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Developing an INSET Course for State EFL Teachers in Greece: A Process-Oriented Teacher Education Proposal towards Digital Literacy

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Abstract

Designing a teacher-training course requires decision making processes, adherence to the principles of adult learning and the need to cater for trainees' knowledge, teaching skills, attitudes and awareness by organizing and implementing accordingly the content and process of teacher training. The purpose of this paper is to design a training course providing a description of the target group of trainees, an outline of the general aims of the course, a plan of the course with specific reference to its objectives, content and methodology including the teacher and language development component as well as a rationale for the entire course. The present teacher education proposal aims to foster state EEL teachers' digital literacy for pedagogical purposes as well as to promote trainee-centeredness providing them with opportunities to gain control and actively participate in the training process. A context-sensitive approach is adopted to make the content and methodology of the course relevant to the trainees' current practice and professional needs in the new digital age linking theory to practice through reflection.

Keywords: In-service Training, Process-oriented, Reflection, Digital Literacy, Trainee-centeredness

Introduction

Given that effective teaching practice is synonymous with continuous and systematic teacher education, the majority of countries worldwide have placed emphasis on foreign language teachers' training both on an initial and on a continual basis. However, in Greece, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' training practices seem to have received relatively little attention so far.

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In the Greek state-school context, state foreign language teachers' in-service training (INSET) has been provided both from the public and the private sector following mostly transmission-based and trainer-centred methods through lectures or presentations preventing any potential seed of autonomy. Trainees are usually treated as passive recipients of transmitted knowledge rather than active agents in a decision-making process (Crandall, 2000). This tendency of INSET courses to rely heavily on a traditional and transmission-based approach has received strong criticism on the grounds that too much emphasis is placed on theory leaving barely any room for practice and, hence, blocking teacher development. Previous studies have illustrated the fact that state EFL teachers in Greece do not have many opportunities to participate in INSET courses that are trainee-oriented (Gyftopoulou, 2010; Karkaletsis, 2010; Kourkouli, 2015). Moreover, theory transmission in-service seminars and lack of systematic training do not help state EFL teachers respond to the 21st century challenges of their profession such as digital literacy. That is why this paper's focus is in-service state EFL teachers' professional development towards fostering their digital skills.

In particular, this paper attempts a more process-oriented approach to in-service teacher training defining the theoretical background of the present teacher education proposal along with a description of the training context in Greece such as current in-service training practices and state EFL teachers' ICT training. It also specifies the course rationale; the target group of trainees; the general aims of the course and the course plan. Last but not least, it provides a thorough analysis of the training process as regards the course methodology, the selection of the tasks, the course stages, the teacher development component as well as the language development component.

Theoretical Background

According to Strevens (1974), there are three basic components which shape the content in teacher training courses: *personal education* which refers to the subject matter of a course; *general training* which entails input addressed to all trainees irrespective of their potential specialization; *specific training* which is a combination of theory and practice to convey knowledge and skills to trainees by means of various methods, such as microteaching or peer teaching.

In the literature, certain conceptions play an instrumental role in the effectiveness of the training process. The *art/craft conceptions* support that there is no perfect method to teach and that teachers should become eclectic in their choice of methodology taking into account various factors such as different contexts, students' needs, etc (Freeman & Richards, 1993; Beaumont, 2005). Parallels can be drawn between the art/craft conceptions and Wallace's (1991) reflective model of teaching in which the role of reflection is apparently significant in facilitating development among teachers. In particular, the *Reflective Model* is an alternative model of education in which trainees derive their model of teaching from their own previous experience and from previous research. The trainees have the opportunity to put their knowledge to practice and become reflective towards discovering the strengths and/or the weaknesses of their teaching practices. It is a model which rejects the stereotypical view that there is one good model of teaching that everyone should adopt. Instead it suggests that there are various effective models depending on various contexts which demand different kinds and amounts of flexibility on the part of the teacher.

