quality of the education in Beninese schools. However, they are positioned in classes and more dangerously in beginners' and exam takers' classes. This situation consequently influences the learners' results at the end of the year. Even if teachers claim that the onus lies in learners' hands, they must recognise that they too bear some responsibility in learners' failure and disruptive behaviours. Considering all these problems and their impact on learners' performance, it is necessary to suggest what follows to the different actors of the educational system in Benin.

To school authorities

Firstly, it is urgent that the Government organise training for non-qualified teachers who are already in service. Secondly, the Government should think of recruiting and training experienced teachers into inspectors because inspectors are rare in Beninese educational system. Thirdly, it is urgent to re-open pre-service teacher training institutions for all teachers before their first contact with learners. Moreover, it must be compulsory for those willing to teach to receive a pre-service training which will give them the required aptitudes for the teaching job. The re-opening and equipment of all the Higher Teacher Training Colleges in the country will sharply reduce the high rate of non-qualified teachers in technical schools.

Fourthly, the Pedagogical Inspection of Department must do their best to plan inspections and observations for teachers at least once a trimester. Administrative board affirms that their teachers are being observed once a trimester but the reality is that not all the teachers questioned in the frame of this paper responded positively. Of course, this department will say that they do not have enough personnel who can visit all the technical schools in their territory, but I think that in collaboration with the Human Resources Department, they can provide one or two schools with a teacher's adviser and the schools in the same

municipality with an inspector so that all the advisers in his territory will rely on him for any advice. Fifthly, administrative board have to plan the buying of a VCD/DVD reader and a TV set in their school budgets despite all the difficulties that they are encountering in the management of the tremendous problems in Beninese educational system today. This will allow teachers in their schools to view educational documentaries, especially Laurent Cantet's film "Entre les Murs".

Sixthly, towards authorities in charge of Teacher Training Colleges, they should impose on every trainee, the recording of their teaching experience exam in a VCD format that they ought to deposit with their memoire sanctioning their training as a qualified teacher. This will greatly contribute to the improvement of the quality of the training received at TTS all the more since the trainee can also view it later again to self-develop. Any trainee at a TTC can view as many as they want so as to compare teaching methodologies, discipline management attitudes as well as pedagogical behaviours. They will be more familiar with those concepts before finishing with the TTC.

Teachers

Results from the questionnaires and interviews prove that teachers do not observe themselves, nor do they always observe their peers' teachings. This is scandalous and very risky for themselves on the one hand, and for the innocent souls they are in charge of processing in this industry of education on the other hand. Therefore, the following recommendations are important:

First, they must plan with their head teacher during weekly meetings on visiting themselves at teaching. This can be done once two weeks so that the following week gathering will be for discussions. Here, peer teachers have to be invited and they should be really objective during their critics and to the observed teacher to be open-minded and accept criticism from his peers as it is always formative.

Secondly, teachers can record their own teaching experiences that they can view later to check what went well or wrong during that particular section of teaching. Of course, neither schools nor teachers are well equipped with electronic devices such as video recorders that are

needed for this. Nevertheless, the extraordinary development of new technologies for information and communication has made all these electronic materials cheaper for anyone to buy them. Thus, teachers can provide themselves with camera recorders that they can display in a corner of the room to record the lesson. We are convinced that it is feasible and they will be able to do it provided they will it.

Thirdly, teachers can buy and view Laurent Cantet's film "Entre Les Murs" so as to meditate on the attempts of solutions to different problems the film raised. They will for instance compare their ways of solving disciplinary matters with those used by Mr. François Marin and his colleagues in their multicultural class of the inner-city High School Françoise Dolto. Fourthly, teachers should prioritise their training and self-development, the sole guarantee for their professional development to become a truly certified and accomplished teacher. Fifthly, learners say that teachers insult them as some teachers confess it themselves. Teachers should stop insulting learners. This can be a source of blockade for the learner. Jean Pliya will say "A little thing is needed to divert the normal course of a life ! ... An error of judgment may be the flip that puts into action the fatal route."

Indeed, a little insult towards the learner and this can bring about the diversion of his or her entire fate. So, teachers had better advise than insult learners.

To learners

Learners are not really concerned with this paper. Yet, this chapter of recommendations cannot be closed without a word towards this actor of the system.

Firstly, they have to know what brings them to school. There are learners who are very obstinate and evasive in class. They do not always follow what is going on in the classroom. Many reasons, among which the following, explain this state of things:

- *Physiologic needs* such as hunger, thirst, sleep are dominant and they constitute the basis of motivation. When they are not satisfied, nothing is worth for learners. For example, learners who are often without

breakfast or suffer malnutrition become generally lethargic, apathetic and inactive. Their learning capacity seriously diminishes.

