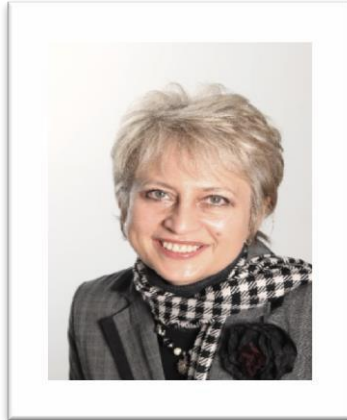


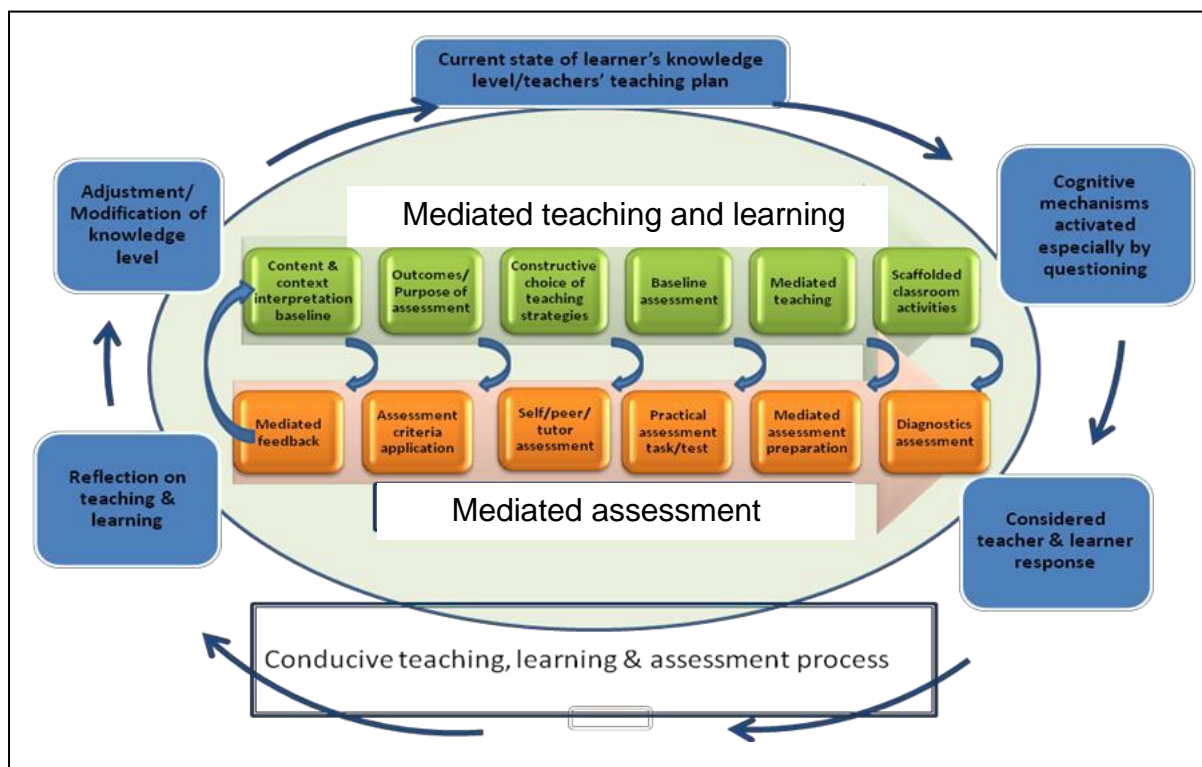
**The mediated journey of assessment as and for learning**  
**IACESA CogEd Seminars on 6 and 13 February 2016**



~ Celia Booyse ~

In their decision to have “Assessment” as the theme for 2016, the IACESA Board considered the thinking of theorists such as Black and Wiliam (1998, 2003), Lambert and Lines (2000), Walvoord (2004) and Jensen and Nickelson (2008) on deeper learning and teaching, learning and assessment cohesion. With a quest for effective assessment in mind, the president of IACESA, Prof Mary Grosser approached Dr Celia Booyse (Umalusi) to present workshops on *Assessment for and as learning*. The four-hour workshops took place on Saturday, 6 and 13 February 2016 at the NWU Vaal Triangle and the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI) in Kuils River respectively. The workshops were interactive and discovery-based. The practical sessions challenged the attendees to think deeply about effective questioning, typologies and the impact of motivation and emotion on assessment.