Reflection as a key concept in teacher training plays a major role in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory according to which experience is highly influential in the learning process but is not sufficient on its own unless it is consciously processed by means of reflection. Learning is viewed as a circular process by which trainees are engaged in new experiences and reflect upon them from different perspectives. They finally store new concepts so as to transform their observations into rational theories through decision-making and problem-solving processes (Kolb, 1984; Kelly, 1997). Reflection also plays a defining role in O'Brien's (1981) E-R-O-T-I model which relies on trainees' own experiences and/or classroom observation sessions. The trainees are engaged in a trial process experimenting with the theoretical input and applying it accordingly into daily classroom practice. Reflection enables trainees to critically evaluate methods and techniques trying them out to integrate the ones that are considered conducive to the effectiveness of their teaching practices and to their developing into reflective practitioners.

Regarding the *theory and practice* dichotomy, educators (Crandall, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Richards, 1990) stress the need for trainees to be provided with more opportunities to link theory to practice by combining the received with the experiential knowledge based on the context. A strong theoretical background is considered an invaluable tool for prospective teachers but cannot ensure effective teaching on its own. It is, thus, the teacher trainer's responsibility to guide trainees into rationalizing their own teaching practices by reflecting upon them and realizing that the theory they are looking for actually resides in themselves. Reflection is seen as the 'bridge' to link theory and practice. Having the power to illuminate the relationship between theory and practice, reflection can give meaning to the teacher's decision-making in the process of teaching, as well as act as a stimulus for change in a teacher's professional career (Trappes-Lomax & McGrath, 1999, p. 3).

Adult learners, who are actively engaged in a continual reflective process of critical thinking and critical practice, are bound to accept or reject beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices based on evidence, which they discover through their own reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Cray & Currie, 1996; Foley, 2004). In other words, reflective practice may provide adult learners, and as a consequence trainees, with a foundation for justifying any potential, personal changes, and for integrating new knowledge permanently into the realm of their belief systems and personal theories (Johnson, 1996; Kontra, 1997; Gilpin, 1999). In-service teacher education should support teachers to be effective facilitators to learning and this is best achieved in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect where creative thinking skills are encouraged (Manolopoulou-Sergi, 2005).

The Training Context in Greece

Current INSET Practices

In Greece, state EFL teachers' training and professional development has almost been neglected. Although, there are compulsory induction programmes for newly appointed teachers in state schools offered in the Peripheral Education Centres (PEC), in-service teacher education is very limited. Teacher associations, publishers of EFL textbooks and school advisors are among those who provide in-service training courses. The seminars, workshops, book exhibitions and any type of gatherings that usually take place, include mostly lectures on various issues (e.g. teaching methods, assessment, students' evaluation) and no actual involvement of the participating teachers (Bax, 1997; Gyftopoulou, 2010; Johnson, 2006). Their only involvement is at the end of

the seminars when there is usually some time for questions and discussion. However, by this time the teachers are mostly interested in getting their certificate of participation.

In the Greek education system, teachers receive their official in-service training by school advisors² who are teachers with high academic and professional qualifications officially selected and appointed by the Ministry of Education to cover the educational needs of prefectures all over Greece (Tzotzou, 2014a). School advisors are expected to be very familiar with the target teaching situation and the ELT³ practice of their trainees in the Greek school context in order to take action whenever and wherever needed. On that basis, regarding new technologies, normally school advisors should help EFL teachers develop flexibility in selecting innovative teaching techniques and materials; familiarize themselves with issues of educational technology (e.g. computer applications, freeware, multimedia, web 2.0 tools); develop awareness and positive attitude towards using new technologies in ELT by emphasizing their learning benefits as well as be able to design motivating EFL courses by using new tech tools in a pedagogically efficient way.

ICT Training

The advancement of technology has brought about new potentials and perspectives to state-school teachers' training through modern e-learning methods which enrich and improve the training process. The first pilot training programme, named 'Odysseia'⁴ (1996-2001), aimed to train state-school teachers of various specializations in developing basic computer literacy skills widely known as ICT -Level A⁵. A second training programme on ICTs followed, widely known as ICT-Level B, which intends to achieve trainees' familiarization with innovative classroom practices following the new trends in modern education. In particular, it aims to equip in-service teachers with modern teaching techniques and train them in new technologies (Web 2.0 tools, freeware applications) as well as ways of using them creatively in the classroom. The objectives of the programme are specific and measurable through feedback and assessment procedures. It is worth noting at this point, however, that state foreign language (FL) teachers, have never been involved in ICT-Level B training seminars so far. They have never been trained on how to use ICTs in the educational process, although organized regularly by the Ministry of Education for other

² Their responsibilities include management of educational policy (implementation), coordination and monitoring (institutions and schools units), in-service training of schoolteachers, evaluation of the educational process and schoolteachers, counselling and pedagogical guidance of school teachers as well as remedial work on their possible deficiencies (Tzotzou, 2014a).

