

# EDUCATION REVIEW



## MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-DEAN

David Smith, Professor, *vice-dean (Research)*

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to present you with the first issue of the *uOttawa Education Review*. The intent of the *Review* is to provide you, members of the Faculty of Education's extended family and education partners in the community, access to current educational research conducted by our professors and graduate students. My hope—and the instructions given to authors who wish to publish in the *Review*—is that you should find interesting ideas and practices in these articles that will be useful to you in your work as an educator.

I am grateful to Prof. Liliane Dionne for her work as Guest Editor for this inaugural edition of the *uOttawa Education Review*. Prof. Dionne has organized the issue around the theme of professional development for teachers. The articles address reflective practice, professional learning communities, and the place of humour in teaching. I hope you find them informative and useful.

We are planning future issues of the *Review*, and I would be pleased to receive your thoughts and ideas to assist us in making the *uOttawa Education Review* as appealing as we can. Please do not hesitate to share your comments with me by email at [vdre@uottawa.ca](mailto:vdre@uottawa.ca).  
Happy reading!

**David Smith, Professor**  
vice-dean (Research)

## CONTENTS

How the learning community can help adjust pedagogical practices to curriculum changes: Nadia's experience with environmental education <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	2
The place of humour in learning and teaching second languages <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	4
The power of reflective practice in the professional development of leaders <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	6
How a professional learning community can contribute to teachers' professional developments <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	8

# HOW THE LEARNING COMMUNITY CAN HELP ADJUST PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES TO CURRICULUM CHANGES: NADIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Liliane Dionne, PhD, Jules Remy Batobo

In 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Education started the process for the incorporation of environmental education (EE) in the province's academic programs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). For the Ontario science and technology curriculum, grades 1 to 8, these recommendations coincided with the revision of the curriculum. Once the program had been revised, how were teachers to integrate the new EE content into their teaching? To provide some insight into this integration, the experience of Nadia, a fifth grade teacher, is analysed. Through her participation in a learning community in a Franco-Ontarian school, the teacher incorporated successfully the environmental content proposed by the curriculum changes.

## How to adjust pedagogical practices to curriculum changes?

When changes are made to programs, most teachers gradually incorporate the new material into their teaching (Van Driel, Beijaard and Verloop, 2001). In terms of pedagogical practices around EE, a study in 2005 by Carr in the United States found that only 67% of educators included environmental education in their teaching. It seems that if teachers are left to their own devices, few will make changes to their repertoire of practices.

As a way to support teachers in adjusting their practices in response to program changes, some authors opt for the creation of a learning community within the school (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). While not a panacea, this method of professional development facilitates the adoption of a reflective approach, the mutual engagement of educators in their development and the establishment of sustainable pedagogical practices (Savoie-Zajc, 2010). According to Schussler (2003), the learning community meets certain needs of the teacher which facilitate the acquisition of skills, these needs being cognitive, affective, and ideological. By meeting cognitive needs, the learning community enables the teacher to acquire new knowledge and pedagogical practices. On an affective level, the teacher finds the sup-

port he or she requires to continue the development task. Lastly, by satisfying ideological needs, the learning community enables educators to affirm their pedagogical values. In short, it is not enough to simply place the new curriculum in a teacher's hands for that individual to incorporate the new content. If the teacher is to develop professionally, he or she must be supported on a cognitive, affective and ideological level. We will see how a learning community met the cognitive, affective and ideological needs of Nadia so that she was able to incorporate environmental content in her teaching.

## The learning community supports Nadia in integrating environmental education

At Nadia's school, a learning community was created with the commitment of five teachers of grade 4 to 6 and one university researcher around a group project involving a science fair. Here is how the learning community enabled her to acquire a winning EE practice.

## Meeting Nadia's cognitive needs to integrate environmental education

Under the "environment and saving energy" theme of the Grade 5 science and technology curriculum, Nadia suggested a project involving building models of energy-saving houses to the students in her class. The children built rooms of the house where energy consumption can be reduced to better respect the environment, such as the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom.

