1. Background to the Mentor Programme

At the Faculty of English Studies, University of Athens, practice teaching has always figured prominently in the teacher education curriculum and has always been regarded as an essential, indispensable component in the preparation of our students for their future role as professionals in the area of English language teaching.

We have always recognised that university-based coursework and fieldwork offer different but complementary growth opportunities to students in terms of both knowledge and teaching skill. The university-based courses strive to develop students' subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge, their critical faculties, their reflexitivity skills (which will allow them to reflect on mainstream teaching practices and to understand social needs for language learning in the united Europe of today and tomorrow), and also to provide students with the discourse and vocabulary, i.e., the metalanguage, that will allow them to analyse, discuss their personal teaching theories, and provide a rationale for their teaching. The knowledge developed at university, however, is necessarily decontextualised, and cannot by nature consider the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the classroom environment. The university can develop students' understanding of a wide array of issues about learning, social and cultural contexts and teaching, but cannot assist them in implementing these understandings in complex classrooms which serve increasingly diverse students. The development of student teachers' personal teaching competence and a wide

repertoire of practices, along with the knowledge of when to use different strategies for different purposes, to a great extent can best be achieved during practice teaching under the guidance of an experienced mentor teacher.

As standards for education and learning are now higher than ever before, and as learners need even greater knowledge and skills in order to survive and succeed in today's globalised societies, the demands on teachers have proportionately increased. Teachers need to know how and when to use a range of practices to accomplish their goals with different students in different contexts, they need to be effective in enabling diverse groups of learners to learn ever more complex material, they need a much deeper knowledge base about teaching diverse learners, and more highly refined and developed diagnostic abilities to guide their decisions. In order to respond to these increasing teaching demands and to succeed in their task, student teachers need well-crafted field experiences, guidance, support, and constructive dialogue with experienced and well-trained mentor teachers.

Throughout the years, more than 200 experienced EFL teachers have cooperated with the faculty and have accepted our student teachers in their classrooms. They have supervised, guided and evaluated our student teachers throughout their practice teaching placement. The 200 cooperating teachers have accepted this responsibility in addition to their already heavy teaching workload and their other professional and personal commitments. They have not been compensated for their extra work, they have not been afforded a reduction in their workload, and their contribution to the education of student

teachers has been appreciated only by the faculty and has not been officially recognized by the state.

Acknowledging the substantial contribution that our cooperating teachers can make in shaping, developing and refining our student teacher’s teaching competence, it has been a longstanding wish and aim of the faculty to train our cooperating teachers systematically in performing their role more effectively. In addition, another longstanding wish and aim of the faculty has been to develop a cadre of experienced and well-trained mentor teachers whose role and work would be recognized by the state and who would be rewarded for their contribution, either by a reduction of their workload during the practice teaching period or by the award of points leading to their promotion/professional development. However, for many years, financial and organizational constraints prevented us from offering our cooperating teachers anything more than a handout with detailed guidelines and information related to their tasks and responsibilities during practice teaching, and a letter of thanks by the Faculty at the end of the practice teaching period as a small token of our appreciation for their work.

In 2006, an opportunity arose which allowed us to realize our aim of training our cooperating teachers as mentors, and offered a means to promote the work of our mentor teachers. Within the framework of the Practice Teaching in TEFL course, our Faculty was funded by the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (Project 3.4b: Student Vocational Practice) in order to materialize two programmes/aims: a) the Teaching Practice Programme(TPP) which, inter alia, gave the opportunity to 60 students to function as paid student teachers for two months in public and private

primary or secondary schools, and b) the Mentor Education/Training Programme (METP), through which we were given the opportunity to train the English language teachers that supervised our students during their practice as mentors and to develop accompanying mentor training packs(see Appendix 1 for Programme Coordinators and Scientific Associates). The training of mentors started in February 2006 with a seminar organized for 60 cooperating teachers. Those who took part were informed of the role and responsibilities of the mentor teacher and the potential contribution they can make to the education and training of our student teachers. A draft Mentor Training Handbook was developed and distributed to all our cooperating mentor teachers. Mentor teachers were also in constant communication during practice teaching with the course coordinator for any issue or query they had regarding the mentoring process.

The effectiveness and impact of the TPP and the METP were evaluated through questionnaires that were given to student teachers and their supervising teachers/mentors before and after the practice teaching period. The questionnaire findings revealed that our student teachers greatly appreciated the support offered by their mentors, and regarded the practice teaching experience as a highly rewarding, productive and enlightening experience which contributed significantly to their professional development as language teachers. Mentors themselves also found the experience rewarding, and reported gains on a professional and personal level. The results of the evaluation indeed strengthened our resolve and made us more determined to continue with our efforts, despite financial and organisational difficulties in systematically training our cooperating teachers as mentors. The

positive evaluations of the TPP and the METP also acted as incentives for us to promote and publicize the METP so that other University departments offering practice teaching could follow our example, and so that the state would gradually recognize their role as mentor teachers.

