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DOKTORI DISSZERTÁCIÓ TÉZISEI

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THE ROLE OF COOPERATION
IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION
AND IN-SERVICE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN TEFL

1. Research topic and aims

Teaching and learning in a formal school setting involve complex processes; therefore, they are worth examining in order to achieve better results. A multi-faced issue deserves a more in-depth investigation; however, my concern is primarily with the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and in order to narrow the scope even further, only one aspect is taken into consideration. The particular purpose of this dissertation is to focus on cooperation as an important means for development of foreign language teachers in the Hungarian school context. This goal is accomplished by looking at the role and importance of cooperation in pre-service education and in-service development. Thus, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What factors interact in cooperation in pre-service teacher education?
2. What factors interact in cooperation in the subsequent in-service teacher development?
3. What is the influence of pair or team teaching in the training of teachers on cooperation in their careers?

In order to answer these questions I investigated the field of cooperation in learning and teaching. The purpose of referring to the Centre for English Teacher Training (CETT) at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest was twofold: to look at the pair or team teaching side of the special mode of teacher training and to investigate how trainees develop and manage their professional lives after graduation. My role of a researcher, a mentor and a teacher explains the two dimensional research, one dimension being the language teacher preparation and the other the teaching profession domain.

In the first dimension, the aim was to explore the relationships in pre-service education in TEFL. The research focused especially on the idea of collaboration between trainees supposed to work closely together over a period of prolonged training (trainees at CETT have full responsibility for a class in the course of what used to be a whole school year and is currently a semester). The opportunity to work collaboratively was considered an essential experience in the particular context; however, the purpose was not to formulate a hypothesis. The author's first research question was to gain an understanding of the factors which helped and hindered the process of cooperation. The term *factor* was adopted as an umbrella term to identify perceptions of the subject matter and look at what was regarded as important and beneficial in the process of

cooperation. Recognizing the key factors which contribute to successful outcomes of working together, the researcher expected to find ways around the possible difficulties of collaboration in the course of teaching practice.

The second dimension in the teaching profession domain looked at the concept of cooperation from a slightly different aspect. The second research question, related to this domain, meant to find out if and how teachers from the education programme at CETT applied cooperative teaching techniques and took opportunities to cooperate in their careers. The term factor was used to convey the same meaning as in the first research question. The particular goal was to identify the key issues which stimulate and inhibit teachers in their pursuit of collaborative work. The researcher was also keen to learn from what the teachers possessed and needed in order to initiate, encourage and maintain cooperative relations.

As far as the third research question is concerned, the objective was to find out more about the main topic of research. The aim was to explore how pre-service language teacher education could affect relationships and professional development in a language teaching career. My intention was to look into the way experiences of cooperation during pre-service training had encouraged the teachers to go on cooperating during their careers. In these terms, it was interesting to reveal if there were opportunities to work collaboratively as well as a clear link between pre-service training and a teaching career. Another important goal was to examine the values inherent in cooperation.

The ultimate aim of the research discussed in this dissertation was to fill in a gap in the literature. The intention was to complement earlier studies by putting forward a number of ideas for consideration. First and foremost, the project was designed to generate knowledge with regard to the role of cooperation in learning and teaching. The research aimed to explore the field of language teacher education and the teaching profession in order to identify learning benefits and challenges of cooperation. Second, although educational programmes strive for better outcomes, they look at pre-service education mainly as a frame for gaining knowledge for the teaching profession and do not sufficiently emphasize the further impact of their methods. In this respect, the aim was to examine the continuum of professional growth in terms of cooperative techniques which would foster a beneficial approach to learning. Third, pre-service education and in-service

development are often regarded as separate areas; therefore, with reference to cooperation, the research aimed to understand relationships between them which would initiate a reconsideration of this divide in the field of TEFL. Generally, the objective was to examine the topic of research in depth in order to find implications for teacher training and development.