The teacher found information in her learning community to guide her students to relevant document sources. These documents were used to illustrate directly on the models the means used to reduce the environmental impact, such as reducing water use or electricity consumption or recycling materials, or using energy-saving light bulbs, low-flow shower heads, etc. Use of healthier materials to build the houses, such as paint without volatile organic compounds (VOC), was also proposed.

*Liliane Dionne is associate professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. She is the principal investigator of the Science ECO 21 Educational Research Unit. She teaches educational research methods at the graduate level, as well as science and environmental education at the bachelor level. Her research activities focus on the professional development of teachers, science and environmental education, learning communities for professional development, as well as university-school partnerships for teacher education. Professor Dionne has published many peer-reviewed publications on these topics, and she contributes to international research projects.*

*Jules Remy Batobo is a certified teacher at the Ontario College of Teacher. He graduated in 2010 from the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa with a bachelor degree in the concentration primary-junior. He has also a teaching certificate of the MELS in Quebec, complemented with a master degree in literature.*



Through the learning community, Nadia developed expertise in environmental education, precisely in the area of energy-saving and acquired pedagogical skills that gave her students greater autonomy. Through critical reflection on her teaching, she adopted a balanced practice in science, combining hands-on activities with memorization of key concepts. She also leans towards interdisciplinary teaching of science, which offers a flexible approach for introducing environmental content in her lessons.

#### Meeting Nadia's affective and ideological needs for integrating environmental education

On an affective level, Nadia's involvement in the learning community provided her with the support she required to ensure the success of the environmental project. Without that involvement, she would not have been able to experience this science fair process, which takes time and resources. On

an ideological level, Nadia decided to develop her students' environmental conscience. From the awareness gained during the fair, the teacher wanted to share her experience in order to encourage her colleagues to introduce EE. She believes that the students will also be better equipped to adopt environmentally-responsible behaviour. Nadia describes her students as "energy-saving ambassadors" since they will bring their new attitudes home, thereby influencing their parents.

#### Conclusion

The Ontario elementary science and technology curriculum was enriched in 2008 with environmental education content. These additions may be difficult for many teachers to incorporate due to a lack of time and resources (Carr, 2005) or even interest. Nadia's experience in a learning community shows that EE can be incorporated into a teacher's repertoire of practices by meeting cognitive, affective and ideological needs. This grade 5 teacher had the opportunity to become involved in an environmental science fair with an energy-saving theme. Although not a panacea (Savoie-Zajc, 2010), the learning community enabled Nadia to adjust her pedagogical practices and to develop professionally in this field. She learned about saving energy and developed an innovative pedagogical approach for the project. She was supported in her project by the learning community so that it was completed successfully. Lastly, Nadia's environmental values were affirmed and communicated to her students. This project shows that the learning community represents a valuable initiative for guiding teachers faced with curriculum changes. In the context illustrated, Nadia's experience reveals the potential for enriching the teaching of science and technology by developing the students' knowledge as well as their environmental conscience.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>Article was translated from original French version.

#### References

- Carr, D. (2005). *Incorporating environmental content: An online survey of K-12 teachers in Kentucky concerning current educational practices and preferences for education resources*. Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Environmental Education Council.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 249-305.
- Dionne, L., & Couture, C. (2010). Focus sur le développement professionnel en sciences d'enseignants à l'élémentaire. *Revue Education & Formation*, e-293. Consulted on January 18, 2011 at: <http://utc3.umh.ac.be/revues/index.php?revue=9&page=3>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2007). "Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future." Consulted on January 18, 2011 at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/enviroed/shapingSchools.html>

Savoie-Zajc, L. (2010). Les dynamiques d'accompagnement dans la mise en place de communautés d'apprentissage. *Education & Formation*, e-293. Consulted on January 18, 2011 at: <http://utc3.umh.ac.be/revues/index.php?revue=9&page=3>

Schussler, D. L. (2003). Schools as Learning Communities: Unpacking the Concept. *Journal of School Leadership*, 13, 498-528.

Van Driel, J. H., Beijaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2001). Professional Development and Reform in Science Education: The Role of Teachers' Practical Knowledge. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38, 137-158.

