

Content and Process of the Major Training Programme for State EFL Teachers in Greece: A Critical Review

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Abstract

What is important for teacher development is to seek professionalism through collaboration with other colleagues, sincere critical reflection on one's own practices, sharing of problems and strong desire for self-improvement for the benefit of both learners and teachers. This form of professionalism was the expected outcome of the so-called Major Training Programme (MTP) addressed to state EFL teachers in Greece which implied that state-school foreign language learning should be transformed into a forum where informed, principled experimentation is encouraged in cooperation with other stakeholders, bringing a real-life flavour to the whole learning experience. In general terms, the MTP was a teacher education programme conceptualized, developed and implemented on the basis of the 'New School' philosophy and it followed the reflective model of teacher education allowing a role for both the trainer and trainees in the process by most importantly emphasizing the development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching practices. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon the MTP providing a critical analysis and evaluation of its content and process relying on concepts and theories derived from the teacher education literature.

Key words: Training, Reflection, Teacher Development, Personal Theory, Trainee-Centeredness

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, in Greece, in-service teacher training focused on *transmission-based* and *trainer-centred* approaches. Teacher educators by means of lectures or different kinds of presentations used to transmit theoretical knowledge and basic skills to trainees who were treated as passive recipients of 'ready-made'

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knowledge rather than active agents engaged in decision-making processes (Crandall, 2000). The majority of teacher training programmes, if not all, included mostly seminars or one-day conferences which didn't actually facilitate the active involvement of the participating teachers (Bax, 1997; Johnson, 2006).

The above mentioned transmission-based approach to teacher training changed for the first time in 2011 when a pilot six-month training course, the so called Major Training Programme (MTP)², which was a formal in-service voluntary/non-compulsory training course, addressed to state-school teachers from different areas all over Greece, was implemented to foster *teacher development* (Beaumont, 2005). The MTP demonstrated a shift toward a more reflective and holistic approach to teacher education which promoted *trainee-centeredness* and provided opportunities for trainees' *autonomy* (Beaumont, 2005). This shift covered the need for the teacher education to become more *process-oriented* in a constructivist way prompting the teachers to discover their 'personal theory' which constitutes the basis on which new knowledge, skills and attitudes will be accommodated (Crandall, 2000). In fact, the MTP marked a new era for the teacher training in Greece focusing on the importance of research and inquiry on the part of the teachers as well as on the role of *reflection* in the professional development of state-school teachers (Bartlett, 1990; Freeman & Richards, 1993).

The MTP attempted to respond to the new educational challenges of the 21st century³ based on the assumption that teacher autonomy and the ability to make informed decisions become even more imperative nowadays especially because traditionally prescribed educational models and methods have been questioned and proved ineffective the last decades. Taking into consideration the fact that the trainee-teachers are not the 'empty bucket' to fill it, the MTP focused on previous school experience activating trainees' *critical* and *autonomous* thinking processes (Yates & Muchisky, 2003). The training programme was structured around the 'New School' philosophy which values teachers' personal experience and teaching practice as essentially important and a threshold for any conceptual change or development they might achieve.

In light of the above, the present paper attempts a critical review of the content and process of the MTP for state EFL⁴ teachers in Greece. To this end, after providing an outline of the specific training context including the training institution characteristics, the target teaching situation, the MTP purpose and participants (trainers and trainees), it is attempted a thorough analysis and evaluation of its content and process on the basis of modern theoretical approaches to issues of teacher education and professional development.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are several definitions as regards teacher education, teacher training and teacher development in the relevant literature (Freeman, 1989; Manolopoulou-Sergi, 2005; Richards, 1990; Widdowson, 1983;

² 8,000 permanent state-school teachers from seven different specializations participated in this pilot MTP period and the training course took place in 57 training centers in five selected prefectures all over Greece according to the information available at the official MTP site (<http://www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/>). It is worth noting here that it was an innovative training project as the MTP planning and implementation was based on the results of an extended research study regarding the school teachers' actual training needs (available at <http://www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/index.php/2010-06-02-19-22-56/65-2010-10-18-13-39-01>). Although according to the initial planning the MTP aimed to train almost 150,000 public and private school teachers of all disciplines in primary and secondary education (as cited in Anastasiades, 2011), unfortunately, after its pilot phase, despite its successful implementation and completion, this innovative training programme was ceased or even 'blocked' probably either due to rapid political changes in Greece (e.g. elections, new government, appointment of a new minister of education, etc) or/and due to the financial crisis and the lack of funds from the Greek state and the ministry of education as long as the co-funding provided by the European Social Fund (ESPA 2007-13) came to an end. For more details regarding this training course schedule, methodology and structure, see the *Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part* (2011), pp. 48-53.

³ Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part (2011), pp. 10-11.

⁴ EFL=English as a Foreign Language.

Woodward, 1992). According to Richards (1990), *training* in the micro perspective focuses on equipping teachers with a repertoire of strategies to facilitate their teaching practices whereas in the macro perspective *education* stresses the importance of infiltrating acquired knowledge through personal qualities like judgment, flexibility and creativity. Freeman (1989), however, supports that *education* constitutes an umbrella term including the concepts of both training and development. In particular, according to Freeman, *training* is described as the direct intervention on the part of the trainer with emphasis on knowledge and skills which aims at mastering specific trainable aspects of teaching through practice whereas *development* is considered to be an indirect intervention which focuses on idiosyncratic and more complex aspects of teaching, with a view to encouraging a shift of awareness and attitude, which would subsequently lead teachers to change of attitudes and practices.

In the present paper, focus is especially placed on the reflective model of teacher education which formed the theoretical 'backbone' of the MTP. The *reflective model* is an alternative model of teacher education which allows trainees to construct their own teaching 'theory and practice' by exploiting their own previous experience as well as knowledge coming from research. It is then up to the trainees to put their knowledge to practice and become reflective on the grounds of their actions, the strengths or the weaknesses of their teaching practices. According to the reflective model, there is no one good model or recipe of teaching that everyone should follow. The teachers are encouraged to be flexible and creative in their decision-making processes reflecting upon their own teaching situation and their learners' actual needs (Farrell, 1999).

Reflection also plays a defining role in the process of a teacher's *professional development* in O'Brien's (1981) *E-R-O-T-I* model. In this teacher training model the input comes from the trainees' own experience usually gained through classroom observation sessions or even an analysis of their ideas. The trainees are engaged in a trial process experimenting with the theoretical input and applying it accordingly into daily classroom practice. In a similar vein, Zeichner (1994) considers that reflection is essential for bringing understanding to the complex nature of classrooms and states that teachers should be trained to reflect on the subject matter and the thoughtful application of particular teaching strategies. He further states that teachers need to reflect on their learners' understandings, interests and developmental thinking. In other words, teachers need to look at teaching from other perspectives beyond their 'egocentric' view, that is, to become more *reflective practitioners* (Green, 2006).

The MTP followed the *reflective model* of teacher education (Wallace, 1991) allowing a role for both the trainer and trainees in the process by most importantly emphasizing the development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching through a variety of techniques such as group-work, plenary discussions, reflection materials, assignments and presentations. Reflective practice was also exploited as a professional development process towards achieving behavioural change⁵.

SETTING THE TRAINING CONTEXT

Training institution

The MTP was organized by the Pedagogical Institute in 2011 (from June to December 2011) which was the main training institution authorized by the Greek ministry of education to organize the specific training programme. That period, the Pedagogical Institute⁶ was the oldest *research and advisory* state body which

⁵ Manolopoulou-Sergi & Sifakis (2011), in *Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part-English* (2011), p. 47.

⁶ The Pedagogical Institute has been replaced by the Institute of Educational Policy since 2012 (http://www.pi-schools.gr/pi_history/). In particular, the Institute of Educational Policy was founded in 2011 with the Law 3966 (Government Gazette A' 118/24-05-2011) functioning under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs to support and promote scientific research regarding current as well as future education issues, methods and policies (<http://www.iep.edu.gr/index.php/el/>).

essentially contributed to the educational policy implemented by the ministry of education. Its main aim was the submission of *pedagogical proposals, advice and recommendations* to the minister of education on all issues of education, as well as the *implementation* of the decisions made by the minister of education. One of its principal duties was the design and implementation of *training programmes* for state-school teachers on new curricula, new technologies, teaching methodologies, school management and other pedagogical issues in order to improve the *quality* of primary and secondary education.