2. Theoretical framework

The aim of this section is to focus on some aspects and views in the literature I found relevant from the perspective of the study. The focal point is the concept of cooperation described on three levels: research, learning and teaching. The theoretical framework is provided to account for key issues grounded on the perceptions (Allwright, 1993; 2005; Johnstone, 2001; Kramsch, 2000; Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999; Nunan, 1992) of the correlation between these levels. The reference is to the notion of cooperation which is considered to have a bearing on learning the language, learning to teach and teaching in respect of English as a foreign language.

2.1 Definitions of key notions

The emphasis throughout this discussion is on two key notions: *collaboration* and *cooperation*. The present study uses the two key notions interchangeably. They refer to a process of working together on a common task and sharing responsibility in order to try to achieve a mutual goal. This broader perspective on the main concepts of cooperation and collaboration is meant to provide a useful tool to facilitate the understanding of the complex process of one person working with another; an issue which deserves a more profound investigation.

2.2 Research-based policy in foreign language education

In light of the dramatic changes outlined in the dissertation, it appears that the principle behind development is carrying out research. Within the boundaries of education and language pedagogy it is asserted that substantial attention is paid to "understanding the learning process from the vantage point of the learner as well as the teacher and/or researcher" (Mc Groarty, 1998, p. 593). With reference to the literature (Allwright, 1993; 2005; Schön, 1987; Stewart, 2006), it becomes obvious that although the role of academic research in foreign language teaching and learning has long been recognized, new approaches related to applied research have been adopted. In recent years, marked attention has been directed towards the question of practitioner research

(Allwright, 2005) in terms of teachers' involvement into investigation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) articulate the importance of action research (initiated by Schön, 1987) which stimulates teachers to become researchers in their own environment. As for Gebhard and Oprandy, (1999) the focus of action research is on recognizing, understanding and solving a problem in teaching. It is also perceived that the value of action research is in collaborative actions such as discussions of problems, important issues, planned actions, collected data and formulation of new plans.

As with many areas in the field, the issue of collaboration at research level has been a matter of debates (Allwright, 1993; 2005; Stewart, 2006). Discussions are about the concern that albeit collaboration in research seems to be occurring, participants are less aware of the cooperative matters involved. Critical issues emerge mainly concerning the relationship between teacher educators and practitioners (Grundy, 2001). Taking into account the attempts for cooperation in action research and reflective teaching as research as well as the efforts to diminish the split between teacher educators and practicing teachers, it appears that it is worthwhile to consider the crucial role of cooperation.

2.3 Cooperation in the foreign language learning process

Research on cooperative learning (Crandall, 1999; Garrett & Shortall, 2002; Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon, 2002) indicates that this way of dealing with foreign language learning is particularly in relation to teachers' affinity for reflective processes, interactions and reflection among students, regarded essential to foster students' development. This leads to the question of the positive aspects of cooperative learning. Existing research on the effectiveness of the cooperative approach in foreign language learning seems to support the belief that its use is justified by numerous advantages.

A final area of concern is that many parallels can be drawn between the new understanding of learning and the experiential component of teacher education. The main point is that the current learning approaches, which seek to unite thought and action, can be associated with the attempt in teacher education programmes to bring the theoretical and practical aspects closer. This important question forms the basis of the next section.

2.4 Cooperation in foreign language teacher education

In review of the discussions on the topic, peer-assisted learning and teaching in the course of teaching practice are found to be a beneficial approach compatible with teaching in a particular situation, which in this case is the context of pair or team teaching at CETT. The scheme reported in research (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994; 1997; Major, 2003; Malderez, &. Bodóczky, 1999; Medgyes & Malderez, 1996; Medgyes & Nyilasi, 1997; Révész, 2005) serves many purposes simultaneously. The general aims are to provide support for teaching and learning and to maximize the benefits in cognitive gains for the participants involved. The concrete aims for the student teachers are to give them an opportunity to develop their planning, problem-solving and decision making skills in a particular context and to give them a more profound experience of the classroom as well as a better understanding of the teaching profession. Additionally, the CETT model of a teacher training programme aims to develop and maintain an interest in teaching as a choice of career.

