Teacher professional development through WhatsApp-based Communities of Practice in challenging contexts

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Overview

- Project background
- Country profiles
- Research Design
- Why WhatsApp?
- The Workshop design
- Challenges
- Possibilities
- Taking learning forward
- Papers form the projects
Project background

- Links directly to SDG 4c (By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States)
- Developed from initial work in Pakistan (2013-2015), which led on to an IATEFL Project (CI-ATEFL -- now CINELTA) in 2016) and work with Syrian teachers who are refugees in Jordan in 2016-17 (ESRC IAA -- UoM funding)
- British Council ELTRA project funding (2018-19) exploring good practice in teacher development using WhatsApp: focuses on three countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon and Rwanda
- Links to the English Connects project (2019) -- teachers and trainers were introduced to WhatsApp as a part of this project
Country profiles (nature of the fragility)

**Post conflict** (Côte d’Ivoire and Rwanda)/ in conflict (Cameroon)

**Strikes** (Côte d’Ivoire, Jan - March 2019) -- housing supplements

**Abductions and killing** of English teachers (Cameroon)

**Poor infrastructure** -- limited resources/ poorly maintained schools/ limited reporting systems/ lack of reliable data

**Large classes** -- there is a range, reported to be as high as 150 (we saw 120)

**Low pay** + teachers expected to pay for resources (photocopying, their own textbooks, attending I-ST)
Teaching and Learning context

Many similarities *between* countries

Many differences *within* each country e.g. Cameroon

Apart from the regular classroom and library, my school has a multimedia center where sometimes these learners receive online lessons (audiovisual)

My school is located in a rural area deprived of electricity and thus the school has very limited facilities. Most of the work is manual. However, it's easier to follow up on task given class sizes are very manageable - an average of 25 students per class.
Research design

- Collaborative - partners as co-researchers
- Knowledge sharing across borders

Research Questions

1. How can ‘low tech’ forms of digital communication contribute to language teacher development in challenging contexts?
2. What forms of practice emerge as more established mobile communities collaborate with teachers across borders to establish new mobile communities?
3. What forms of resilience emerge through the ‘low tech’ digital communities?
Rwanda & CM in Cameroon

• Interviews

Côte d'Ivoire

• Workshop design and delivery

Cameroon

• Workshop adaptation and delivery

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda

• Final knowledge sharing

Collaborative and participatory methodology
Why WhatsApp?

Lack of other resources

Access to technology according to the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% (n=100)</th>
<th>Desktop</th>
<th>Laptop</th>
<th>Tablet</th>
<th>Mobile phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon  (n= 20)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire (n= 54)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda    (n=26)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % across all three countries</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affordances of tools: varies according to context and tools
Workshop locations

- Rural, agricultural communities
- Lack of CPD opportunities
- Many English teachers
  - Daloa - 393
  - Abengourou - 104
- Dissemination possibilities
Workshop design (Ia)

Three key areas of learning:

- Communities of Practice as a democratic process
- Size of a Community of Practice
- Need for personal preparation

Sharing knowledge between Rwanda and Cote d’Ivoire

... making it more democratic, like not now we’re becoming the top down people, no no, making it more democratic, having them make their own decisions, that’s what I really learnt from the interviews.

Goma-Bi, I1
Workshop design (Ib)

Sharing knowledge between Cameroon and Côte d’Ivoire

Need for personal preparation

I got prepared before going for the training, so when I reached the place and I realised we had 3 or 4 people who [didn’t have WhatsApp] I mean it was not so difficult for me to tell them because I was prepared for that.

Boahia, I1
Workshop design (Ic)

Sharing knowledge between Cameroon and Côte d’Ivoire

Size of CoPs

Seriously before I was thinking it should be many people, like 50 you know, but C said even 10 or 15 is enough, you know it isn’t necessary, [this was ] one reason even we just focus on 20, but we were expecting like 100, because for us it’s a training we need many many people, we don’t need many many people.

