
Cross-pollination in Teacher Development

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Introduction

Cross-pollination in teacher development is an under-researched area partly because of the in-service teacher training model currently in place in a number of educational contexts, including the mainstream school sector in Malta. At the start of the 2014-2015 scholastic year a group of 232 teachers working within the primary and secondary sectors benefited from an in-service course aimed at enhancing their language awareness. All Year III and Forms 3 to 5 English teachers working in state schools in Malta and Gozo participated in this course which was also attended by a number of teachers working in Church schools. The participants in this course numbered 120 primary teachers and 112 secondary teachers. The fact that the course was designed by twelve teacher trainers from the private English Language Teaching (ELT) sector specifically for the needs of mainstream teachers was its foremost innovative aspect due to the cross-pollination that ensued.

Teachers working in state schools in Malta are obliged to attend a minimum of twelve hours of in-service training every year. This training is either organised by Education Officers (EOs) or by the school itself. The training may focus on subject-related issues or else on other educational priorities. In 2014 there were four EOs responsible for teachers of English at secondary level and one EO responsible for the teaching of English at primary level. One of their main duties consists of organizing annual in-service training for teachers. In the case of primary teachers, training related to the teaching of English cannot occur every year as they might be asked to attend courses organised by the EOs responsible for other subjects.

In-service courses are not designed and delivered by the EOs every year. Besides the fact that sometimes teachers might have to attend training offered by the school where they work, the EOs at times invite guest speakers to run a specific course. For example, if a new course book were being introduced at a particular level the EOs would invite the publisher to send a trainer to Malta for the purpose of conducting a course based on the materials that the teachers would be expected to use in the forthcoming scholastic year. Despite the fact that external trainers have been used in the past, the seminal importance of the course discussed in this article is in relation to the fact that it indicates an alternative approach to teachers' in-service training in the mainstream sector.

The course was the brainchild of the Minister for Education and it was co-ordinated by the primary and secondary English EOs based at the English Language Resource Centre in Valletta. Knowing how much emphasis is placed on teacher language awareness in the ELT sector, the EFL Monitoring Board, the entity responsible for regulating this sector, was asked to help develop a course that would target this significant area in teachers' knowledge. Thornbury (1997) defines language awareness as "the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively" (p.x). The link that Thornbury (1997) makes between language awareness and effective teaching is crucial and confirms the idea that a sound understanding of the English language, how it works and how students learn it and use it, enables teachers to exploit their pedagogical knowledge and skills more competently.

A pre-course questionnaire confirmed that around a third of the 232 participants had received little or no training in language awareness over the course of their career, the stress having usually been placed on methodology. The course was geared towards consolidating teachers' understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In the case of the primary school teachers, there was also a focus on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), an approach that enables teachers to exploit their Mathematics, Science and Art lessons for the purpose of teaching English.

The course consisted of six sessions spread over three days, three sessions for primary teachers and another three for secondary teachers. Each session lasted four hours. The twelve trainers worked in pairs in order to design a session that they then delivered individually to three separate groups. Half the trainers were responsible for the primary level and the other half for the secondary level. In this way each group of teachers benefited from the knowledge and experience of three different trainers.

The three sessions of the course for primary teachers were called: 'Exploring Language Features and Giving Instructions through Various Tasks and Fairy Tales'; 'Mathematics in English'; and, 'Teaching Science in English'. The three sessions for secondary teachers were entitled: 'Practical Pronunciation'; 'Grammar Awareness'; and, 'Language, Literacy and Knowledge: Vocabulary as the Basis of Success'. The course consisted of hands-on activities that for the most part used loop input. Woodward (2003) describes this method as a "type of experiential teacher training

process that involves an alignment of the process and content of learning" (p.301). Hence, for example, whilst engaged in a pronunciation activity the teachers were also actively learning about how to teach a particular aspect of pronunciation. In this way the course also sought to reinforce their methodology through language awareness.

The cross-pollination between the private ELT sector and the mainstream educational sector posed a number of benefits and challenges. Based on the results of an interview-based study, this article explores the cross-pollination that took place as part of this professional development course.

Towards a Generative and Transformative Model

As mentioned above, the one-time, intensive INSET course model still largely dominates the kind of in-service training that teachers in Malta are offered. In the literature on professional development this model has been criticised as being insufficiently effective. Randi and Zeichner (2004) maintain that "teachers learn little from traditional in-service workshops and that they should engage in more experiential professional learning" (p.200). They claim that on such courses "the learning opportunities actually offered to teachers have typically been driven by others' visions of what teachers need to learn" (Randi and Zeichner, 2004, p.181). According to Hardy (2010) the traditional one-off approach to professional development hinders "more robust, localized, sustained and engaged approaches to teachers' learning" (p.80). He argues that, "The continuation of these practices within the field of teachers' work reflects sedimented traditional approaches to teachers' learning and the marginalization of more active learning in general" (Hardy, 2010, p.80). Avalos (2011) claims that "teacher learning and development is a complex process that brings together a host of different elements and is marked by an equally important set of factors" (p.17).