# THE PLACE OF HUMOUR IN LEARNING AND TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGES<sup>1</sup>

Mélissa-Bianca Dubé

## Introduction

Humour has probably been used in teaching and learning second languages before but it is only recently that researchers (Askildson, 2005; Bell, 2009) appear to have focused on the importance and impact that its use may have for teachers and students. Why not include it in teaching since we use it daily in other aspects of our lives? As Askildson (2005) states, the most natural and universal aspect of language that unites all human beings is unquestionably, humour.

## Humour and second language learning theories

Teachers of foreign languages use humour to increase learning of the target language. Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin (2010) put forward two inter-related theories to try to explain how this learning takes place: resolution theory and disposition theory. The first explains how a humorous message is analysed and perceived cognitively, whereas the second evaluates the affective aspects of the same message. Understanding humour is therefore a two-step process. For the stimulus – a joke for example – to be funny, it must first be recognized by the learner and then interpreted. If the learner succeeds with both of these steps, the joke will be understood, but if the process breaks down, the stimulus will not be understood (Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin, 2010).

Askildson (2005) discusses the fact that information retention is due to the fact that humour indirectly impacts the affective factors of learners. In his view, humour in the classroom increases the physical and psychological rapport between individuals. This same rapport between all individuals in the class reduces tension and anxiety and stimulates interest. As Neuliep (1991) reveals in his research of second language teachers, the teachers reported using humour because they see it offers a number of benefits, including relaxation, comfort, the human side of the teacher, the interest of the students and maintenance of classroom control.

Bell (2009) suggests that humour in the second language classroom contains a social and physiological aspect that is beneficial for the learner. In this sense, humour creates a more amusing atmosphere, builds connections between learners who feel more at ease, and makes learning more enjoyable. Humour is also an excellent way to approach certain grammatical and linguistic elements and its use opens doors to a new world by giving us a glimpse of the target culture. The teacher might, for example, ask students to prepare and present orally a dialogue containing jokes in the mother tongue. As a second step, the learners would be asked to translate the jokes. The lesson might then show that certain types of humour lose their relevance and meaning when translated from one language to another and from one culture to another.

Bell (2009) also challenges the approach that humour should only be introduced at the appropriate time (beginner, intermediate, advanced) in the learning of second languages. She also points out that universal, culture-based and linguistic humour can be appreciated by the learner at any level. Universal humour deals with less specific topics, such as how the world functions or general human characteristics. Culture-based humour is built on making fun of specific attitudes of a community. Linguistic humour, for its part, is directly linked to words and syntax, such as charades and word games. (Schmitz, 2002)

It is therefore up to language teachers to choose the right time to introduce amusing or humorous activities. For learning to occur, these opportunities must be linked to the language or cultural elements being studied. For example, experienced learners of basic French or those in French immersion might be asked to create a short oral presentation representing their favourite episode of *Têtes à Claques* (<http://www.tetesclaques.tv>).

*Mélissa-Bianca Dubé - Learning languages has always been of great interest to me. This is why I decided to pursue my postsecondary studies in this field.*

*I graduated from the University of Ottawa in 2005 with an honours BA in second-language teaching. In order to teach in the Ottawa region, I then completed a bachelor of education degree (BEd) in 2006, again at the University of Ottawa.*

*In 2008, I also completed the Honours Specialist Program in FSL, and I am now enrolled part time in the MEd program (concentration in DLS) at uOttawa. Moreover, I am also certified to teach FSL in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools.*

*I presently teach FSL at Colonel By Secondary School and have been with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) for five years.*



### The benefits of humour and laughter in second language learning

Humour is contagious but should it be used openly in the classroom? Chiasson (2010) mentions that learners from classrooms where humour and laughter are present are not afraid to take risks. These learners are more confident and use the second language without fear of being ridiculed or criticized. Laughter and humour also remove affective barriers by reducing stress and embarrassment (Décuré, 2003). They also enable timid learners to more easily interact with other students and to participate in group work.