³ ELT=English Language Teaching.

⁴ 'Odysseia' was conducted within the framework of the Operational Programme 'Information Society'. Teacher training was conducted annually in Universities in Athens, Thessaloniki and Macedonia. Initially, 135 teachers were trained and then these teachers trained their colleagues in 385 schools, in laboratories equipped by the 'Odysseia' Programme. The basic computer literacy skills included Microsoft Office Programmes (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and the Internet.

⁵ The first ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) training seminars were conducted during 2001-2005 under the Programme: 'The training of teachers in the utilization of ICT in education' and aimed at training teachers in developing basic computer literacy skills. Certification tests, regarding the ICT skills teachers acquired in the training sessions, were conducted. These certification tests still take place. In 2010, specialised ICT training started conducted in six phases until the previous school year 2014-15. Theoretically, specialised ICT training addresses to all primary and secondary school teachers. However, FL teachers were excluded from the first six phases and there is no official information yet regarding the FL teachers' training in the present and future. The aim is to train teachers in the implementation of ICT in the field of their specialization focusing on the pedagogical use of Web 2.0 tools, educational software, interactive whiteboards planning relevant didactic scenarios. In December, 2010 certification tests, regarding the specialised ICT skills trainees acquired during their training, were conducted.

state-school teachers the last decade. Actually, there is a training 'gap' to be filled in order to cover state EFL teachers' personal and professional need to become aware of new technologies and use them effectively in their classroom.

Since 2007, a pioneer optional seminar entitled 'Exploitation of Techniques of Asynchronous and Distance Learning via Moodle Platform of Electronic Learning' has been carried out all over Greece and addressed to state-school teachers of all specializations⁶. The teachers are prompted, via the Moodle platform, to design, organize, present and evaluate lessons and activities using methods of asynchronous electronic learning and educational games⁷. Teachers have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with several web applications, and techniques of asynchronous learning as well as the GSN⁸ services. Blended learning is the main characteristic of the Moodle seminar as teachers have to attend five educational meetings while weekly distance workshops and assignments are carried out online.

However, it is worth-noting here that almost all the above-mentioned seminars focus only on new technologies and Web 2.0 applications without any explicit pedagogical guidance. In other words, they do not integrate technology and methodology; Web 2.0 implementation and pedagogical theory. Therefore, either these seminars should be reviewed and enriched with a pedagogical view of new technologies in EFL teaching or another set of seminars should be put forward towards EFL teachers' pedagogically oriented digital training as well as strategic lesson planning to foster the learning benefits of technology in the new Web 2.0 era.

Course Rationale

Content

To be more specific, this paper includes a teacher education proposal with a view to improving the present training situation in Greece. To this end, the content of the recommended INSET course intends to promote experiential learning and integration with lasting effects on the trainees' teaching practice (Tzotzou, 2016a). The course content is triggered by previous research which shows that the teacher is mainly responsible for the effective use of technology in the educational process (Zhao, Hueyshan & Mishra, 2001) but technology is often met with reservations because teachers are unfamiliar with the possible pedagogical applications of ICTs. It is therefore essential that in-service teachers be trained to effectively use technology for learning purposes. In a rapidly changing world, EFL teachers need to *change* by continuing to evolve in the use, adaptation, and application of their art and craft (Lange, 1990). They need to realize the dynamic role of new technologies in their teaching. Hence, the course content seeks to sensitize the trainees to the issue of *learners' motivation* as it is an important problem state EFL teachers obviously face in the classroom especially in the secondary education (Tzakosta, 2010).