The target teaching situation

The target teaching situation is defined by the 'New School' purpose and principles structured around the new *digital, innovative, multilingual and multicultural* education in order to cover the modern educational needs and challenges of the 21st century⁷. To this end, it exploits modern teaching theories and follows a *differentiated approach* to learning towards the development of humanistic values and basic skills related to the role of learners as future responsible citizens, their active participation in social and cultural life, their collective social spirit, autonomous action, environmental awareness, aesthetic experience as well as their positive attitude towards lifelong learning.

Regarding foreign language learning, as clearly stated in Volume B of the MTP material (2011, pp. 2-8), there is a focus on the development of learners' *cognitive, social and communicative* skills in relation to certain foreign language learning levels as defined in the new *unified curriculum for the foreign languages*⁸ and as prescribed by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). In this context, the EFL teacher needs to be constantly trained and informed about the new pedagogical approaches which promote differentiated instruction, experiential learning, the cross-thematic approach, intercultural awareness and educational technology. The teacher also needs to be familiar with web resources and applications which can facilitate tremendously teaching, enriching the school textbooks and creating conditions towards learners' motivation. EFL teachers are encouraged to take initiatives and become active course designers, developers and creators by reflecting upon, revising, improving and adjusting the existing curricula to the actual language needs, learning styles and preferences of their learners⁹.

The MTP purpose

The main target of the programme, as clearly stated in the basic training material¹⁰, was teachers' *professional development* in a holistic way by building up trainees' internal agenda, awareness and attitudes through peer interaction. In particular, it aimed at facilitating EFL teachers in making informed decisions for their classrooms that prioritise learning by becoming autonomous and 'open' to experimentation and thus enjoying their teaching to the benefit of their learners. The MTP was also conceptualized, developed and implemented on the basis of the 'New School' philosophy, as already mentioned, to provide trainees with *specific training* by promoting innovative EFL teaching techniques and cross-thematic activities, differentiated learning, course design skills and the integration of new technologies and arts into EFL learning (Stevens, 1974). All in all, the MTP aimed to equip the trainees with innovative teaching/learning ideas and techniques in order to teach *young learners*, aged between 6 and 18 years old, of different English language competence levels studying in Greek state primary and secondary schools.

⁷ The 'New School' philosophy, purpose, principles and methods are extensively presented in the *Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part* (2011), pp. 9-33.

⁸ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part- English (2011), pp. 1-2.

⁹ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part- English (2011), pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part-English (2011), pp.44-45.

The MTP participants: trainers and trainees

The MTP trainers were carefully selected on the basis of certain academic and professional criteria. They had a long and remarkable *teaching experience* in both school education and teacher training. They were also characterized by a rich *academic background* with a lot of *qualifications* regarding ELT¹¹ methodology, adult education and distance learning. The majority of trainers had been *state school teachers* for decades or *school advisors*, which means that they were very familiar with the target teaching situation and the ELT practice/routine of their trainees in the Greek state-school context. In particular, school advisors 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 whose responsibilities mainly include in-service training of schoolteachers, evaluation of both the educational process and schoolteachers, school teachers' counselling and pedagogical guidance as well as remedial work on their possible deficiencies (Tzotzou, 2014).

As far as trainees are concerned, they were *in-service permanent*¹² *state EFL teachers*, all holding a *university degree* on English language and literature. Due to their previous university English studies they had already developed their English language competence to a great extent. They were characterized by a *strong motivation* for teaching and teacher training as they decided to apply for an optional and extremely demanding training course which lasted almost six months. Each group of trainees (\approx 20 trainees per group) could be characterized *homogeneous* as the trainees were native Greek people with almost similar religious beliefs, common national, linguistic and cultural origin, and a middle-class social status. However, there was some kind of '*gender gap*' among the trainees (notable age differences) which naturally resulted in considerable differences regarding their overall teaching experience. There were twenty in-service state EFL teachers-trainees in each one of the groups who had to participate in both the contact sessions and the distance part of the course.