Goma-Bi, I1
Workshop design (II)

Building on local knowledge in Côte d'Ivoire

Need to change teacher beliefs and perceptions of professional development

So the workshop was designed, first of all to change minds, change beliefs, to challenge pre-established beliefs of professional development.

Goma-Bi, l1

... the new trends of professional development, like joining associations, joining communities, virtual communities and all this.

Goma-Bi, l1
The Abengourou workshop

Digital Skills for Educators: Using WhatsApp for Teacher Professional Development
Challenges

Context - contrast between Daloa and Abengourou
Equity? Equal access?

It’s like big villages, so when they are back to their village, to their area, it is a little bit difficult for them to connect to the internet, most of the time they are short of data, they have to get the money, sometimes they have to come to Abengourou before getting the data for being connected.

Boahia, 12
Challenges (Ib)

Attitude - desire to take your own professional development into your own hands

They have to be passionate, ... and when you are passionate you find the means to do it, you can find the financial means to buy your own data.

Boahia, I2
Challenges (Ic)

Burn-out - sustainability?

The challenge I am going through, because I have so many platforms that I am managing, not only am I the community manager for CINELTA, and I have some other WhatsApp groups, and I have so many classes, around 10 classes, and each class we have a platform.

Boahia, I2
Possibilities

Professional development for our colleagues

... for my personal development and my professional development. It’s a great chance for me

Boahia, 12
Possibilities:
Impact event

Virtual event
Benin, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Rwanda, Mali, Senegal

https://tateproject.wordpress.com/

Experiences of WhatsApp: Mali
June 28, 2019 by Gary Mottram

Mali, a West African country, has more than forty spoken local languages in addition to the not so widely spoken official language French. English is taught as a Foreign Language and is introduced at the middle school level (7th grade) and taught through the secondary, vocational schools and universities. Lack of opportunities makes English teaching ...

Leave a comment

Experiences of WhatsApp: Senegal
June 24, 2019 by Gary Mottram

Senegal is a West African country where English is taught as a second language. Students start learning English when they graduate from primary school and it is compulsory until they reach fifth form. In lower sixth and upper-sixth, they can choose another foreign language like Spanish, Portuguese. In the 1970s the Association of Teachers of ...

Leave a comment
**Possibilities: WhatsApp**

Desire to continue sharing - African values and knowledge  
(07/08/19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Absolutely Mr. D, with pleasure. Sharing is one of African traditional values that we should promote.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CdI</td>
<td>Yes M sharing is part of African values. But sharing knowledge has been excluded for centuries. I am interested in the sharing values in Africa. Knowledge is less shared because it is the key to freedom and equality. When Amadou Hampâté said when an old man dies is similar to a burning library, he wasn't thinking of this. But it so true. One reason why technology integration in higher Ed is so problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>I do agree with you A! That's why we young generation who understood that should change this perception by keeping on sharing values and knowledge for the betterment of the humanity! I'm sure when we join forces we can address those challenges.</td>
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Taking learning forward: WhatsApp

Desire to continue sharing - African values and knowledge

MATE World Teachers Day 2020
English Connects developments, building on the original idea from our project.

The British Council’s English Connects project has set up an exciting new online community for all secondary school state teachers in Cote d’Ivoire to join teachers from the other 11 participating English Connects countries with the Messenger App ‘Telegram’. A British Council trainer will lead weekly Continuous Professional Development (CPD) self-access activities for teachers. There will also be weekly online live discussions, new resources for low resource/large class contexts and opportunities to enter competitions and apply for a UK online training course!
Taking learning forward: New opportunities

We are continuing to build on this work and to spread our learning in various directions

GCRF Pump-priming project in Côte d’Ivoire

Developing language teacher quality and resilience in fragile contexts through inquiry-led practice

ESRC IAA project in Manchester with Cornerstone

Transforming lives, transforming practice: how technology shapes teaching, learning and well-being for vulnerable adults in a time of pandemic
References from the different projects

There have been reports, papers and chapters on the various projects we have been involved in. Here are some of them:


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https://tateproject.wordpress.com/