- *Security needs*: learners have to be secured in their learning environment. School authorities and teachers must take into consideration security hindrance to students. The latter will not feel secured if there is not light for example in the room, if the teachers for instance are alcoholic. The familial environment also plays a role in this security. Parents need to provide their children with appropriate conditions to learning.

CONCLUSION

Learning can take place in formal and informal contexts - through education and training, work and life experience. A teacher can learn from peers, mentors, supervisors, even his own students; as well as books, research and focused teacher development sessions. But, it is very important that he learn from his own deeds, his own teachings. Classroom observations are one of the ways a teacher can plan and organize his learning at this stage in his professional life. In a system like Beninese, where the majority of the teachers are unqualified added to the lack or the insufficient number of inspectors and teacher advisers, teachers have to prioritize their self-observations based on relevant instruments of observation.

Reflecting on what they do in their lessons, why and how they do things and what the effects on their learners are, helps them to improve their understanding of the learning and teaching processes. Making a video recording or taped recording of a lesson adds to reflective practice, because it provides an accurate and objective record. It shows teachers exactly what they did, what their learners did, reminds them of things they may have forgotten and shows them things they may not have noticed. Using recordings as a basis for reflection helps teachers to identify where they can take action to change and develop.

As a whole, as teachers say it themselves, classroom observations either their own or those of

their peers brings a lot of benefits to teachers. They can gain professional development recognizing what can be identified as successes and failures in a teaching sequence, which will permit them to bridge the gap between their imaginative view of teaching and reality. Through classroom observations, teachers can readjust their teaching methodology as they will be able to check the three dimensions of teaching i.e. methodological, academic and human dimensions of teaching. Everything that can help them to self-develop and contribute positively to the processing of learners into well-finished or semi-finished goods competitive in the job market. All this is possible provided teachers or schools dispose of adequate instruments of audio recording or video recording of classroom activities. Teachers have to fetch from their nothingness means of buying those devices so as not to wait for a school to do it in their place.

In this paper, classroom observations are viewed in form of record like Cantet's film "Entre les Murs" as a tool to teachers' self-development and teacher training. So much so that they can record their own and revisit it whenever they feel like using the different instruments of observation we have suggested them previously. I am not saying that teachers should no more think of their training at a Teacher Training College nor am I saying that government should not anymore think about organizing training on behalf the teachers no matter whether it is called pre-service or in-service training. I am just convinced that by doing so, a lot of things will change in Beninese educational system. Instead of dodging whenever inspectors or teacher advisers pass in a school, teachers will always feel ready and eager to meet them.

REFERENCES

- Arcario, P. (1994). Post-observation conferences in *TESOL teacher education programs*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Ashby, P., Hobson, A., Tracey, L., Malderez, A., Tomlinson, P., Roper, T., Chambers, G. and Healy, J. (2008). *Beginner teachers' experiences of initial teacher preparation, induction and early professional*

- development: *A review of literature*. London: DCSF
- Bailey, K.M., Curtis, A. & Nunan, D. (2001). *Pursuing professional development*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Barlett, L. (1990). *Teacher development through reflective teaching*. In J.C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 202-214). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bailey, K. M., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (1998). Undeniable insights: The collaborative use of three professional development practices. *TESOL Quarterly* 32(3), 546-556.
- BOKO, G. (2009). *Psychologie et Guidance en Milieu Africain: Introduction à une relation éducative plus réussie entre éducateurs, parents et enfants africains*. CAAREC Editions, 2009.
- Fanselow, J. F. (1987). *Breaking rules: Generating and exploring alternatives in language teaching*. White Plains, NY: Longman..
- Farrell, T.S.C. (2004b). *Reflective practice in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fanselow, J. F. (1988). "Let's see": Contrasting conversations about teaching. *TESOL Quarterly* 22(1), 113-30.
- Garet, Porter, Desmoine, Birman, Kwang, What makes professional development effective? *American Education Research Journal* 38(4) 915-946. 2001
- Gebhard, J. G. (1992). Awareness of teaching: Approaches, benefits, tasks. *English Teaching Forum* 30(4), 2-7.
- Gebhard, J.G. (2005). Awareness of teaching through action research: Examples, benefits, limitations. *JALT Journal* 27(1).
- Gebhard, J.G. (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign or second language: A teacher self-development and methodology guide, second edition*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Huling-Austin, J. A synthesis of research on teacher induction programs and practices; *paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans*
- Jersild, A.T. (1955). *When teachers face themselves*. New York: Teachers College Press
- NEKPO, C. (1999). *Education et Culture*, Tome 2. CNPMS, Bénin
- PLIYA, J. (1987). *Les Tresseurs de Corde*, Hatier-CEDA, Paris,
- Richards, J.C. & Farrell, T.S.C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wong H; Induction programs that keep new teachers teaching and improving; *NASSP Bulletin* Vol. 88 No. 638 March 2004