ANALYSIS OF THE COURSE

The MTP content

The MTP aimed to present and promote the so-called 'New School' principles in classroom practices as stated in Volume A of the MTP material (2011, pp. 9-33)¹³. Initially, it offered *general professional training* towards understanding the psychological and humanistic aspects of modern education (e.g. team building, empathy, intercultural understanding) in its new social and multicultural context. In this context, trainee teachers were triggered to reflect upon professional issues of concern, both individually and in groups. Such issues included the *impact* and *consequences* (intended and unintended) of different educational policies as well as practitioner issues such as managing relationships with learners, colleagues and parents in the school community as a whole.

Subsequently, it provided trainees with *specific training* in order to familiarize them with innovative EFL teaching techniques and cross-thematic activities, differentiated learning methods, course design skills and the integration of new technologies into EFL learning¹⁴ (Strevens, 1974). To this end, the

¹¹ ELT=English Language Teaching.

¹² In Greek state schools of both primary and secondary education, there are officially two main categories of teaching staff: a. the permanent school teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education (either through written exams or on the basis of certain criteria, e.g. previous teaching experience, social criteria, etc) to offer their teaching services continuously and b. temporary school teachers who are employed on a temporary basis (about 8-9 months) every school year.

¹³ Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part, (2011), available at: <http://84.205.248.3/images/stories/ebook-epimorfotes/geniko-meros/1.%20tomos%20a%20geniko.pdf>

¹⁴ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part, May 2011, available at: <http://84.205.248.3/images/stories/ebook-epimorfotes/english/6.%20AGGLIKA.pdf>

content was structured around both teaching experience and practice focusing on the new unified curriculum for the foreign languages-EP5-XG curriculum which includes concepts such as *differentiated learning, educational technology, interculturalism and multilingualism, experiential learning, integration of world knowledge, cross-thematic approach to integrating art and environmental issues in the foreign language classroom*¹⁵. All these issues were processed looking into ways by which they could be implemented in the EFL classroom.

The MTP content, in alignment with the 'New School' principles, emphasized the development of *human values, growth in self-awareness* and in the *understanding* of others, *sensitivity* to human feelings and emotions, active learner *involvement* in learning and in the way human learning takes place (Beaumont, 2005). Teaching was not seen as a simple technical responsibility but as an inherent personal, ethical and moral matter and the role of values was essentially recognized (Johnston, 2003; Mori, 2003). To this end, the course encouraged the exchange of ideas and sharing of concerns by fostering trust, empathy and trainees' emotional involvement (Johari, 2006).

The MTP process

The MTP was carried out on the basis of a *blended model* including three cycles of contact sessions and a distance schedule of work (total duration: 200 hours)¹⁶. Contact sessions included experiential group-work and plenary discussions, a written exam as well as the design and presentation of a microteaching while distance work comprised the study of materials, the submission of two written assignments, regular e-mail correspondence, trainer's support and feedback reports.

More specifically, contact sessions included *demonstrations, pair/group/plenary discussion, workshops* as well as *microteaching* (Ellis, 1986). Trainers demonstrated a particular technique (e.g. jigsaw reading, role-play, group formation) by activating the trainees themselves. They also invited trainees to work in pairs or groups using activity sheets in order either to carry out a pair/group discussion (e.g. exchanging/sharing experience and opinions) or to prepare ELT materials and lesson plans. After each workshop there was always a plenary discussion on ELT issues, initially discussed in pairs/groups, with all the trainees together. These procedures were enriched with *video presentations* and *experiential activities* such as classroom teaching, peer teaching and microteaching (Ellis, 1986).

Other training activities, as put forward by Parrott (1993), included *reading* ELT texts and course materials; *watching* ELT material through trainees' involvement; *speaking* through collaborative brainstorming by exchanging and comparing opinions, ideas, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and experience with co-participants in the task; *writing* through brainstorming ideas, preparing and describing lessons/techniques; *drawing* diagrams and mind-maps; *recalling* types of materials used in the classroom, learning methods and styles; *producing* materials for classroom use and lesson plans; *comparing* two or more lesson plans, personal opinions and experience with co-trainees; *teaching* by experimenting with New School philosophy and approaches in actual ELT practice.

After each training activity there was always a *feedback session* in which pairs/groups reported back their ideas (Wallace, 1991). A specific person of each group (spokesperson) was nominated to make notes and present the conclusions of the group orally to the rest. Notes were usually 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' followed to facilitate a discussion as a whole (Parrott, 1993).