After having reviewed a substantial amount of literature on teacher development published in the first decade of the 21st century, she affirms her belief that "we have moved away from the traditional in-service teacher training (INSET) model" and come to recognise the fact that "prolonged interventions are more effective than shorter ones, and that combinations of tools for learning and reflective experiences serve the purpose in a better way" (Avalos, 2011, p.17). Underscoring the significance

of a generative and transformative professional development model, Flint, Zisook and Fisher (2011) affirm that "professional development models that are collaborative, learning centered, and related to practice are more meaningful to teachers" (p.1164). Moreover, "authentic professional development is voluntary, inquiry oriented, pervasive across time and space, and open to the complexity, range, and variation of professional development based on teachers' self-identified needs and interests" (Flint et al., 2011, p.1164). It seems clear that the long-established INSET training model in place in the Maltese context needs to be re-evaluated and if not superseded altogether at least complemented by a more generative and transformative model.

In the traditional INSET model teachers from a variety of contexts are usually brought together in one location to participate in a session led by a trainer who may no longer be an active teacher. The first risk here is that teachers do not have a say in selecting the focus of the training, which may thus be divorced from their needs. Nir and Bogler (2008) maintain that "when able to decide for themselves whether to participate in a particular professional development process or not, teachers are more likely to exhibit a higher degree of satisfaction with these processes" (p.384). In support of this de Segovia and Hardison (2009) argue that in order for the implementation of reform in ELT to be successful "Continuous feedback from the classroom to policy makers and ongoing professional development support are... beneficial" (p.161).

From research by de Vries, Jansen and van de Grift (2013) it emerged that "In a situation in which CPD is a professional duty and not mandatory, teachers' student-oriented beliefs relate to teachers' own learning activities or CPD" (p.86). This raises questions about the effect of mandatory INSET courses on teachers' learning and development orientation. Secondly, on such courses it might be very difficult to create a sense of collaboration amongst the trainees given their different contexts. Hence, teachers might feel they are operating in isolation, which compels them to employ familiar techniques rather than attempting to adopt a problem-solving approach in order to address contemporary students' needs (Gemmell, 2003).

Talking about a collaborative form of professional development, Stillwell (2008) claims that "it brings peers together to talk shop and tap into one another's experience, breaking down barriers and giving novice teachers a chance to learn from the pros, and vice versa" (p.361). Hadar and Brody

(2010) found that the “breaking of isolation included the creation of a safe environment in which sharing, daring, and support became commonplace” (p.1649).

The necessity of such a collaborative learning environment leads Postholm (2012) to conclude her extensive review of the literature on teacher development by saying that “the schools in which the teachers work are the best arena for them to learn” (p.425). This means that the “courses teachers participate in should be connected to development processes they are already participating in at their school” (Postholm, 2012, p.425). Kuusisaari’s (2014) investigation into collaborative teacher learning during in-service training found that “collaboration that supports collaborative development consists of ideation, further development of ideas and raising questions” (p.46). Engaging teachers in collaborative forms of professional development in their own contexts and based on the needs they help identify is an intrinsic part of a generative and transformative model.

Another significant feature of the generative and transformative model of professional development is the importance given to teachers’ identity and beliefs. Randi and Zeichner (2004) assert that “Professional development is not about learning to work more efficiently. As learning professionals, teachers are working to learn more effectually so that they may bring their knowledge to bear on the particular problems of practice” (p.220). This entails supporting teachers to perceive themselves as lifelong learners.

Ure’s (2010) model of teacher education “helps create a learning continuum for teacher candidates that links the learning outcomes for teacher education programmes to the subsequent phases of teacher professional learning” (p.470). The idea of a continuum is crucial in the constructivist model of teacher development. Teachers’ development from the pre-service stage to that of experience involves a series of incremental changes in beliefs and practices. For example, Ezer, Gilat and Sagee (2010) show how initially teachers will value “the contribution of the experiential component in teacher education...as more essential for their success as teachers than the theoretical one” (p.402). However, “Once they have gained experience, the theoretical knowledge of their subject matter and of auxiliary subjects will be perceived as significant to their functioning as teachers” (Ezer et al., 2010, p.402). It is this kind of transformation in teachers’ beliefs that leads Kanno and Stuart (2011) to underscore “the centrality of the development of teacher identity in novice L2 teachers’ learning-to-teach processes”

(p.249). According to Armour and Makopolou (2012) one of the main flaws of most professional development programmes is their “fractured understanding of teachers as learners” (p.343). They argue that if teachers perceive themselves as teachers rather than as learners there is the risk of stasis in their learning: “if teachers are engaged in impoverished learning experiences over a long period of time they are likely to become deskilled as learners” (Armour and Makopolou, 2012, p.344).

Antoniou and Kyriakides (2013) affirm that “Every effort to train teachers inevitably should refer to what an effective teacher is or how an effective teacher should behave in the classroom in order to maximize the learning potential of the students” (p.9). Partly for this reason, “managers of ELT innovation should first persuade the teachers of the need for change and the benefits of the proposed innovation, recognizing the dialectic relationship between teachers’ beliefs and pedagogy” (Choi and Andon, 2013, p.19). The fundamental significance of teachers’ beliefs in determining effective pedagogy means that professional development should seek to adjust teachers’ beliefs about learning and teaching. The relation between teachers’ beliefs and CPD participation was investigated by de Vries, et al. (2014) and these “found symmetry between teachers’ student orientation and their own learning (a higher student orientation means higher participation in CPD)” (p.351). Such “teachers engage in professional learning first and foremost because they find it enjoyable, interesting, value it personally, and see it as important to their goals” (Jansen in De Wal et al., 2014, p.33). The generative and transformative model develops teachers’ beliefs and their identity as educators who value professional learning.