The underlying assumption is that partner support during the teaching experience relieves anxieties, fosters the feeling of security as well as the learning process (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994; Medgyes & Malderez, 1996). The question of how future teachers develop their skills, knowledge, confidence and capacity for reflection remains relevant. The emerging key issue is that collaborative work between trainees has a major effect on student teachers' professional development (Knezevic & Scholl, 1996). In recognition of the importance of cooperation in foreign language teacher education, it is worthwhile making an attempt to look at what goes beyond the scope of teacher preparation.

2.5 Cooperation in the teaching process

The wealth of literature on the field of education offers inadequate investigations and information addressing the topic of cooperation in the teaching profession. The consideration of the notion of collaboration is deeply rooted in the combat against isolation due to single classroom authority (Brandes & Ginnis, 1992; Claxton, 1989; Underwood, 1987). Being isolated seems to be a typical condition of teachers in general and language teachers in particular.

One of the central issues related to the circumstances discussed above is that there is a need to alter this present day situation (Claxton, 1989; Nunan, 1992). Drawing conclusions on research, it appears that beside the state of solitude of teachers there are current attempts for cooperation in the teaching profession (Claxton, 1989; Medgyes, 1995; Nunan, 1992). Another consideration is the demand (Nunan, 1992) created for promoting the idea of cooperation rather than competition in foreign language education where teachers, learners, and curriculum specialists can collaborate for various reasons and purposes. Medgyes (1994a; 1994b), for example, offers thoughtful insights into collaborative approaches to teaching, the main philosophy of which is based on cooperation between teachers, particularly native and non-native speakers of English. A similar understanding is expressed by Carless (2006) who describes more recent innovative collaborative programmes in Hong Kong secondary and primary schools.

Ultimately, cooperation is regarded to promote professional improvement in the sense that teachers can learn from each other by means of personal interactions using reflecting, focusing, disclosing, goal-setting and planning among other processes. For example, Edge (1992a; 1992b) argues that through exploration, discovery and action, cooperation enables teachers to work on their own development and eventually become better teachers. This argument, ardently supported by Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001), underlines the assumption that there is a need for collaboration in the teaching profession.

3. Research method

With the intention of finding answers to the research questions I decided to carry out a project in the context of my immediate teaching context. In order to collect data for the research on the role of cooperation in pre-service education and in-service development, a qualitative approach was adopted. The choice of method used to collect and consequently analyse data was determined by first, the complex nature of collaboration affected by many and various factors; second, the low number of respondents; third, an interest in the participants' detailed experiences and personal impressions about team work; fourth, the main aim to achieve in-depth investigation and understanding. In all this, the decisions about the research method used to conduct the present study were also motivated by research on studies carried out in a qualitative paradigm.

The project involved prolonged engagement, persistent observation (Davis, 1995; Crookes, 1992; Lazaraton, 2003), triangulation and thick description (Bachman, 2004; Crookes, 1992; Davis, 1995; Holliday, 2004; Lazaraton, 2003; Mc Groarty & Zhu, 1997; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989) of the collected data. Essentially, the circumstances justified the use of interviews rather than questionnaires. Apart from semi-structured interviews, observational field notes, trainees' diaries and transcripts of recorded planning sessions were collected for investigation. The qualitative research described in this dissertation included elements of ethnographic study with regard to the teacher trainer who was the researcher.

3.1 Participants

The core of data was gained from pre-service and in-service teachers who were related to CETT. As for the pre-service teachers, the project involved four female participants all participating in the TEFL university programme. The investigations were associated with the time of their studies and particularly their teaching practice scheduled in the academic year of 2005/2006. The place of the teaching experience was the grammar school where I worked. The trainees, doing their teaching practice in the current situation reported here, could have been any other student teachers in the particular academic year; therefore, their selection was considered as random. The trainees worked in pairs to teach a class for a term. Each pair of student teachers was responsible for a class at secondary level and taught four English lessons a week.