⁶ Available at: <http://e-learning.ilei.sch.gr/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=9611>

⁷ It was first initiated by the 1st office of Secondary Education in Ilia prefecture (the technical coordinator was Vassilis Daloukas), approved by the School Advisor for Computer Science and has been welcomed by teachers of all subjects (school year 2007-08). It is organized by the Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education in several prefectures all over Greece, in cooperation with the CTI and FL school advisors. It lasts 26 weeks (six months) and comprises both face-to-face sessions and a distance schedule of work per week.

⁸ GSN=Greek School Network (available at <http://www.sch.gr/>).

In this regard, the course content triggers the trainees to work out theories about using new technologies in ELT, thus becoming able to develop their personal theories of action (Clarke, 1994; Gyftopoulou, 2010; Widdowson, 1984). Trainees have the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge and experience from a set of *special resources on teaching FL with technology, other teachers' experiments* (e.g. Web 2.0-based lesson plans) and *suggested bibliography on the Web 2.0 education literature* for further reading (Tzotzou, 2016a). In other words, the knowledge to be provided is relevant, plausible, applicable, intelligible and challenging towards enhancing the *effectiveness and flexibility* of EFL courses by means of new technologies.

In light of the above, the content of the course seeks to be *flexible* and *dynamic*. In fact, it is built up progressively and 'composed' naturally by relying upon personal and vicarious experiences, critical reflection and the relevant literature (Farrell, 1998; Ur, 1999). Thereby, trainees are to be enabled to not simply change what they do, but change their justifications for what they do (Pennington, 1995). Integration is, therefore, to be achieved through *sense-making* which makes theory relevant for practice as teachers' knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, conceptual or perceptual, is understood and acted on within the *context of real teaching* (Johnson, 1996).

Process

Theory and practice are to be integrated through the enriched reflection model in a context-interactive way involving a continual cycle of innovative behaviour and adjustment to new circumstances (Pennington, 1995) as prescribed by the digital era and the Web 2.0 education paradigm. To this end, the course follows the *EROTI* model of teacher training (O'Brien, 1981) relying upon experience, rationale, observation, trial and integration by aiming at the application of theory to practice (Gyftopoulou, 2010; Kotsiomyti, 2010). *Trial* takes place extensively by applying new technologies for ELT purposes in the context of the training classroom (e.g. peer observation, peer interaction, microteaching) and *integration* takes place in the 'real' classroom of the in-service trainees in a distance follow-up stage.

There is an extended use of *experiential practices* to involve the trainees in *actual teaching* (the trainees have the opportunity to teach actual learners in their own classrooms) and in *simulated practice* (e.g. peer teaching and observation tasks mainly through microteaching). Trainees are engaged actively in experiential training through a *practice-reflection* cycle of activities (Ur, 1999) by being exposed to Web 2.0 tools to be used in their teaching beyond the fiction that there is one best way to teach (Roberts, 1998).

Through *groupwork* trainees are to be involved in peer interaction and reflective dialogues to access new information (Farrell, 1999). *Awareness-raising practices* can develop trainees' conscious understanding of the principles underlying modern EFL teaching and the educational technology that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons (Ellis, 1986). New understanding will emerge from a process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Hence, there is to be a shift from a transmission model of teacher education (Fanselow, 1988) to a *constructivist model* (Roberts, 1998) which views teacher education as ongoing engagement between received knowledge and experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991).

Last but not least, the course is *trainee-centred* allowing EFL teachers to have control over the purpose (product) and the form (structure) of their training. Its processes emphasize the

development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching (Bartlett, 1990; Mann, 2005) through *group-work, plenary discussions, reflection materials, microteaching* and a *follow-up assignment* (Ellis, 1986). In this context, the trainers' role is mostly to stimulate, organize, coordinate, monitor, support and encourage both individual reflection and peer observation on EFL teaching practices in a collaborative context (Kotsiomyti, 2010).

The Target Group of Trainees

The course addresses to *in-service state EFL teachers*, all holding a university degree on English language and literature. Due to their previous university English studies they are supposed to have already developed their English language competence to a great extent. They are supposed to be characterized by a *strong motivation* for training on the pedagogical use of Web 2.0 tools as they have never received ICT-Level B training up to now. The group as a whole is also supposed to be *homogeneous* given that in-service state English language teachers are basically native Greek people with almost similar religious beliefs, common national, linguistic and cultural origin, and a middle-class social status (Tzotzou, 2016a). Last but not least, the trainees are *adults* with special characteristics accompanying adulthood and consequently affecting adult learning processes (Kokkos, 1998). Due to their adulthood, trainees need to be in the centre of the learning process by taking into serious consideration their *profile* and *needs* as well as by ensuring their active involvement in the training course (Rogers, 1999).