Implementing a generative and transformative model of professional development is a challenging task that relies largely on the effectiveness of the trainers, who will need to possess a set of important attributes that will allow them to fulfil the potential of this model. One of Hayes’s (1995) twelve principles for professional development stresses that “Trainers should themselves be teachers” (p.257). The advantage of this is that “Teachers on the course recognize that what they are being asked to consider is grounded in the experience of a colleague, and is not the abstract theory of a ministry official or university lecturer, far removed from ordinary classrooms” (Hayes, 1995, p.257). Such trainers will most often engage teachers in the kind of experiential learning that is deemed desirable in the classroom. According to Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2008)

"Teacher educators seem to agree that, to be able to support their student teachers' learning, they themselves should be good models of the kind of teaching they are trying to promote" (p.531).

In discussing the 'teach as you preach' principle in teacher education, Struyven, Dochy and Janssens (2010) state that "Rather than delivering information about engaging and innovative teaching practices through traditional approaches, modelling the use of these teaching methods serves the purpose of providing student teachers with 'experiences' of good teaching practices" (p.43). Such congruent teaching is not only important in pre-service training but should be a constant feature of in-service professional development.

Another important attribute is the trainer's context-sensitivity. This is necessary because "it will never be possible for the trainer to prepare trainees for all the contexts in which they work now or may work in the future" (Bax, 1997, p.235). Context-sensitivity "includes the attempt to involve trainees as far as possible in the process of their own development, which in turn means that their own views about their teaching contexts will probably be given prominence in the teacher education session" (Bax, 1997, p.237). Nonetheless, the trainer needs not accept everything teachers say unquestioningly; "challenging their assumptions and proffering new ideas will probably lead them to reflect more on their work than if they were left to express their views without an outsider's criticism or suggestion" (Bax, 1997, p.237).

Molle (2012) describes how a trainer's effort to "support collegial participation that is not focused on agreement but whose purpose is to interrogate ideas" (p.205) is typical of high quality professional development. The act of questioning is significant because, as Kuusisaari (2014) found, "excessive agreement during the process of collaborative development appeared to hinder, or even prevent collaborative action, and also suppress development of new teaching practices" (p.55).

In addition to the above, the most fundamental attribute that trainers need to possess is their own aptitude towards professional learning. According to Swennen et al. (2008) "The fact that the transition from teacher to teacher educator is assumed to be non-problematic suggests that the work of teacher educators themselves is neither particularly specialized nor highly valued" (p.540). Trainers "need to learn the professional language,

not only to enhance the level of congruent teaching, but also in order to learn from the expertise of colleagues, to reflect on their own teaching and to develop as teacher educators" (Swennen et al., 2008, p.541). Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) suggest that "In order to rethink teacher education, we must recruit and support teacher educators who have a broad mandate, an expansive world-view, a collaborative approach, and the skills to enact a rich curriculum" (p.343). Being able to use trainers with the above set of attributes facilitates the task of implementing a generative and transformative model of professional development.

One way through which this model can be implemented more easily in mainstream education is by embracing the idea that the sources of in-service training should be as varied as possible and hailing from different sectors.

In describing a collaborative form of professional development, Bignold and Barbera (2012) assert that "Teacher educators should be using all relevant, valid and reliable information that supports the professional education and development of students and the school workforce generally" (p.373). This is necessary because "the importance of establishing a collaborative learning culture as a catalyst for effective CPD and subsequent change should not be underestimated" (Bignold and Barbera, 2012, p.374). Bourke, Mentis and O'Neill (2013) claim that "An expansive view of teacher learning together with recognition of the benefits that may derive from freely renegotiated rules and divisions of labor may lead to unanticipated but ultimately more useful objects and artifacts of that learning" (p.276).

In line with this idea, Livingston (2014) declares that "A dynamic mix of 'teacher educators' is needed with different knowledge, skills and expertise. They need to work in partnership with the teachers and with each other in a more integrated and co-constructed form of teacher education" (p.222). This kind of integrative approach leads to a situation of cross-pollination whereby one sector helps to develop another.

The kind of cross-pollination in teacher development witnessed on the in-service course described above probably constitutes the spark of an effective alternative to the traditional INSET model. However, for it to be effective cross-pollination requires that teachers (and their superiors) trust the external sources of training. According to Wermke (2012, p.623)

“Teachers believe sources of knowledge are not equally important and this relative degree of importance is also dependent on the trustworthiness they attribute to those sources. Consequently, actors who are able to generate a climate of trust, characterized through competence, respect and understanding, gain access to the schools and therefore have better chances at influencing teacher practice.”

In Livingston’s (2014, p.219) opinion, for cross-pollination to play a pivotal role in contemporary teachers’ development, momentous changes need to take place first:

“The diversity of teachers’ professional learning needs across their career calls for a collaborative approach to teacher education with different teacher educators working in partnership – integrating research and practice to promote innovation and improvement in learning and teaching. The development of an effective and sustainable collaborative approach to teacher education requires shifts in systems, cultures and practice and ongoing professional development for teachers and teacher educators.”