With regard to the in-service teachers, other four female participants were involved in this research with the purpose to collect data concerning the overall understanding of their work habits and attitudes toward cooperation in school. These respondents were previous student teachers who graduated from CETT. The participants involved in the teaching profession had worked with me during their teaching practice. The four in-service teachers were also randomly chosen to take part in the study. Two participants worked at secondary schools (one grammar school and one technical school) which belonged to the state sector of education and two participants were employed in language schools. The schools involved in this research were considered typical of the career opportunities for teaching English in Hungary.

Evidently, the focus of my research was on the teachers, who had been active participants in the special form of collaborative teaching at CETT. Moreover, with the objective to gain insight into the context, I interviewed four individual classroom teachers. They were also female teachers of English as a foreign language. Selection of the participants in that phase of the research was also random. These respondents were members of staff in one of the state schools mentioned above. The in-service teachers' colleagues were regarded as additional participants; however, the responses received were considered of significant value.

Finally, as the assumption was that perceptions and personal constructs needed further consideration, the study included data from the students (9th and 10th year) who attended the pre-service teachers' classes. The students were regarded as necessary but not focal participants. In fact, the study had data on the students' opinions mentioned in their written feedback given to the pre-service teachers at the end of their teaching practice. Including students' perceptions was seen important; however, it was beyond the scope of the present research to consider this different aspect of the process in much detail.

3.2 Description of the data collection procedures

The research reported in the current dissertation has developed over the last few years. Although the study dealt with a limited number of participants, an attempt was made to carry out a research which was value bound (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In fact, the foundation from which the research method started to develop was Mc Cracken's (1988) four-step model. One of the most important steps taken toward the initiative to collect data on the role of cooperation in pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher development in TEFL was work on the research instrument. The starting point was related to the relevant question of how to achieve validity and reliability of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Regarding this issue, the qualitative interview schedule was improved in the process of validation (Barócsi, 2005a) in the spring of 2005.

In the autumn of 2005 I became involved with pilot work (Barócsi, 2005b; 2006) addressing some of the issues in the role of cooperation in pre-service education and in-service development. This was felt to be central to the overall aim to compile considerations for the dissertation research. The pilot study was intended to apply the research instruments and provide

information about the effectiveness and perceived usefulness of the scheme. The main advantage was that it proved that continued research on the topic of my interest was feasible and the directions taken plausible.

To collect data from the participants about the concept of collaborative learning and teaching, the actual sixteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in the academic year of 2005/2006. In particular data collection was conducted in four phases: (1) eight interviews with pre-service teachers before and (2) after their teaching practice, (3) four interviews with in-service teachers and (4) other four interviews with the in-service teachers' colleagues.

With the intention to produce a picture as complete as possible, information from the transcripts of the interviews was triangulated with other sources of data. The interview transcripts were triangulated with the four student teachers' diaries and observational field notes taken during classroom observation. My field notes contributed to the better understanding of the processes in the classroom and provided insights about behaviours that could not be readily obtained through other means. As the student teachers kept a record of their experiences, the entries from the student teachers' diaries were included for the purpose of receiving more reflections to gain as much knowledge as possible about the particular areas of interest. Tape-recorded planning sessions during the period of teaching practice constituted the additional data for the stage of the study as regards pre-service education, a phase which aimed to illustrate the flow of thoughts and discussions when planning a lesson.

3.3 Description of the data analysis

The main data sources used in the process of the research were various; however, the type of data allowed the same approach to data analysis to be followed. In this respect, an inductive approach to data analysis was adopted. In relation to the way of the interpretation of the responses, hypotheses were not generated prior to the qualitative data analysis. The data were analysed using the constant comparative method described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994).

Additionally, the research attempted to quantify gains from the data by concentrating on further thought. Drawing on thematic analysis of the text was found appropriate, as my particular concern was in the flow of information and the texts' coherence.

4. Presentation of findings

4.1 Cooperative learning

In recent years, there has been much research on how crucial the role of cooperative learning is in the teaching/learning process. Therefore, it was considered important to find out if participants had been exposed to cooperative learning environments prior to training. With this purpose, an evaluation was taken to judge the participants' perceptions about cooperative learning situations during their undergraduate work. It was tempting to ask about cooperative behaviours in order to attribute the findings to the concept of on-going learning in teacher training and the teaching profession.