Last but not least, distance procedures relied upon principles underlying adult education ensuring

¹⁵ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part-English (2011), p. 45.

¹⁶ See the *Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part, (2011), p. 49* and/or the whole training schedule posted at: http://www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/images/stories/progr_a_b/2.%20programma%20epimorfosis%20ekpaideutikon%20b%20thmia.pdf

maximum flexibility regarding space, time and trainees' special learning rhythms in accordance with the methodology of distance education (Anastasiades, 2011)¹⁷. In particular, they comprised the *study of specially designed materials* mainly produced by the Pedagogical Institute, expert scientists in the field or even the trainers themselves, the submission of two *written assignments, e-mail correspondence* at regular times, the *trainer's support* and *trainer's feedback reports*¹⁸.

EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

The MTP content

The MTP managed to select and organize its content in a way which promoted *experiential* training/learning and integration with lasting effects on the trainees' teaching practice. In particular, it exploited both *personal input* (personal experience) and *external input* (vicarious experience, theory) through active experimentation, reflective and peer observation (Johari, 2006). Trainees worked out theories about teaching in practice, thus becoming able to develop their personal theories of action (Clarke, 1994; Widdowson, 1984). Moreover, trainees gained in-depth knowledge and experience from *specially designed reading materials, other teachers' experiments* (e.g. lesson plans, teaching proposals) and *suggested bibliography on the literature* for further reading¹⁹.

It focused on *practical experience* by activating trainees' critical and autonomous 'higher-order' thinking skills through analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating past and new knowledge on ELT issues (Bloom, 1956). The printed and audiovisual training materials fostered teachers' professional development in a *holistic* way by building up trainees' internal agenda, awareness and attitudes. As a result, trainees learned *how* to make informed decisions for their classrooms that prioritise learning by becoming autonomous and 'open' to experimentation and thus enjoying their teaching to the benefit of their learners.

The MTP was based on the assumption that teachers' knowledge is inherently their own, constructed by teachers themselves, and largely experiential. In this regard, theory informed *classroom practice* only to the extent to which teachers themselves made sense of that theory. In other words, the MTP situated learning about teaching within an *experiential context* and developed in teachers ways of knowing and doing that represent the socially constructed, perceptual, and interpretative nature of real teaching. Trainees were constantly engaged in a *process of sense-making*, enabling them to not simply change what they do, but change their justifications for what they do (Pennington, 1992). In this way, *sense-making* made theory relevant for practice as teachers' knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, conceptual or perceptual, was understood and acted on within the context of real teaching (Johnson, 1996). Consequently, teachers were not treated as consumers of theories but as '*theorists*' (theory-builders) in their own right (Clarke, 1994; Widdowson, 1984) being engaged actively in *experiential training* through a practice-reflection cycle of activities (Ur, 1999).

In this regard, the MTP content was not rigid and static but *flexible* and *dynamic*. In fact, it was built up progressively and 'composed' naturally by relying upon personal and vicarious experience, critical reflection and the relevant EFL literature (Farrell, 1998; Ur, 1999). On that basis, there was also integration of theory and practice which was achieved through *sense-making* which made theory relevant for practice as teachers' knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, conceptual or perceptual, was understood and acted on within the *context of real teaching* (Johnson, 1996). Teachers-trainees became legitimate

¹⁷ Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part, (2011), p. 53-60.

¹⁸ Basic Training Material, Vol. A: General Part, (2011), p. 59-60.

¹⁹ Basic Training Material, Vol. B: Specific Part-English (2011), p. 44-106.

knowers, producers of legitimate knowledge, and capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional practice over time (Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

The MTP process

The MTP followed the *E-R-O-T-I* model of teacher training (O'Brien, 1981) as it was based on experience, rationale, observation, trial and integration by aiming at the application of theory to practice. *Trial* took place extensively by applying new ELT practices in the context of the training classroom (peer interaction, microteaching) and *integration* took place in the 'real' classroom of the in-service trainees in their schools.