While it is important to acknowledge that professional development transcends face-to-face in-service training, it is also crucial to appreciate that the trainers used for such training should not necessarily originate from the teachers’ own sector. Cross-pollination allows the knowledge, skills and experience developed in one sector to help enrich another. Creating a culture that values such “multi-layered interconnected approaches to teacher education” (Livingston, 2014, p.221) is fundamental if teachers are to benefit from generative and transformative forms of professional development.

Methodology

The findings reported in this article were generated by an interview-based study that investigated the cross-pollination that took place during an in-service course on teacher language awareness. Immediately after the course, semi-structured interviews were held with the five EOs co-ordinating it and with the twelve trainers responsible for its design and delivery. Each interview was held in a one-to-one manner, audio recorded

Education Officer	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience (years)	Years as Education Officer	Level
E01	F	19.5	9	Primary
E02	F	27	1.5	Secondary
E03	F	22	1 month	Secondary
E04	M	28	11	Secondary
E05	F	35	10	Secondary

Table 1 – Education Officers

Teacher Trainer	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience (years)	Years as Education Trainer	Level
TT1	M	35	22	Secondary
TT2	F	10	6	Secondary
TT3	F	11	5	Secondary
TT4	F	11	5	Primary
TT5	F	11	8	Primary
TT6	F	25	18	Secondary
TT7	F	6	1	Secondary
TT8	F	14	7	Primary
TT9	F	24	13	Primary
TT10	F	30	16	Primary
TT11	M	18	12	Primary
TT12	M	22	15	Secondary

Table 1 – Teacher Trainers

and transcribed. These interviews focused on the interviewees' views in relation to the cross-pollination in teacher development that had occurred as part of the course. Tables 1 and 2 provide further information about the EOs and teacher trainers (TT) respectively.

The tables above show that, with one exception, all the interviewees had plenty of teaching experience. Three of the five EOs had been in their post for an average of 10 years. Hence their knowledge of teachers' needs was considerable. The majority of the trainers had a minimum of five years' training experience, most of which had taken place in the ELT sector. However, in a few cases they had experience of training mainstream teachers in other countries.

ELT sector's contribution

The interviewees were asked what they thought trainers from the ELT sector could offer to teachers in mainstream education in relation to language awareness and methodology. According to the EOs, teachers can benefit a great deal from such trainers. In terms of methodology the main contribution is their knowledge of innovative methods and approaches. One EO explained that "because ELT schools are a business they need to keep their clients happy. Possibly because of this they are a bit more au courant with more recent methodologies...perhaps they are willing to try out new things in order to be successful" (EO2). Her colleague agreed with this by saying that trainers "can contribute innovation because in the mainstream school classroom you're dealing mostly with teenagers and you've got to be innovative and fresh in your teaching otherwise you're going to lose their attention. There's always room for refreshing new ideas" (EO3). The trainers' innovative ideas enable them "to improve on teachers' methodology practices in the mainstream classrooms. I think teachers would appreciate that" (EO5). The CLIL activities the trainers carried out with the primary teachers as part of the in-service course are an example of this: "from the feedback I received the primary teachers enjoyed the cross-curricular aspect, using English in Maths and in Science. They found that quite interesting" (EO1). Another EO mentioned how ELT trainers can contribute ideas in relation to making language learning motivating: "Since certain students in the ELT sector, especially youngsters, might not be that motivated, these trainers are used to doing their very best to make their lessons as motivating and fun-filled as possible. That helps them to

share with our mainstream teachers all these best practices" (EO4). This interviewee also affirmed that "These trainers are used to employing differentiation methods because in the ELT sector they have to cater for so many different levels, age groups, and cultures" (EO4). The EOs indicated that mainstream teachers stand to benefit from the exposure to innovative methods and approaches that ELT trainers can provide them with.

The trainers agreed with the EOs that their main contribution in relation to methodology is their knowledge of what is considered innovative in language teaching. One trainer pointed out that "On a theoretical and practical level in our field there is a bigger emphasis on a learner-centred approach, and collaborative learning via pair work and group work... In our sphere the dominant methodology has long been a communicative methodology" (TT1). Trainers in the ELT sector try to "make language learning more motivating" (TT2) or show teachers "how to teach language in a fun way" (TT3).

One trainer affirmed that in ELT "we use more communicative and interactive methods and I think we are just a little bit more up-to-date with modern teaching methods" (TT6). A colleague of hers claimed that, "we can provide teachers with ideas in relation to the kind of methodology they could use to make language learning more interactive" (TT10). The trainers working with primary teachers indicated that, "we can help them when it comes to teaching language using a CLIL approach, which they didn't seem familiar with" (TT8).

However, teachers need to be willing to adopt such practices: "If the teachers are open to other methods then we can offer them a lot. I did notice that a few teachers are resistant to such methods" (TT4). The trainers acknowledged that this resistance might be due to the different contextual demands between the ELT and mainstream sectors. As one trainer pointed out, "the teachers were restricted because of the context in which they teach but a lot of them would have liked to be free to teach the way we do in this sector" (TT7).

Another trainer asserted that mainstream teachers "teach English to prepare students for exams whereas we do so to prepare students for the real world. So I don't blame them entirely for using certain methods" (TT10). The ELT trainers maintained that despite these limitations they could still help mainstream teachers to adopt a more learner-centred

and communicative methodology if they were receptive to the idea of improving their practices.