A summary of the participants' views suggested that cooperative approaches were established in different ways in different circumstances of learning. It was apparent that a distinction was identified in terms of how various subjects, foreign languages and majors were taught and learnt. It also appeared that cooperative techniques were more commonly used in TEFL than in other subject areas. Perceptions also implied that participants remembered more cooperative approaches to learning in their tertiary education. The argument was supported by most participants as they regarded secondary schools as the environment in which cooperative tasks had been less popular. As opposed to this, plenty of cooperative learning situations had been reported at CETT. Interviewees emphasized that such circumstances (both secondary and higher education under consideration) had enabled them to participate in a variety of activities such as: projects, role plays, presentations, even carrying out research in the classroom.

It also appeared that the emphasis was on learning regarding expression and exchange of ideas. The interviews underlined the point that cooperative tasks were seen as conducive to the development of valuable communication skills and establishment of creative atmosphere as well as to promote creative thinking. Additionally, expressed in the perceptions was the claim that the cooperative approach to learning reflected genuine collaboration between members, which could take the process towards a broader conceptual orientation in education.

In discussing such findings, it was clearly identified that how systematically cooperative techniques were used depended on (a) how course materials were designed, (b) preparation for

teaching, (c) used methods, (d) teachers' preference for cooperative activities or the lack of it, and (e) teaching styles. In this view, interviewees' memories emerged as a source of knowledge of the traditional approaches adopted for the teaching/learning process in the past. The answers indicated that individual rather than cooperative behaviours were more common in the classroom. These findings reinforced the importance of the role of the teacher and context in which cooperative techniques were applied.

Respondents were further requested to state what their attitude toward cooperative experiences had been. On the whole, participants were extremely positive towards collaborative learning as a meaningful experience. The prevailing positive attitude toward cooperative learning was recognized in reflections concerning many and varied issues. The interviews revealed that awareness was an interesting phenomenon to take into account. In most cases, participants related their awareness of team learning with their positive attitude toward it.

In broad terms, it was evident in the light of responses that awareness was often linked with preference to work with group members. It may be concluded that while attitude toward cooperative initiatives remained steadily positive, awareness of such behaviours fluctuated. It was obvious however, that positive attitude toward a cooperative learning environment was not a prerequisite for the awareness of it, in other words, positive feelings towards the process could exist without the adequate knowledge of it. The implication suggested that both attitude and awareness might require time to develop.

Apart from time, responses to the questions in the interviews showed awareness of several other factors on which the process of cooperation in learning was perceived to depend. The majority of reflections were combined towards the view that learning could be facilitated in terms of (a) choosing the partner, (b) knowing the partner and (c) trusting the partner (R6). It was also found that engagement in collaboration in particular circumstances might lead to a domineering relationship among members. However, domination by an individual was not seen as an obstacle. A final point concerned the view about the ability to tolerate others, which was found essential and was closely related to the demand for developing adaptation skills in situations when cooperative learning occurred.

4.2 Cooperation in foreign language teacher education

4.2.1 Major factors contributing to cooperation in foreign language teacher education

The findings held significant implications for the factors which interacted in cooperation in pre-service teacher preparation. In fact, considerations of these factors, which could influence the process of working together, provided an answer to the first research question. To summarize, the following major factors were identified as interacting in cooperation in pre-service teacher preparation and contributing to the successful and beneficial process.

First and foremost, there was more than a suggestion from the student teachers' interviews that a more profound stage of preparation was needed before involvement in the teaching practice and team teaching as a special form of teaching. It was also implied that observations of team taught lessons as well as familiarization with the nature of collaborative teaching might disperse worries over the unknown, raise the aspirations of the students and provide confidence before the start of the teaching practice.