In addition to all of the above benefits, humour offers language teachers the opportunity to present certain linguistic elements perceived as boring in an amusing, cultural and authentic way. All types of humour (funny stories, jokes, silly activities, mime, funny videos, etc.) in the classroom better prepare learners to deal with the real world since day-to-day, authentic communication is full of verbal and non-verbal humour (Trachtenberg, 1979).

### Conclusion

The authors agree that humour removes the affective filter from learners, reduces their anxiety and creates a more relaxed atmosphere in the language classroom. This contributes to learning the target language as learners feel more comfortable communicating orally and in writing.

Today, it is much easier to acquire authentic, cultural and humorous resources to teach French as a second language. Among others, the Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques ([www.cforp.on.ca](http://www.cforp.on.ca)) and bookstores offer a wide range of games. There are also several Internet sites where you can download fun activities or games, which can easily be modified to the language level of learners. One such game is Jeopardy (<http://www.jmu.edu/madison/teacher/jeopardy/jeopardy.htm>), a favourite among students. It is important to prepare humorous activities carefully by adjusting the type of humour to the abilities of the learners and then you are ready to go.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>Article was translated from original French version.

#### References

- Askildson, L. (2005). Effects of Humor in the Language Classroom: Humor as a Pedagogical Tool in Theory and Practice. *SLAT*, 12, 45-61.
- Bell, N. (2009). Learning about and through humor in the second language classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 13, 241-258.
- Chiasson, P.-E. (2002). Using Humour in the Second Language Classroom. *TESOL Journal*, 8(3). Consulted on March 15, 2010 at: <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Chiasson-Humour.html>
- Décuré, N. (2003). Laissez-les rire ou "faire l'humour, pas la gueule". *Les Langues Modernes*, 4, 25-35.
- Educational Resources for Teachers. Jeopardy PowerPoint. Online. Consulted on August 10, 2010 at: <http://www.jmu.edu/madison/teacher/jeopardy/jeopardy.htm>
- Neuliep, J. (1991). An Examination of the Content of High School Teachers' Humor in the Classroom and the Development of an Inductively Derived Taxonomy of Classroom Behavior. *Communication Education*, 40(10), 342-355.
- Schmitz, J.R. (2002). Humor as a pedagogical tool in foreign language and translation courses. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 15(1), 89-113.
- Têtes à claques. Online. Consulted on August 10, 2010 at: <http://www.tetesaclaques.tv>
- Trachtenberg, S. (1979). Joke-Telling as a Tool in ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 13(1), 89-99.
- Wanzer, M., Frymier, A. and Irwin, J. (2010). An Explanation of the Relationship Between Instructor Humor and Student Learning: Instructional Humor Processing Theory. *Communication Education*, 59(1), 1-18.

# THE POWER OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERS<sup>1</sup>

Sylvie Rochon

What is expected of leadership personnel has evolved a great deal in recent years. In an accountability paradigm, leaders are expected to adopt results-based management where they are held accountable for their school's results and the means used to improve those results. In this context, leaders serve as agents of change by encouraging each member of the staff to engage in professional reflection in order to continuously adjust and improve professional practices in an effort to increase the success of each student. In light of this pressure, it becomes crucial to support the leadership staff and provide them with the necessary tools.

The results of a Canada-wide study clearly show that principals prefer to develop their skills in an informal learning environment where they have discussions with other colleagues, teachers or friends (Isabelle, 2009). Like teachers, they need to get together frequently and talk with colleagues (DuFour, 2010). According to Szakacs (2002), school principals who reflect on their practices improve their performance.

For Perrenoud (2001), reflective practice is more than simply looking back at the event that took place. It is also a means to reveal the professional practice and critically examine the conceptions and professional knowledge that contribute to decision-making. In Jay's view (1999), reflective practice has four goals: (1) to resolve issues by having a better understanding of them and formulating hypotheses for strategies to improve the situation; (2) to review the paradigm in which the individual operates and to examine that individual's way of thinking; (3) to link theory and practice; and (4) to make the individual more aware during his or her daily activities.