General Aims of the Course

As already mentioned, due to the fact that state FL teachers have never been involved in systematic pedagogical training on how to use technologies of information and communication in the educational process (the so called ICT-B Level seminars), the recommended course aims to fill this training 'gap' in order to satisfy EFL teachers' personal and professional need to familiarize themselves with *new technologies for ELT purposes*. In general terms, the present course intends to achieve trainees' familiarization with *innovative classroom practices* in order to respond to the Web 2.0 education challenges by helping them overcome teacher-level hindrances which are usually related to teachers' lack of confidence (Dawes, 2001) and their low Web 2.0 competence (Pelgrum, 2001).

In particular, it aims to:

- familiarize in-service teachers with new trends in EFL teaching methodology,
- equip them with modern teaching techniques,
- train them in new technologies (Web 2.0 tools, freeware applications)
- enhance their Web 2.0 competence and digital literacy,
- guide them towards the pedagogical Web 2.0 integration,
- enable them develop professionally,
- train them in linking theory to actual classroom practice.

Course Plan

Objectives

The objectives are related to the above general aims but are more *specific* and *measurable* in a way which demonstrates whether the training course will have achieved these objectives

through feedback and assessment procedures (Wallace, 1991). On that basis, by the end of the specific course, trainees should or will have:

- developed skills in reflecting upon their own teaching patterns,
- developed flexibility in selecting innovative teaching techniques and materials,
- improved their own skills in English and FL competence further,
- familiarize themselves with educational technology (e.g. freeware, multimedia, Web 2.0 tools),
- developed their digital skills (e.g. Web 2.0 technology)
- developed awareness and positive attitude towards a new Web 2.0 pedagogy,
- been able to design motivating EFL courses by integrating digital tools.

Content

The course seeks to provide trainees with *special training* on how to use innovative EFL teaching techniques by using *new technologies* in their everyday school routine. To this end, it should develop trainees' a. *knowledge* on Web 2.0 applications already used in the EFL context, b. *skills* on how to manage and use new technologies in order to enrich their EFL teaching methods, techniques, activities and materials (Strevens, 1974), c. *positive attitude* towards new technologies and their integration into the EFL classroom and d. *awareness* of the need to change resulted naturally from the above mentioned knowledge, skills and positive attitude regarding the benefits of the educational technology which will eventually activate trainees' sense of flexibility and decision-making initiatives in the teaching process.

The course could follow a *bottom-up* approach to the above thematic area relying upon the *art/craft conceptions* of teaching against any prescribed sets of teaching skills or general teaching methods. Trainees need to be stimulated to discover things that work by integrating new technologies through a process of decision-making, reflection, analysis and assessment (Freeman & Richards, 1993). Teaching should be seen as an essentially individual undertaking in which trainees are invited to take initiatives and become active course designers, developers and creators by reflecting upon, revising, improving and adjusting their old teaching practices through their familiarization with new technologies in order to maximize their learners' motivation (Tzotzou, 2014b, 2016b).

The art/craft approach of conceptualizing teaching could also be combined with a *philosophy conception* of teaching *based on humanistic values* which emphasize a. *active learner involvement* and *autonomy* in learning as well as in the way human learning takes place via Web 2.0 technologies and b. the *need for developing an online community* for teachers and learners towards the sharing of learning and teaching experience by means of Web 2.0 tools (Beaumont, 2005; Johnston, 2003). For instance, it could be demonstrated how Web 2.0 tools can allow users (teachers and students) realize the educational benefits of interacting and collaborating with each other by forming a virtual learning community through social networking sites, blogs, wiki, video sharing sites and other Web 2.0 applications (Tzotzou, 2014b, 2016b).