With regard to the enhancement of teacher language awareness, the EOs pointed out that trainers from the private language teaching industry are well qualified to conduct such training: “the ELT sector is geared towards that and teachers stand to gain from the knowledge of these trainers” (EO5). This is because in the ELT sector “language awareness is at the forefront, you concentrate on it all the time in order to be successful with your students” (EO2). Given their clients’ language needs, “inevitably trainers from the ELT sector have much more language awareness because they actually have to do a lot of homework themselves in order to perfect their knowledge of the language” (EO4). This might not be the case with mainstream teachers: “especially in certain contexts, language awareness might take a bit of a backseat because there are other things to concentrate on” (EO2).

One EO explained that, “With regard to language awareness, some primary teachers might need that training...because perhaps they rely mainly on their secondary education. To be a teacher in primary you only need to have a SEC certificate in English and some teachers didn’t go beyond that” (EO1). The EOs valued the trainers’ prowess in enhancing teacher language awareness and it was partly for this reason that they accepted to collaborate in co-ordinating this course.

The ELT trainers concurred with the idea that the emphasis placed on language awareness in their sector makes them adept at delivering training related to it. One trainer stated that, “it would be helpful for the teachers if the metalanguage I have is passed on to them. Not all of them have it” (TT5). The trainers felt that “what we could give them is an understanding of how this knowledge helps them as teachers” (TT10). One reason for which ELT trainers have a well developed language awareness is that, “We teach students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and we are thus exposed to a wider variety of language learning problems. In a mainstream school you’re largely exposed to the same problems. ELT teachers have to adapt to the needs of different learners and help students with their particular problems which are often linked to their mother tongue” (TT6). One of the most experienced trainers pointed out that in ELT “we accept language diversity. I think that many mainstream teachers only have one model of English and some of them may feel a bit inferior because of it.

Seeing this in a different light also helps in the analysis of language" (TT1). Somewhat in relation to this, a colleague of his remarked that, "in relation to pronunciation we have a lot that we can offer to mainstream teachers...

Our students have different expectations than Maltese speakers of English. Our students know that they need to improve their pronunciation. So in ELT we know we have to train our teachers to do that. It might not be done in mainstream education so I think we're very well equipped to offer that to them" (TT12). Language awareness training was considered "mostly necessary for the primary teachers" (TT11), who gave some of the trainers the impression that "they don't need it. They were like, 'We don't need this because we don't have to teach it'" (TT4). The trainers obviously disagreed with this idea, with one of them explaining that "When primary school teachers teach subjects like Maths, Science etc. they wear their subject hat. They go into the lesson and completely forget about language. So what I did and what they really took on board is the idea that you have to wear the language hat as well" (TT9). The trainers not only confirmed that language awareness is necessary for mainstream teachers but that the ELT sector has much to offer when it comes to training aimed at enhancing it.

Benefits of cross-pollination

When one educational sector helps to develop another, the educators on both sides can accrue a number of benefits. In the case of the in-service course, the participants could learn from a group of trainers who had become experts at the task of developing teacher language awareness. By designing and delivering a course tailor-made for teachers from a different context, the trainers could develop their own training skills. Nonetheless, all the EOs and ELT trainers indicated that the main benefit is that both parties in the cross-pollination process are provided with a new perspective on significant teaching and learning issues.

For the EOs, cross-pollination is a two-way process that enriches both mainstream teachers and ELT trainers. According to one EO, "Once you are open to the idea of cross-pollination both sectors would gain... I've always believed in going into something with an open mind to learn, in every situation you're going to learn something... The sharing of knowledge and experiences and the mixing of abilities across the two fields is necessary and useful to both parties" (EO5). Her colleague affirmed that "Cross-

pollination is always healthy...because through it you get fresh ideas which then have to be adapted to a different scenario" (EO3). Cross-pollination enables the individual "to see things from a different perspective. Inevitably, all of us tend to be creatures of habit so the fact that you have to see things from a different perspective helps you to question your own assumptions, your own way of doing things. The sharing of different views is significant and essential. It's so easy for teachers to be a bit blinkered" (EO4). Thanks to cross-pollination mainstream teachers will be able "look at their jobs from a different perspective, perhaps use ideas which they haven't used in the past... The trainers would be more aware of the kind of activities and language promotion that occurs in mainstream schools" (EO1).

According to one EO "whenever a trainer stands up in front of a group of teachers and says 'This is something I've tried and it works', whenever this happens you are going to get a receptive audience... I think that the trainers will benefit as well because by getting in touch with teachers who teach a group of students for a whole scholastic year they get a bit of a different perspective from what they're used to" (EO2). These EOs clearly believed that as much as teachers stand to gain from the process of being trained by people hailing from a different sector, the trainers themselves would benefit from cross-pollination.

The trainers shared the EOs' belief about the mutual benefits accrued via cross-pollination. One trainer confirmed the idea that "we can learn from each other. We taught them the way we do things and they taught me how difficult it is to motivate their students. They also made me think outside the box... It was a mutual learning experience" (TT2). A colleague of hers agreed by saying, "it's helpful for one sector to try to develop another because they have different perspectives and so people can learn from each other... So if the ideas of what we do in the ELT world are communicated to mainstream teachers they can benefit from them... However, I myself learnt as a trainer, even practical ideas of what I could do with my own students" (TT3).