Since 2003, the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est de l'Ontario (CECCE) has promoted this approach for developing the competencies of its leadership staff. Reflective practice is at the core of various leadership meetings, whether individual meetings with the leadership director, research-action meetings, formal meetings, or supervision meetings. This experience, both in terms of successes and failures, has led to the identification of the conditions considered essential to the success of meetings built around reflective practice (Rochon, 2009): (1) scheduled and organized; (2) incorporated in a coherent and aligned organizational framework; (3) data-based; (4) included in a reference framework; (5) guided by questioning; (6) based on trust; (7) infused with love!

## Writing reflective practice on the calendar

The first condition for successful reflective practice may seem trite because it highlights the importance of writing the various meetings on the calendar. Despite the goodwill of leaders, the reality is that the demands on their time often require them to set aside meetings that are viewed as a "luxury". In addition, these reflective practice moments must be well organized. What topics will be presented? Why? How will the reflective practice be framed? What is the reference framework? Will we use data? What questions will principals be asked? What are the current needs of our leaders?

## Reflective practice incorporated in a coherent and aligned organizational framework

Reflective practice will be more effective if the leader can make the link between the reflective element and a system priority. On this point, Collette (2008) stresses that a change must be meaningful to the persons affected. He goes on to recommend that there be few changes and that those made be explicit. Does every principal understand the school board's vision, the current priorities for change, and the expectations regarding their leadership? All of these elements must be clarified to ensure the success of a reflective practice.

*Sylvie Rochon specializes in leadership development at the Conseil des écoles catholiques du centre-est de l'Ontario (CECCE). She is also a visiting professor at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education. Since 2002, she has worked as a coach for school principals, and her prime focus has been on the challenges these administrators face in leading the way toward change.*



### A reflective practice that relies on research and the literature

The data reveal an issue and the evolution of our strategies. However, they do not indicate what should be done. The purpose of reflective practice is to improve practices by relying not only on experiential knowledge but also on research and the current literature. Reflective practice helps leaders develop a common understanding.

### Reflective practice guided by questioning

The art of asking questions! The data confirm the issue, the reference framework feeds the reflection and the questions act as a catalyst for discussion and reflective practice. It is by these questions that leadership staff examine their actions and consider different options.

### Reflective practice based on trust

Leadership staff will have authentic discussions if they believe that these exchanges are intended to support not judge. Trust will develop if the individual is given the right to express his or her thoughts and to disagree; in short, if the individual is given the right to be vulnerable. Having trust also means acknowledging that individuals have solutions but that they need time to stop and to reflect in order to find the solutions that work.

### Reflective practice infused with love!

Talking about love in an article may seem frivolous. But are we not more inclined to trust and to reflect out loud in the company of people whom we like? Love opens the door to candour, vulnerability, doubt, mistakes, pride, pleasure ... all the elements essential to reflective practice.

### A reflective practice that is build on data analysis

From a rigour standpoint, it is essential that the issue, reflections and improvement strategies arising from the reflective practice be based on an analysis of the data. What do the data tell us about the issue? What is a problem? What do the data reveal in real time about the outcomes of our improvement strategies?

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>Article was translated from original French version.

#### Bibliography

Collerette, P. (2008). Pour une gestion du changement disciplinée dans l'administration publique in *Télescope*, issue: La gestion du changement stratégique dans les organisations publiques, *Revue d'analyse comparée en administration publique* Vol. 14 n° 3 fall 2008. p.33-50.

DuFour R, DuFour R, Eaker R, Karhanek G. (2010) *Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever it Takes*. Bloomington: Solution-Tree

IsaBelle, C., Lapointe, C., Bouchamma, Y., Clarke, P., Langlois, L. and Leurebourg, R. (August 2008a). Contextes de formation chez les directions d'écoles francophones au Canada. *Revue de recherche appliquée sur l'apprentissage*, 2(1), article 4, p. 1-20.

IsaBelle, C., Lapointe, C., Bouchamma, Y., Clarke, P., Langlois, L. and Gélina Proulx, A. (2009). *Compétences et contextes de formations: Études chez les directions d'écoles francophones au Canada*. Research report. Unpublished. Ottawa.