All in all, the course should comprise elements of both training and development incorporating the elements of theory and practice as well. Trainees should be encouraged to rationalise their practices before being exposed to new theoretical input as well as make abstract conceptualisations based on their practical experiences. Teachers should also be encouraged to try new things interacting with new technologies during the course, reflect on Web 2.0 benefits and adjust their practice and thinking on the basis of the new digital trends in EFL education.

Training Process

Methodology

The course could follow the *enriched reflection model* (Ur, 1999) by exploiting both *personal input* (personal experience) and *external input* (vicarious experience, theory) through active experimentation, reflection and peer observation (Johari, 2006; Tzotzou, 2014a). In-service teachers should be given the chance to recall and share their teaching experience, reflect alone and in discussion with their co-trainees, both at a descriptive and at an analytical level, in order to work out theories about teaching with new technologies, thus becoming able to develop their personal theories of action. External input should be encouraged by urging trainees to gain in-depth knowledge and experience from reading materials on the literature of educational technology, other EFL teachers' experiments (e.g. Web 2.0-based sample lesson plans and teaching proposals) and suggested bibliography on Web 2.0 education for further reading (Farrell, 1998; Ur, 1999).

In this regard, the training course will encourage *reflection* and *critical thinking* through conscious recall and examination of the previous teaching experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action (Richards, 1990). Through *critical reflection* trainees can reach awareness of a need to change (Pennington, 1995) which is the first step towards innovation and improvement by locating teaching in its broader social and cultural context in our digital era (Bartlett, 1990).

Selecting Tasks

Due to the fact that EFL teachers are adults, their training should be mostly experiential by focusing on the acquisition of experience, observation and processing, reflecting and gaining deeper knowledge (Tzotzou, 2014a, 2016a). Since trainees are in-service teachers, the *experiential* and *exploratory* training can be achieved through the *interaction* between the trainees and the content of the course by carrying out a variety of activities linking their own previous experience and knowledge to that content. Moreover, *feedback* activities and *critical thinking* should be encouraged as well as *interaction* between the trainees and the trainer and among the trainees themselves integrating Web 2.0 technologies into the training course.

To this end, training tasks could include *online demonstrations*, *pair/group/plenary discussion* and *workshops*. After each workshop carried out in groups, there could be a plenary discussion on the use of specific Web 2.0 tools or freeware applications, initially discussed in pairs/groups, with all the trainees together. These tasks could be enriched with *video presentations* and *experiential activities* such as *classroom teaching*, *peer teaching* and *microteaching* (Ellis, 1986). Moreover, the integration of Web 2.0 tools into the training course (e.g. blog, wiki, you-tube, GoogleDrive etc) is recommended by engaging trainees in Web 2.0-based tasks in a lab with computers and internet connection which could be beneficial as EFL teachers will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with these tools on their own and in collaboration with their colleagues during the course before their actual pedagogical implementation in the school classroom.

Other training activities, as put forward by Parrott (1993), could include *reading* online ELT texts and course materials, *watching* ELT material with trainees' active involvement (e.g. you-tube video watching), *speaking* through collaborative brainstorming (exchanging and comparing opinions, ideas, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and experience with co-participants in the task),

writing (brainstorming ideas, preparing and describing lessons/techniques on a wiki platform), *producing* (materials for classroom use, lesson plans based on new technologies using Web 2.0 tools such as HotPotatoes), *comparing* (two or more lesson plans, personal opinions and experience with co-trainees, e.g. using GoogleDocs), *teaching* (to experiment with new technologies in their classroom as a follow-up activity).

After each training activity, there could be a *feedback session* in which pairs/groups report back their ideas (Wallace, 1991). A specific person of each group (spokesperson) could be nominated to make notes and present the conclusions of the group orally to the rest. Notes could be made on a large sheet of paper 'posted' on the wall (Woodward, 1992) with other groups commenting or asking questions and after noting down the main points of the presentation a 'plenary circle' will follow to facilitate a discussion as a whole (Parrott, 1993).

Finally, there could be a distance *follow-up task* asking teachers to prepare a Web 2.0-based lesson plan as well as to put this lesson plan into practice in the actual school classroom. This task could involve a. the *study of materials* (e.g. journals, extracts, selected bibliography online) and b. the submission of a *written assignment* with trainees' *feedback reports* after actual classroom practice using the Moodle⁹ platform.