This sentiment was also shared by a trainer who suggested that, "you always learn from somebody else's experience. Something that I have found works for me I can pass on to people who might find themselves in a situation similar to mine. However, they helped me too. I got ideas from them of how they actually do some things... So I think it's been a two way thing" (TT5). Another trainer remarked that, "It was encouraging for

them to see that where I was coming from wasn't completely unrelated to their context... I came to appreciate the fact that mainstream education isn't entirely different from the ELT model and situations... The experience was quite educational for me as well" (TT9). All the trainers seemed to be indicating that, "it's always good to get out of your comfort zone and become aware of what's happening in other schools and in other contexts" (TT4). For them, "you can only gain from something like that; you have nothing to lose" (TT7). As one trainer put it, "with pretty much anything in life a different set of eyes can point out things that you might not be aware of or different ways that you can do the same thing" (TT12). The trainers' belief that cross-pollination is a two-way process illustrates their commitment to their own professional development via teacher training.

Some of the most important lessons that the trainers learnt from the cross-pollination that took place as part of the in-service course were in relation to the mainstream teachers they helped to train and the context in which these operate. One trainer explained that "one of the things we got is a real respect for the teachers. In Malta...teachers of English are often maligned for things that have nothing to do with the way they do their job. Their professionalism, their seriousness, their insightfulness, their intelligence and also their enthusiasm, these were things that the other trainers and I were able to take away from this course" (TT1).

Another trainer valued the fact that the teachers "came up with ideas and changed my way of thinking about primary school teachers. They are almost all motivated and passionate about what they do... It was certainly interesting to see that we're all pulling in the right direction. They are not doing things which are very different from what we do" (TT10). The teachers' enthusiasm for the training also helped to impress the trainers: "I was impressed that they were very teachable and very willing to learn... I was expecting some barriers to be thrown up but there was none of that" (TT12). It seems as if the course helped to undermine certain preconceptions some trainers might have had: "What I found very interesting is that these teachers aren't opposed to English as some people might imagine" (TT8).

This re-evaluation of mainstream teachers was bound to a better understanding of the context in which they teach: "I learnt about the restrictions they had which we don't have here. They don't have the freedom that we have so I understood their situation better" (TT7). This led one trainer to admit that she has "a better appreciation of what they

have to do as teachers of English” (TT6).

A colleague of hers concurred by saying that “Mutual respect is perhaps what emerged from this course... On our part there is definitely more respect for the challenges these teachers face in their classrooms” (TT1). It seems clear that one of the most valuable benefits of cross-pollination is that it acts as an opportunity for even experienced educators to develop new insights into the educational process.

Challenges of cross-pollination

Cross-pollination brings with it a number of challenges, the most significant one, perhaps, is that related to the contextual differences between the two sectors involved in the process. In fact, it was anticipated that one of the obstacles to the success of the in-service course would be the trainers’ possible lack of knowledge of the context in which mainstream teachers operate in Malta. Thus, irrespective of the fact that most of the trainers had plenty of experience in training mainstream teachers from other countries, it was still deemed necessary to provide them with as much information as possible about the local primary and secondary classroom contexts and the respective needs of the teachers.

This is in line with Hyde’s (2000) idea that “It is helpful for trainers working in educational innovation projects to research the local educational culture” (p. 271). In the months leading up to the course, each trainer researched the mainstream classroom context to ensure that the course would fully address those needs. The trainers’ attitude was also fundamental in this regard and in fact they did not adopt the stance of all-knowing experts addressing a group of novices. They were aware that the teachers were university graduates, most often with long years of classroom experience. Their intention was to help the teachers enhance their language awareness and not to provide them with something they lacked altogether. Nonetheless, this challenge could not be overcome completely.

The EOs affirmed that in a situation of cross-pollination the trainers’ lack of familiarity with the teachers’ context might lead to resistance. One EO claimed that, “the biggest challenge is that the trainers have never been in exactly the same context as the teachers they are training” (EO2). This might lead to a situation in which “the teachers might not always find

what they're being presented with as relevant to the context where they teach" (EO1). Another EO pointed out that "One of the challenges could be that either one of the two parties might not be able to understand the different scenario in which the other one operates... Some approaches used in language schools cannot be used in the mainstream classroom, so, as professionals, the teachers need to weigh whatever is being offered to them and apply it or adapt it to the situation they're working in" (EO3). For this to happen effectively both trainers and teachers need to have the right attitude: "It's a question of attitudes and open-mindedness. If you're not open to this kind of thing you're going to miss out. The attitude of both trainers and teachers has to be the correct one" (EO5). Respecting each other as professionals and being willing to learn from one another are crucial attitudes for both parties. This is especially crucial given the fact that "There might be this fear of being looked down upon. Nevertheless, I think teachers are very mature and they know that this is merely a situation of professionals talking to fellow professionals and sharing with them practices which perhaps they might not be aware of and vice versa" (EO4). The EOs indicated that even though there exists the risk that teachers might resist training delivered by trainers from another sector the risk is worth taking if one trusts the professionalism of both parties.