Jay, J. K. (1999). *Untying the knots: Examining the complexities of reflective practice*. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No ED431732)

Perrenoud, P. (2001). *Développer la pratique réflexive dans le métier d'enseignant*. Issy-les Moulineaux: ESF éditions.

Rochon, S. (2009). *La puissance de la pratique réflexive dans le développement des compétences de leadership des personnes à la direction*. Submission to AFIDES, October 2009.

Szakacs, B. (2002). *Principal Perceptions of their Performance Evaluation Experience: A study of Public School Principals in the state of Wisconsin*. Consulted at Proquest Digital Dissertation. (AAT 3064441) *Contacts*

# HOW A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Dumais, Liliane Dionne, PhD

Teachers looking to resolve an issue with their pedagogical practice have always been able to rely on help from their colleagues to find solutions. In addition to these informal consultations, an increasing number of studies demonstrate the success of collaborative initiatives in an academic environment, such as the professional learning community (PLC), to help adjust the pedagogical practices of educators (Carroll, 2010; Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008). Certain criteria need to be in place for a PLC to function most effectively. This article looks at four key criteria: establishing a clear process and a climate of trust among teachers in the community, focusing on practitioners' strengths, using scientific research to find solutions to problems, and seeking consensus in decisions.

## **A process based on transparency, shared values and trust among teachers**

A transparent PLC process will encourage each member to invest in the community. Clarification of values and goals will be done within the group at the beginning of their commitment to the initiative (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). A brainstorming session might lead to questions, which will encourage the educators to reflect on their practice. By expressing their opinions openly, teachers will be interested in taking part in collaborative projects to enrich their pedagogical practices, which will enhance their commitment to their professional development. The success of a PLC depends largely on the trust established among the teachers (Sammon, 2008). The moderator or person responsible for guiding the community will ensure that hierarchical relationships do not form within the group so that teachers are encouraged to take initiative and assume responsibilities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Fullan, 2003). If they feel like full and active members of a team, teachers will contribute to its success.

## **Fostering learning by focusing on teachers' strengths rather than their weaknesses**

Unfortunately, some teachers have received very little positive reinforcement during their careers. However, recognition and appreciation are essential for educators to be able to learn and advance professionally (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993). The PLC is not a place for pedagogical supervision; it is a place of motivation and assistance to help teachers reflect on their practices and self-assess and seek solutions to problems they encounter in the classroom. In this context, the PLC will be perceived as a non-threatening learning environment; it will be a source of ideas and solutions for adjusting educational practices. Teachers will be reassured that their efforts to improve ways of doing in the classroom, even if unsuccessful, will not be judged by the group (ibid.).

## **Relying on scientific research to fuel discussions**

A positive outcome of the type of professional development encouraged within the PLC is that it promotes rigorous investigation based on scientific research that is valued and viewed as important by teachers. Educators will engage to a greater degree in discussions if the documentation presented at meetings deals directly with their day-to-day classroom practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Such research will demonstrate, for example, the effectiveness of a given practice, will support the analysis of student achievement, or will contribute to a better understanding of provincial or school board statistics (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993). Placing these data in context provides teachers with concrete strategies to improve student performance and can even provide ways to encourage engagement (Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008). When discussions in the PLC are focused on case studies, it is possible to show the links between the new knowledge and student success so that educators can apply this knowledge in the classroom (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993). In short, discussions and trials within the PLC will encourage teachers to draw their own conclusions and will motivate them in their professional development, while ensuring that they are given a sense of control over their task (Dionne & Savoie-Zajc, in press).