The extended use of *experiential practices* involved the trainees in *actual teaching* providing them with the opportunity to teach actual learners in their own classrooms and in *simulated practice* through peer teaching and observation tasks mainly through microteaching. Trainees were engaged actively in experiential training through a *practice-reflection* cycle of activities (Ur, 1999) by being exposed to various models of teaching beyond the fiction that there is one best way to teach (Roberts, 1998). Also, '*loop input*' tasks, such as jigsaw reading and group formation, helped them experience on their own new ELT practices and understand how they can promote the 'New School' principles of collaboration and empathy.

It also followed the *reflective model* of teacher education (Wallace, 1991) as it allowed a role for both the trainer and trainees in the process by most importantly emphasizing the development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching through a variety of techniques such as group-work, plenary discussions, reflection materials, assignments and presentations. In particular, reflection enabled teachers to *diagnose* and *understand* their classroom contexts, put their learners at the heart of the teaching-learning process, develop a rationale for their teaching on their own and make informed decisions (Al-Issa, 2002). In each group, trainees were encouraged to use their growing 'knowledge base' (Schulman, 1987) to identify problems emerging in their school classrooms through 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983) and try to solve these problems through continuous reflection, professional and critical inquiry into their own practices (Schön, 1983, 1987). In this way trainees reached new understandings of purposes, learners, learning process, instruction and self and consolidated these new understandings through strategies such as documentation, analysis and discussion (Schulman, 1987) as they were actively engaged in the exchange of ideas and sharing of concerns by fostering trust, empathy and their emotional involvement (Johari, 2006).

Through *group-work* (cross-over and pyramid grouping) trainees were involved in peer interaction and reflective dialogues to access new information (Farrell, 1999). They were provided with appropriate teaching material and reading resources working in supportive and interactive small tutorial groups. The experiential activities carried out by tutorless groups raised trainees' self-awareness of past experiences, and current beliefs, practice and knowledge, created opportunities for discussion with fellow trainees by addressing one's practice, beliefs and pressures affecting one's work (Wallace, 1991).

Awareness-raising practices developed trainees' conscious understanding of the principles underlying EFL teaching and the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons (Ellis, 1986). New understanding emerged from a process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Hence, there was 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). In this context, the trainers' role was mostly to stimulate, organize, coordinate, monitor, support and encourage both individual reflection and peer observation on EFL teaching practices in a collaborative context.

In the MTP, *art/craft conceptions* of teaching predominated over any prescribed sets of teaching skills or general teaching methods. Trainees were stimulated to discover things that work through a process of decision-making, reflection, analysis and assessment (Freeman & Richards, 1993). Teaching was seen as an essentially individual undertaking in which trainees were invited to take initiatives and

become active *course designers, developers and creators* by reflecting upon, revising, improving and adjusting the existing curricula to the actual language needs, learning styles and preferences of their learners. The art/craft approach of conceptualizing teaching was also accompanied by a *philosophy conception* of teaching *based on values* as the MTP emphasized the development of human values, growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, sensitivity to human feelings and emotions, active learner involvement in learning and in the way human learning takes place (Beaumont, 2005).

Last but not least, the MTP was *trainee-centred* allowing trainees to have control over the purpose (product) and the form (structure) of their training. The MTP process emphasized the development of trainees' own ability to reflect on their teaching (Bartlett, 1990; Mann, 2005) through a variety of experiential techniques such as *group-work, plenary discussions, reflection materials, assignments and microteaching* (Ellis, 1986). *Reflection* was 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).

CONCLUSION

In the course of the MTP, teacher education was not seen as an individual endeavour, but rather, as a process that was anchored in a reflective training model, where knowledge was created through an *interactive and consensual* interpretation of shared reality. Trainee teachers were given opportunities to reflect on and co-construct professional knowledge with their colleagues. *Reflection* enabled the trainees to critically evaluate methods and techniques through experimentation and trial as well as to embrace and integrate the ones conducive to the effectiveness of their teaching practices and to their developing into reflective practitioners. The trainees experienced new ELT practices, constructed and owned by the trainees themselves, by forming clear conceptions of the principles underlying 'New School' procedures and being able not only to apply these principles but also to create further practice (Richards, 1990; Ur, 1996).

To conclude, the MTP was the first innovative training course in Greece which stimulated trainees to discover things that work through a reflective process of decision-making and situated learning about teaching within an experiential context (Freeman & Richards, 1993). Through its innovative content and process, it developed 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).

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