The responses provided throughout the interviews showed that all participants thought of the complexity of the process and definitely perceived team teaching as referring to collaboration before, during and after classes, thus covering the two areas of inside and outside the classroom. It emerged that all pre-service teachers considered planning and discussions before and after lessons to have been as essential as in-class work. The challenges of these areas associated with the responsibility of the people involved were combined towards the creation of the most valuable learning atmosphere. The findings implied that even though pre-teaching collaboration might take a sufficient amount of time and effort to coordinate arrangements and all the work, based on the gains from cooperation, participants' attitude could remain positive. In-class collaboration, as far as team taught lessons were concerned, was successful for some trainees and challenging for others but it was not a prerequisite for establishing a team. The findings raised the basic question that something was clearly more challenging within the frame of shared lessons, which seemed to make certain demands on teachers. Another remark regarding the issue pointed out that shared lessons were of necessary help at the early stage of teaching practice. In addition, the trainees' responses amounted to saying that shared lessons tended to reduce responsibility and

the workload. Taken together, while giving no priority to one area or another, the results of the present study showed that whatever the teaching mode in the classroom was, cooperation among team members maintained benefits. There was also evidence to suggest that post-lesson collaboration was crucially important and promoted trainees' professional development. A further broad conclusion emerging from the interpretations was that both the demonstration of ideas and development of reflection were facilitated in the course of regular discussions, which was a unique opportunity when working in a team.

Reflections indicated that the initial phase of teaching practice had been the least successful period, whereas the later period had brought rewards. In particular, in terms of professional and personal relations, the opportunities to better cooperate and develop through the establishment of effective relationship appeared strongly associated with the extended period of teaching practice. The interpretations seemed to suggest that although teaching practice was intrinsically rewarding for its own sake, engagement in a prolonged form of experience might be extremely beneficial in the sense that peer cooperation could contribute to the personal development of individuals over time.

In general, from the interviews it appeared that although a more collaborative environment could be created in small groups, the number of people was not the only or not even the main cause of successful cooperation. Additionally, the interviewees clearly felt that the people involved in the process presented a significant factor to consider. In this respect, participants' perceptions supported the view that a team operated more effectively when individuals possessed particular qualities, abilities and skills. According to some participants, getting to know the person also played a decisive role in effective collaborative work. Besides, it was emphasized that a favourable attitude was needed in order to develop a collaborative relationship. In this regard, the reflections from the interviews with all pre-service and in-service teachers revealed that the mentor was perceived as effectively performing an important role before, during and after classes. In many ways, the fact that the teacher trainer was considered a member of the team implied the act of passing the boundaries of pair teaching and placing a stronger emphasis on the element of cooperation. The above remarks indicate that it was seen important for the trainer to have a reassuring, encouraging and comforting manner, but also, as a team member, the trainer

was to facilitate student teachers begin to develop in the direction of cooperation and become aware of what was involved in working in the profession and working together in a group.

Generally, the findings of this study did not produce any evidence of failures in cooperation, but the outcomes shed light on possible problems that might be anticipated. Most hardships were associated with pre-teaching collaboration. This was related to the most significant problem: time. In fact, it was found that the time factor could play a significant role in cooperation in teaching practice. Further reflections demonstrated concerns about post teaching collaboration as being time-consuming and laborious as well. Drawbacks of working together were also perceived around discrepancies in the range of ideas, opinions, applied methods and different personalities. Typically, there were reflections about some difficulty in terms of the flow of communication and instances of misunderstanding related to daily commitments, particularly during the initial period of team work. However, the assumption was that cooperation could improve in the course of time, alongside prerequisites such as flexibility and mutual trust within the boundaries of the team.

A final concern was that team teaching is a complex process; therefore, team members should have a profound understanding of the commitments associated with collaborative work. On the whole, such insights demonstrated that collaborative initiatives required a skilled manner, which was simultaneously placing special emphasis on the need to carry out research in this area.

4.3 Cooperation in the teaching profession

In comparison with pre-service teacher education, the quantity and quality of collaborative initiatives in the teaching profession were fundamentally more difficult to explore. However, the present study provided sufficient evidence for the main directions to be identified and discussed. It is essential to note at this point that data analysis continually implied that cooperation in foreign language teacher education had a lot in common with collaborative relationships in the teaching profession. The most similar features emerged when, in order to answer the second research question, the focus was on the key factors contributing to successful outcomes in a cooperative environment in a school. Gradually, the findings moved towards the formulation of a response to the third research question.