Stages

This course is recommended to be carried out on the basis of a *blended model* in two cycles/phases: a six-hour contact session and a distance schedule of work (Wallace, 1991). The contact session could be divided into 5 stages and include *demonstrations*, *pair/group/plenary discussion*, *workshops* as well as the presentation of a *microteaching* (Ellis, 1986) by sequencing activities according to the reflection model of teacher education, thus moving from practice to theory (Ayakli, 2005).

To start with, in the first stage, there could be a *You-tube video presentation* about Web 2.0 education in order to create expectations about the subject matter and activate the trainees' participation. After video watching, the trainees could be invited to work in pairs by taking notes in order to *reflect* on both the video and their personal ELT experience by exchanging and sharing ideas on how they can make their classes more motivating with new technologies. Then each pair of trainees could report back to the other groups in order to trigger a *plenary discussion*. After reporting, trainees could watch another You-tube video in which experts talk about the main benefits of integrating new technologies into EFL learning followed by trainees' *feedback* comments summarizing the main points of the topic based on their *critical thinking*.

In the second stage, the trainees could be divided into groups in order to carry out a *jigsaw reading activity*. The groups could study different texts with each text describing a particular Web 2.0 tool or freeware application (e.g. blogs, wikis, hotpotatoes, cooltools, GoogleDrive, edmodo, etc). After analyzing and reflecting upon the main points of each technological tool by *taking notes*, each group reports back to the other groups in order to exchange and share knowledge. A *video presentation* could follow to demonstrate each one of

⁹ Moodle (*Modular Object Oriented Developmental Learning Environment*) is a course management system providing an open source learning platform to help teachers and trainers create and deliver their own courses, materials, tasks, etc in an asynchronous way.

the technological tools above and then through a *plenary discussion* the specific advantages of each application are pointed out as a *feedback activity* with all the trainees together.

In the third stage of the contact session, trainees could join *collaborative workshops* (working in groups) in order to study different lesson plans which integrate Web 2.0 technologies into ELT practice by *taking notes* on the ways applications are used to achieve specific pedagogical aims and learning objectives. They could also be asked to suggest alternatives by recommending the use of other technological tools in order to accomplish the same aims of the lesson plan assigned to them. After the *workshop*, they report back and exchange ideas with their co-trainees. Then trainees watch a video extract for *peer observation* in which an EFL teacher uses new technologies in an actual classroom (Tzotzou, 2014a). After *video presentation*, trainees can join a *plenary discussion* again to draw feedback conclusions.

In the fourth stage, trainees could work in groups again in order to work out their own *Web 2.0-based lesson plans* by selecting a Web 2.0 tool on their own in an attempt to integrate new technologies into the EFL classroom and serve pedagogical objectives. Based on that *lesson planning*, each group prepares and presents a *microteaching* to the other groups which could also be video-taped and posted on You-tube and the course's platform at a later stage. A *comparing activity* could follow to exchange ideas and opinions on the effectiveness of the all lesson plans and provide *feedback*.

In the fifth stage of the contact session, the *distance schedule work* is announced to the trainees which could include *study of the relevant Web 2.0 education literature* by posting electronic resources and materials (e.g. journals, lesson plans) on the course's Moodle platform. The trainer also announces the submission of a *written assignment* as a *follow-up activity* with the following parts: a. trainees prepare their own *Web 2.0-based lesson plan* individually, b. *implement* it in their actual classroom and c. write a *feedback report* describing and evaluating the overall classroom experience by focusing on the pedagogical value of the Web 2.0 tools. Finally, during the last stage of the contact session, there could be an *overall feedback task* to evaluate the course by asking the trainees to express their opinion about its aims, content and processes both by filling an online questionnaire (by means of Google Forms) posted on the course's Moodle platform as well as by discussing orally the main issues raised.

The Teacher Development Component

The course focuses on *practical experience* by activating trainees' critical and autonomous 'higher-order' thinking skills through analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating new knowledge on integrating new technologies into ELT practice (Bloom, 1956). The electronic and audiovisual training materials can foster teachers' professional development in a *holistic* way by building up trainees' internal agenda, awareness and positive attitude towards Web 2.0 technology. As a result, trainees can learn *how* to make informed decisions for their classrooms that prioritise learning motivation by becoming autonomous and 'open' to experimentation with new technologies and thus evolving and changing as professionals for the benefit of themselves as well as their learners' benefit.