*Patrick Dumais teaches at École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges in Ottawa (Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est), where he oversees social sciences programming for grades nine through twelve. He is also completing his MEd in educational administration at uOttawa.*

*Liliane Dionne is associate professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. She is the principal investigator of the Science ECO 21 Educational Research Unit. She teaches educational research methods at the graduate level, as well as science and environmental education at the bachelor level. Her research activities focus on the professional development of teachers, science and environmental education, learning communities for professional development, as well as university-school partnerships for teacher education. Professor Dionne has published many peer-reviewed publications on these topics, and she contributes to international research projects.*





### Seeking consensus when making decisions

If action has to be taken that affects all professionals in the school, it will be especially important for the group to arrive at some consensus on the direction of discussions and the implementation of these group projects. If no consensus is possible within the group, the person guiding the PLC might suggest postponing the decision for a while. The time that the issue will be discussed will be specified by the moderator but no time limit will be placed on reaching a consensus decision (Joyner, Ben-Avie & Comer, 2004). Decision-making in the group will be flexible because the goal is to improve practice. This means that decision may evolve based on new discoveries and research. Such flexibility in the decision-making process will encourage those who tend to oppose change to re-evaluate their position and get on board. If a conflict arises within the PLC, it is important to open the door to future discussions in order to avoid strong opposition that would negatively impact the way that the community functions (ibid.).

### Conclusion

When teachers refuse to change their pedagogical practices, it is often because, in the past, their experiences with change have proven ineffective. The PLC may provide the encouragement and support they need, although this collaborative initiative should not be viewed as a panacea (Savoie-Zajc, 2010). Being part of a PLC that respects the rhythm and needs of teachers, can facilitate the discovery of new strategies to improve pedagogical practices or overcome problems in the classroom. Other forms of professional development are available to educators to enrich their repertoire of practices, such as the continuous learning programs offered by faculties of education. Regardless of the approach adopted, it is important that teachers recognize and accept that they must reflect on their practice, move forward and stay connected to a profession that is constantly evolving. As Carroll (2010) points out, learning is no longer only preparation for a job in education, it is THE job of the educator!

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>Article was translated from original French version.

#### Bibliography

- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (1999). Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 249-305.
- Dionne, L., & Savoie-Zajc, L. (in press). Sens, caractéristiques et retombées de la collaboration entre enseignants et contribution au développement professionnel. In Portelance, L., Borges, C., & Pharand, J. (Eds), *La collaboration dans le milieu de l'éducation. Dimensions pratiques et perspectives théoriques*. Sainte-Foy, QC: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Carroll, T. (2010). *Team Up for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching and Learning*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Document available online at URL: [www.nctaf.org](http://www.nctaf.org)
- Dufour, R., Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work. New Insights for Improving Schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Fullan, M. (2003). *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Joyner, E.T., Ben-Avie, M., & Comer, J.P. (2004). *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development. The Field Guide to Comer School in Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sammon, G. (2008). *Creating and Sustaining Small Learning Communities: Strategies and Tools for Transforming High Schools* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Savoie-Zajc, L. (2010). Les dynamiques d'accompagnement dans la mise en place de communautés d'apprentissage. *Education & formation*, e-293. Consulted on January 18, 2011 at <http://ute3.umh.ac.be/revues/index.php?revue=9&page=3>

Schmoker, M.J., & Wilson, R.B. (1993). *Total Quality Education: Profiles of Schools That Demonstrate the Power of Deming's Management Principles*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International.

# THE EDUCATION REVIEW



uOttawa

Faculté d'éducation  
Faculty of Education

The uOttawa Education Review is a thematic bi-annual publication of the Faculty of Education.

© 2011 University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

Unauthorized reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited.

**Senior Editor**

*David Smith, vice-dean (Research)*  
Faculty of Education  
University of Ottawa

**Guest Editor**

*Liliane Dionne*  
Faculty of Education

**Subscription**

The uOttawa Education Review is currently offered free of charge in PDF format at [www.uottawa.ca/education](http://www.uottawa.ca/education); it is also delivered in bulk, free of charge, to select locations.

The Review is an initiative of the vice-dean (Research).

ISSN# 1925-5497

**For questions, inquiries and comments**

*Anne-Sophie Ducellier*  
Manager, Marketing and Communications  
Faculty of Education  
[anne-sophie.ducellier@uottawa.ca](mailto:anne-sophie.ducellier@uottawa.ca)  
Tel.: 613-562-5800, ext. 4941  
145 Jean-Jacques-Lussier St.  
Ottawa ON Canada K1N 6N5  
[www.uOttawa.ca](http://www.uOttawa.ca)