4.3.1 Key factors contributing to cooperation in the teaching profession

From the various reflections in the interviews, it was possible to draw some conclusions regarding the underlying factors which were seen to matter in circumstances of cooperation in the teaching profession, thus providing an answer to the second research question. Interestingly, in the course of the research, the most important factors in cooperation in the teaching profession were found to relate to the ones previously discussed in relation to language teacher education. Surveying the participants' responses with the purpose to identify factors which interacted in cooperation in teaching, a number of significant factors have emerged.

First and foremost, evident in the majority of remarks was the view that members' qualities, abilities and skills had an impact on shared experiences. Moreover, along the abilities and skills for cooperation, it was also considered essential to develop effective strategies. Another point concerned the view that positive attitude toward cooperation was one of the major determinants of efficiency. The conclusion from this assumption included thoughts about the important impact of cooperative circumstances on the development of positive attitudes in teachers towards trust, support and sharing inherent in collaboration. A further consideration in this study raised the question that a potential valuable factor within effective team work was interaction among people of diverse abilities and characters. This view was also extended to the assumption that success of sharing experiences rested in knowing the person, which related to the perception for selection of the person to cooperate with. The outcomes also revealed that mutual work depended on the nature of the common task. The recognition implied that teachers who cooperated should share similar attitudes to the task. This understanding established a link with the involvement of teachers and directed attention toward the importance of the two dimensions in cooperation: professional and personal.

On the negative side, the findings also pointed at significant implications that besides the benefits, cooperation in the teaching profession as well as in teacher education might be difficult due to the efforts it demanded. In fact, in this study accounts elicited hardships mainly from presumptions and preconceptions as the participants tended to report their initial concerns about certain difficulties which might be encountered in a cooperative work environment. As for the relationships among teachers, the data of the research implied that difficulties might be due to

local conditions. As a result, for teachers it was a problem that they were unable to have extensive personal contacts within appropriate working circumstances. Analyses of the data also revealed that teachers worked according to different schedules, which allowed fewer opportunities for relationships among individuals. There were further difficulties experienced in terms of the flow of information from one teacher to another or mere misunderstanding, particularly concerning efforts to organize and coordinate the process when more people were involved.

From the findings it was concluded that if teachers intended to cooperate successfully, it was necessary to reach beyond the hardships and make an attempt to overcome them. On the whole, such references raised the important issue that relationships with others would depend to a great extent on the teachers themselves: their attitudes, the same or similar characters and personalities. Furthermore, it was regarded essential to develop a desirable attitude in teachers. In general terms, the majority of reflections repeatedly expressed the need to have a better understanding of how cooperation worked in order to implement collaboration in practice.

4.3.2 Considerations towards cooperative environments

Although it seemed that in people's minds and in reality perhaps, collaborative relationships were considerably valued in other jobs where people were regarded to have more opportunities for sharing experience about the profession, it was also apparent that the usefulness of cooperation in teaching was equally identified. In this respect, while expressing a positive attitude, all participants in the present research felt that there was a need for collaboration in the teaching profession as well. The conclusion was that reflections voiced the necessity to learn about cooperation and implement it over time.

In all cases cooperation was linked to the classroom and outside the classroom involving daily contacts with others. In this sense cooperation could be modelled as a two dimensional space, one being the cognitive and the other the affective field. First, at the cognitive level, all reasons for cooperation were linked with the conscious knowledge and the outcomes, benefits and drawbacks of people working together in relation to the subject matter. In more specific terms, it was regarded necessary for teachers to cooperate when dealing with school examination periods,

placement tests and competitions, among many others. Typically, the research showed that having a share in teaching a group of learners and substitution for a teacher also demanded a high degree of collaboration. Additionally, cooperative initiatives were reported to be crucial throughout the experience of teaching students in their year of intensive foreign language learning.