The trainers acknowledged that their own lack of familiarity with the teachers' context might constitute a difficulty for effective cross-pollination. One trainer maintained that, "the contextual differences are a major challenge. They teach classes of around 25 learners which is rarely the case in the ELT sector. There's also the fact that they are syllabus-bound while we are less so... Failing to understand these crucial differences can lead to arrogance and therefore it fuels the perception that what the trainer is doing is irrelevant for the mainstream teachers" (TT1). Another trainer explained that, "We were aware that we were going into a different sector but perhaps I wasn't aware of how different... If a trainer fails to adapt it would be a huge mistake" (TT6). This would be because of the resistance that might arise, which was not the case on the in-service course discussed in this article. In fact, a trainer admitted, "I thought they were going to resist me but on the whole it was better than I expected" (TT2). Another trainer said, "I was afraid I was going to face a wall of people thinking 'Who do you think you are coming from the outside and presuming to teach me anything?' I'm sure there were one or two who thought that way but I was pleased to see that I was wrong about the majority... They were very receptive and open to learn" (TT5). Another trainer confirmed

this aspect stating that, "some teachers weren't receptive to the ideas that we shared with them because of the belief that what we do in ELT is not applicable to their context. But these were a minority" (TT3). In order to prevent this kind of resistance it is "important to be clear about your objectives. You're there to help them understand something that is your area of expertise. You have to show them respect" (TT8). This is especially necessary in light of the fact that "Some teachers have a mindset about how to do things and this might stop them being open to alternatives... It's difficult to change a teacher's mindset in three days; at least you plant the seed" (TT6). The likelihood of effecting such change is linked to the attitude adopted by the trainer. One interviewee asserted that "Establishing your credibility as a trainer is essential. You want them to respect you as much as you respect them... I did think I would meet a lot of resistance but by building rapport with them at the very beginning they were very open throughout the session" (TT9). These interviewees implied that in a situation of cross-pollination trainers should seek to offset the negative effect of lack of contextual knowledge by treating the teachers with respect and by clarifying that the training is a learning experience for them as well.

The problems associated with a lack of familiarity with the context are compounded by the preconceptions that trainers might have about the teachers. In fact, one trainer warned of "the danger of the preconception amongst many ELT teachers that we're doing it right and they're doing it wrong" (TT1). Some people in the ELT sector might "think that there is a bigger distinction between being an ELT teacher and a state school teacher, that secondary school teachers aren't up to the high standards of language school teachers" (TT3). These preconceptions are usually driven by the fact that "a lot of people in our sector have never tasted mainstream education so you get a lot of assumptions about teachers which are incorrect... Some people even attribute certain stereotypes associated with the kids these teachers teach to the teachers themselves, which I think is unfair. The teachers are very dedicated and I know because I taught in a secondary school for seven years" (TT11). Some trainers actively sought not to be determined by any stereotypes: "I did hear a lot of things about primary teachers but I didn't let them influence me. I had some experience working with mainstream school teachers and so I didn't have any negative impressions of them before going into the training session" (TT4). One trainer called for more "tolerance because in the ELT sector some people look down upon mainstream school teachers and blame them for the decline in the standards of English proficiency. But I think it's a bit more

complex than that" (TT10). She explained that the course helped her to re-assess her views of such teachers: "being prejudiced as a trainer is a problem. This course helped me to open my eyes... Many trainers are out of touch with the mainstream sector so such a course is very helpful for us as well" (TT10). Similarly, a colleague of hers confessed that initially she had thought that, "encouraging them to teach in English when English is not their first language was going to be a problem. I did think this was going to be an obstacle but in fact it wasn't... I was pleasantly surprised actually" (TT9). Another trainer admitted he and his peers "had certain preconceptions about what we were going to face in training session. I was quite apprehensive going into the first session but in the first 15 minutes I could already see that this was going to be OK" (TT12). This kind of transformation in some trainers' perception led one interviewee to claim, "I think the course was a downright success but next time round the trainers are going to go into it with a completely different viewpoint of the teachers attending the course" (TT11). The fact that the course proved to be an educational experience for the trainers as much as for the teachers underscores the idea that cross-pollination does not just lead to the sharing of knowledge and skills but helps the two parties involved in the process to develop their beliefs and attitudes about the other sector.

Necessary conditions

The EOs and trainers were asked to identify the necessary conditions for effective cross-pollination. As expected most of these conditions have to do with maximizing the benefits, and overcoming the challenges discussed above.

The EOs deemed contextual knowledge and sustainable teacher development to be paramount for effective cross-pollination. ELT trainers "need to be aware of the context if they're going to train more mainstream teachers in the future. They also need to be familiar with the different levels in primary education and the type of assessment used in mainstream education" (EO1). One EO pointed out that "The trainers' awareness of the context in which the teachers work might also affect the performance of the trainers and of the teachers because if they are not aware exactly of the conditions that teachers work in, it might affect what's being done in the training session" (EO5). This also comprises an awareness of the teachers' needs: "we would need a better understanding or evidence of who are

those teachers who have the greatest need for such training because here we saw a one-size-fits-all in a way. Needs analysis has to happen before such in-service courses" (EO2). Such needs analysis could be part of "the ELT trainers' familiarization with the schools that teachers work in. It would be useful for the trainers to go in and see what the schools are like, even if it's an informal meeting with the teachers on a voluntary basis perhaps" (EO2). Sustaining the relationship between the two sectors is essential in this regard. Hence it is necessary to engage in "a healthy discussion about the divide between the mainstream and ELT sectors. I was talking to a secondary teacher who told me that she wears different hats depending on whether she's teaching in a secondary school or a language school... Synergy would be much more useful" (EO3). The kind of cross-pollination effected through the in-service course "should not be a one-off. This is a *sine qua non* because a one-off thing is always seen as peripheral. So I think this kind of relationship between the two sectors should be cultivated further. Such training should be ongoing" (EO4). According to this interviewee, cross-pollination "should definitely be ongoing so that EOs can actually see how effective such training is. As it is you cannot really be sure that what has been disseminated has been assimilated. The whole idea of these one-off INSET sessions should give way to something more ongoing" (EO4).