Dr Booyse provided supporting material on how making connections between assessment and learning encourages a holistic approach to assessment practices and has an impact on the teaching-learning process. The material also includes content on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains and the mediating character of assessment. Such assessment provides an opportunity to diagnose, guide and motivate in particular through constructive feedback allowing for learning in and through assessment to take place. Thinking about the components of assessment as learning and a way to assess the learner’s individual ability and needs, will explicitly lead to including a set of outcomes and criteria, the use of close-to-reality contexts; ideas about individual formative feedback and fostering the ability for self-assessment through a mediation process. This part of the discussion is summarised in the following model:



The focus of the discussions on the days also embraced –

1. The constructive planning of teaching, learning and assessment as classroom practice
2. The Feuerstein model on mediation and the role of prior knowledge
3. The purposes of assessment as learning: diagnostic, self-reflection and reflection on learning, emotion and motivation
4. Self- and Peer assessment
5. The application of a taxonomy as a teaching, learning and assessment tool
6. The link between the affective and cognitive domain and the emotional impact of assessment
7. The development of assessment items and alignment to cognitive demands
8. The interpretation of questions in terms of cognitive demand

At the workshop on 6 February 2016, the interactive sessions engaged attendees from the North West University (Vaal Triangle), University of the Free State, Gauteng Department of Education and 45 teachers from the Vaal and Free State districts.

The Cape Town workshop was offered in collaboration with the Western Cape Department of Education (WCDE), Curriculum Management and Teacher Development branch under the Chief Director, Dr Peter Beets, and the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute with its Director, Mr Eddie Kirsten. The attendees included representation from the University of Cape Town, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, curriculum planners, WCDE assessment specialists, subject advisors and teachers. Through this IACESA/Umalusi collaboration, the impact on teacher development has been expanded to include the involvement of teachers in practice, curriculum coordinators at provincial level and provincial departments.

The WCDE FET Senior Curriculum Planner, Ms Ina Bruce and the Assessment Co-ordinator, Ms Geraldine Kirchner, who attended the Cape Town session, reported on how they have already incorporated some of the workshop content in their training sessions to guide teachers towards a nuanced understanding of assessment as learning. The positive feedback on their sessions speak of encouraged teachers with an enhanced understanding of the positive impact that mediation could have on teaching, learning and assessment. The teachers showed particular interest in reflection, metacognition, assessment to enhance emotion and motivation and the link between the cognitive and affective domains. Richard Lazarus (1991: 19-22) refers to this link as “the marriage between emotion and thought” in his book *“Emotion and adaptation”*. There appears to be a connection between the receiving, responding, valuing and organising levels of the affective domain with the processing of information (data) and responses to questions and data. This implies that the process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when teaching and assessment are planned. Learners should become as aware of the “how” of their learning as they are of the “what”. In teaching, learning and assessment practice, this means that planning needs to include the way to approach a learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating the progress towards the completion of a task. Similarly, reflection (metacognition) is pivotal. Learners who reflect and are constantly aware, seem to identify blocks to learning more easily and earlier, complete work more efficiently and perform better in assessment tasks and exams.

For teachers, the ability to reflect (metacognition) involves planning, monitoring, evaluating and revising thinking processes and how to plan teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Having assessment as learning in mind and true reflection on the actual process will enable the teacher to –

- know what (factual or declarative knowledge),
- know when and why (conditional or contextual knowledge), and
- know how (procedural or methodological knowledge)

to teach and enable learners to learn through assessment.

At the end of each of the sessions, the attendees, in reflection on their own learning in the workshop, echoed the thoughts of Carl Rogers (1983: 18-19)-

*I want to talk about learning. But not the lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff that is crammed into the mind of the poor helpless individual tied into his seat by ironclad bonds of conformity! I am talking about LEARNING - the insatiable curiosity that drives the adolescent boy to absorb everything he can see or hear or read about gasoline engines in order to improve the efficiency and speed of his “cruiser”. I am talking about the student who says, I am discovering, drawing in from the outside, and making that which is drawn in a real part of me.*

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*Publications: co-writer of three books on learning programme development and curriculum studies. Articles and conference papers are on instructional design and assessment practices, research findings from curriculum analysis, the application of typologies as teaching strategy and the impact of feedback as a feedforward process.*

*Interests: biofeedback technology, holistic and integrated health practices, growing bonsai and orchids and involvement in NGO (community development) initiatives.*

*I embrace a holistic, neuroscientific view of deepening learning and metacognition in order for a child to make meaning and strong connections. I embrace scaffolded, discovery learning and assessment based on conducive cognitive-motivational-relational configurations and directed to innovation and critical, constructive thinking. A learning environment filled with compassion, motivation and mediation lies close to my heart. (Hand in hand with Carl Rogers, Jerome Bruner, Loris Malaguzzi, Reuven Feuerstein, Lev Vygotsky, Eric Jensen, Daniel Pink and Richard Lazarus).*