The course could follow the *reflective model* of teacher education (Wallace, 1991) to allow a role for both the trainer and trainees in the process by emphasizing the development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching through several *development activities* such as collaborative work, plenary discussions, reflection materials, assignments and presentations. The

trainer's role is mostly to stimulate, organize, coordinate, monitor, support and encourage both *individual reflection* and *peer observation* on Web 2.0 teaching practices in a collaborative context. These *development activities* facilitate the autonomous process of becoming a better teacher through *experiential practice* with Web 2.0 tools by following the *principle of transversity* which promotes active pedagogy and values related to autonomy and responsibility (Purén, 2001).

In this regard, *reflection* is a means of investigating teachers' beliefs, cognitive processes and decision-making practices (Borg, 2003). As Roberts (1998) argues, development is only possible through a *process of reflection, self-monitoring* and *self-evaluation*. These processes are 'the only possible basis for long-term change' (Roberts 1998: 305). A number of studies have also demonstrated that more reflective teachers are better able to monitor, make real-time decisions and respond to the changing needs of learners than less reflective teachers (Mann, 2005; McMeniman et al., 2003; Yost et al., 2000).

The Language Development Component

What is more, the course offers opportunities for trainees' *language development* as they can interact in the target language with different roles. First and foremost, as *teachers* on the grounds that the language activities demonstrated to the trainee teachers will be potentially 'models' for them to apply to their own teaching context by integrating new technologies (Edge, 1988).

Secondly, the course encourages the role of trainees as *users* as it helps the reinforcement of all four skills in the target language engaging them in a variety of tasks which demand the extended use of their FL productive and receptive skills, such as speaking (pair dialogues, group/plenary discussions, microteaching), reading (jigsaw reading and study of foreign bibliography), writing (note-taking, lesson planning and written assignment/report) and listening (video watching without subtitles). In this way, trainees use the target language to interact with each other and they can achieve FL improvement.

It also treats trainees as *analysts* since both in the contact session and in their distance study they can learn how to focus learners' attention on specific language forms, structures and functions by the aid of new technologies into their ELT practice. In this regard, language work/awareness based on the applied linguistic theory can interact with Web 2.0-based methodology (Beaumont, 2005).

Conclusion

The present teacher education proposal aims to answer two crucial questions: *a. how teachers can be motivated to change* and *b. how languages are learnt more effectively in the digital age* by providing theory and practice on the latest advances in the field of EFL teaching (Manolopoulou-Sergi, 2005). To this end, it stimulates trainees to discover things that work through a reflective process of decision-making (Freeman & Richards, 1993) and situates learning about teaching within an experiential and pedagogical Web 2.0 context. It develops in trainees ways of knowing and doing that represent the socially constructed, perceptual, and interpretative nature of real teaching, a 'multi-dimensional awareness' and the ability to apply this awareness to their actual contexts of teaching aiming at a *long-term effect* of the specific training and knowledge input (Tomlinson, 2003).

In particular, the present teacher education proposal suggests a shift toward a more experiential approach that promotes trainee-centeredness and provides opportunities for autonomy and peer collaboration among trainees (Beaumont, 2005). This shift illustrates the need for teacher education to become *process-oriented* in Greece and for a more *constructivist* approach to be adopted which would render trainees capable of making interpretations by constructing their own meaning (Crandall, 2000). In light of the above, the trainer's role is to guide state EFL teachers into becoming reflective and autonomous decision-makers by assuming responsibility for their practices, linking effectively theory and practice and thereby being ready to walk the paths of professional growth in the digital era.

To conclude, the main idea put forward is that state EFL teachers cannot become better professionals unless they learn to develop their critical self. By this, it is meant that they should learn to reflect upon what they do in their classrooms critically. That is why, this course triggers trainees to experience new technologies by forming clear conceptions of the pedagogical principles underlying Web 2.0 technology and being able not only to apply these principles but also to create further pedagogical practice (Richards, 1990; Ur, 1996).

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