Another way of sustaining cross-pollination is by having "ELT trainers working with one or two colleges on a regular basis to develop experience in relation to mainstream education and to provide teachers with even better training" (EO2). Ensuring that the kind of cross-pollination seen in the in-service course happens on an ongoing basis would be beneficial for both teachers and trainers.

The ELT trainers concurred that contextual knowledge is necessary for effective cross-pollination. Despite the fact that they were provided with information about the context and the teachers before the start of the course, the trainers still felt that in the future they would benefit from familiarizing themselves even further with the trainees and their context. One interviewee mentioned that trainers "need a little bit more information about the trainees prior to running the course... The trainers need to familiarise themselves as fully as possible with the context so that we can adapt completely to the teachers' needs" (TT4). A colleague of hers admitted that he "would like to be a bit more familiar with what goes on exactly in the classroom. Some of my assumptions as to what they teach

were not correct. I'd like to know a bit more about what they do in class because then that is the starting point for how we can help them do things better" (TT12). This knowledge of the trainees and their context is bound to the significance of a needs analysis exercise. One trainer explained that, "it would be good if a needs analysis is conducted prior to the course so that the teachers themselves identify their training needs" (TT2). This means that, "The teachers should be consulted about their needs" (TT4). Such an exercise "would help [trainers] a lot because it would help us to direct our training to those specific needs" (TT6). A needs analysis exercise would enable teachers to inform trainers of "what they would really like to focus on so that you'd work towards their needs... To know what they need exactly you have to ask the teachers" (TT10). This is necessary in order for teachers "to be convinced that the course is going to be useful and that it isn't just another in-service course that they have to attend" (TT12). Hence, "Clear objectives about what is to be attained by the end of the course are necessary" (TT11). One way by means of which the needs analysis exercise can be conducted is through providing trainers with the opportunity of meeting teachers in their own context: "meeting some teachers would have been better than a description, especially since some trainers weren't fully sure of what to expect" (TT3).

Another interviewee explained that, "Many of the trainers would actually benefit from observing mainstream school classes before the course begins" (TT1). A colleague of his said that, "As a trainer, being able to sit in the teachers' classes would give me an insight into what they really need" (TT2). This was echoed by an interviewee who claimed that "The trainers need to have the opportunity to observe teachers before the course in order to verify what their needs are" (TT8). The act of consulting teachers was considered so important by the trainers that they highlighted the need for a bottom-up approach to teacher development: "giving the teachers a choice as to which sessions they want to attend might be better because they would attend the sessions that best address their needs" (TT3). The trainers highlighted their belief that in order for them to be most effective in the training of teachers from the mainstream sector they need to be given access to the teachers, their context, and their actual needs.

Forging a strong relationship between trainers and teachers would help both parties develop the right attitude towards the other sector and guarantee a sustainable form of teacher development. According to one trainer "there needs to be mutual respect otherwise this can't work. If we

as trainers see them as teachers who are not making language learning motivating or interesting and they fail to see us as professionals because perhaps we lack a degree in education, it won't work" (TT4).

Another interviewee remarked that, "the teachers need to be assured of the expertise of the trainers and that what they're going to be learning isn't just theory but is going to be useful in the classroom" (TT12). In order to consolidate respect between the two parties and maximise the benefits of cross-pollination, training needs to be ongoing: "I think frequency would be a very important factor even though that's difficult... Both sectors would get to know the other better and the more we learn about the mainstream sector the more we'd be able to adapt our training to suit their needs" (TT6). Sustainable teacher development ensures long-lasting impact: "If teachers do not implement what they are absorbing in these training sessions then we are going nowhere. So there needs to be some form of follow-up to encourage them to move in the right direction" (TT9). These trainers expressed the belief that in order for cross-pollination to be effective the two sectors need to keep the communication channel constantly open. This would allow both trainers and teachers to benefit.

Conclusion

The feedback collected at the end of the in-service course was testament to its success. The majority of participants pointed out that the course was useful for their needs as teachers of English and would facilitate their task of teaching the language even more effectively. As Bartolo and Xerri (2014) point out, language awareness needs "to become a priority of teacher training programmes at both pre- and in-service levels. This is crucial given that teachers' authority in the language needs to be sustained on an ongoing basis for the benefit of all their students" (p.39). Nonetheless, perhaps the biggest success of this course was that it pioneered some of the principles of a generative and transformative model of professional development in the local mainstream context by illustrating how cross-pollination between two educational sectors can be mutually beneficial. In order for such a model to become fully entrenched it is necessary to move away from the traditional format of a one-off, intensive INSET course and adopt a more sustainable approach that cultivates teachers' identity as lifelong learners.

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