Second, analyses and interpretations of the qualitative data revealed perceptions about cooperation relating to a level different from the cognitive one discussed above. Responses indicated that cooperation in the teaching profession developed in accordance with the occasions which seemed distant form the pressures in the classroom. Such initiatives appeared to include less anxiety, more positive feelings and emotional support. This provided a framework for distinguishing the affective level. For instance, it was reported that collaboration was particularly helpful outside the classroom in school events, projects, exchange programs abroad, trips, outings and summer camps. Respondents' accounts explained the nature and degree of cooperation at this level. The participants' comments were found illustrative of the interpretation that cooperation in the teaching profession could also have emotional and social gains.

It was also found that the chances to share significantly influenced the extent of effort. In this respect, some respondents expressed concerns with the frequency of undertaking cooperative initiatives in the teaching profession. These concerns attempted to show the actual fact of frequent lack of collaboration, along an awareness of the necessity to work in a supportive context. This point had a connection with views about cooperative circumstances in language schools. As a matter of fact, collaborative initiatives in language schools appeared rare in comparison with coordination of practices in state schools.

Ultimately, the analysis related to the in-service teachers' responses provided an answer to the third research question about the influence of pair or team teaching in the training of teachers on cooperation in their career. In this regard, the outcomes suggested that working as a team during the teaching practice had positive impact on the in-service teachers' work in their careers. In consequence a conclusion was drawn that student teachers involved in team teaching continued to

cooperate with others and could extend the role of a team member in their teaching career. These conclusions emerged from four essential observations in the course of data analysis.

First, the help of the in-service teachers, who agreed to assist me and contribute to the present study, was a statement in favour of collaboration. The content of the interviews also illustrated the enthusiasm of the participants for the process of working together. Second, the implication of gains was discerned in the fact that the in-service teachers took the question of cooperation very seriously. While the participants expressed interest and made an attempt to give as thoughtful answers as possible, they demonstrated positive attitude and high respect toward the theme of my research. Third, the interviews provided evidence for the participants' success in their previous team teaching experience as well as their attempts to develop collaborative relationships in their current careers. Fourth, the data revealed in-service teachers' particular attention given to the importance and necessity of cooperation in the teaching profession and life. Apparently, this was regarded as an issue which needed thoughtful consideration. In general terms, the interviews supported the idea that cooperative teaching in the context of teaching practice could generate further benefits to in-service teachers over time in their careers.

5. Concluding remarks

From the findings of the present research, it can be concluded that collaborative practices in the field of TEFL can gain significant importance from two perspectives: the foreign language teacher education and the teaching profession perspective. Taking into account the first perspective, one important condition of success in undertakings can be that pre-service teachers are involved in collaborative work. Team teaching as a form of teaching practice, done on a systematic basis, can be a beneficial way for student teachers to acquire the main components of professional competence. The opportunities to team teach combined with the length of the teaching practice can be associated with the main strengths of the teacher training programme at CETT. The main positive aspect of collaborative teaching as a particular form of teaching practice is that it creates an effective environment and stimulates learning. Provided with the opportunities for intensive and varied interactions, student teachers combine reflection and action to take responsibility for their own learning, which eventually results in gaining an ability to maintain autonomy.

This leads to the second, the teaching profession perspective. The outcomes of the present study point at the fact that individuals who establish cooperative relationships during the teaching practice can carry on the potential to develop a cooperative attitude and eventually continue to foster collaborative work between teachers. In broad terms, it appears that in both contexts, namely foreign language teacher education and the teaching profession, collaborative initiatives are highly beneficial and promote personal and professional growth to a great extent.

In conclusion, the summary of the important aspects outlined above revealed the attempts to understand relationships between pre-service education and in-service development, often regarded as separate areas. With special reference to these fields, the research initiated a reconsideration of this divide in the domain of TEFL. In this respect, the study directed attention to an integrated approach to learning and teaching in terms of the application of cooperative techniques and the sequence of professional growth. The final assumption was that if cooperation in pre-service education and in-service development was a valuable experience, then participation in collaborative processes in education should be encouraged.

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