In July 2006, and after the completion of the Practice Teaching course, we decided to apply for the European Language Label award, whose theme was the pre- and in-service education of language teachers. Our programmes were awarded the 2006 ELL award, and were positively evaluated for their innovativeness and their potential for establishing mentorship schemes in Greece.

Despite the fact that funding for the programmes ceased, we decided to continue with our efforts to promote the METP and to train our body of mentor teachers. In February 2007, before the launch of the practice teaching course, a two day conference with speakers from the faculty and abroad was organized on the theme: *Mentoring student teachers of English: Issues and possibilities*.

The aims of the conference were:

a) to bring together for the first time our mentor teachers, offering them the opportunity to meet, discuss and share their ideas and experiences of the mentoring process.
b) to share our perspectives on mentoring, to discuss issues pertinent to the mentor role with experts from the field, and to identify directions for future action.
c) to promote the work and role of mentor teachers, and inform relevant official bodies of the substantial

contribution that mentor teachers make in the education of prospective teachers.

d) to raise awareness of how mentoring schemes operate in different countries across Europe.

e) to train our mentor teachers in a basic invaluable mentoring function: that of observing student teachers and providing constructive feedback.

In order to achieve these diverse aims, the conference programme included presentations of the Pre-service EFL Teacher Education and Training Programme of the Faculty of English studies, mentoring programmes and their effectiveness in Greece and elsewhere in Europe, theoretical discussions of mentoring as a concept and as a process, personal accounts of the practice teaching experience and the METP from three different perspectives, and more practical and focused mentor training sessions (see Appendix 2, for the Conference programme). Moreover, a revised Mentor Training Handbook was developed and distributed to all our mentor teachers.

It is important to note that in order to become a mentor, experience and expertise are considered essential. But being a good teacher does not automatically presuppose that one is a good mentor. Special training is needed to become a mentor; training in observation, providing effective feedback, supporting and counselling the student teacher, and an understanding the cognitive and affective processes of learning to teach. Learning to become a mentor is a conscious process of induction into a different teaching context and does not emerge naturally from being a good teacher (Wang 2001). Learning to mentor is a highly conscious and gradual process of knowledge, belief development and reconstruction (Orland-Barak 2001)

which can only be achieved through systematic and ongoing training opportunities (see Andrews and Martin 2003, Balassa et al 2003, Tang and Choi 2005). Our METP has attempted to provide various training opportunities in order to develop our mentors' awareness, knowledge, and skills in mentoring, and this handbook is a further step in this direction. More specifically, this handbook aims to:

- develop our mentors' understanding of the academic, professional and social needs of EFL student teachers.
- develop a deeper understanding of the importance and contribution a mentor can make to the professional development of student teachers.
- develop awareness of the practices of mentoring.
- develop mentors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities during practice teaching.
- provide an overview of the mentoring literature.

The handbook is thus addressed and dedicated to all our mentor teachers, and represents evidence of our conviction that the training of our mentor teachers is as important as the training of our student teachers. After all, as Wang (2001:72) points out, "without quality mentoring, we will risk having novices learning teaching practices that do not reflect quality teaching."

2. Preparing teachers for the future: new visions of learning and teaching

The process of globalization and changes at the societal, economic and political levels have prompted an avalanche of changes in our conceptions of the nature of knowledge and

literacy, in means and forms of communication, and in the range of skills and dispositions needed by learners in order to survive and function effectively in the workplace. This in turn has necessitated changes in the nature of teaching and learning, in the content of school curricula and teacher education curricula, and in forms of assessment. Teachers are at the cutting edge of this whirlwind of change, and are potentially the single most important asset in preparing learners who are flexible and responsive to change and able to survive and strive in today's changing world. In order to perform their formidable tasks, teachers' roles, responsibilities and required competences have, as a result, become increasingly complex, wide-ranging and diverse. As Garrido and Alvarez (2006:170) point out, "it is very clear that the role of the language teacher has expanded very much beyond its traditional boundaries and therefore the nature of teachers' responsibilities has also changed. Teacher education programmes need to take into account teachers' extended roles and responsibilities not only as educators but also as learners."

But what has prompted this frenzy of change? Global economic integration, the linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of today's societies, new communication technologies and new media have changed our perceptions of the nature of knowledge and the kinds of literacies needed for the workplace and for the satisfaction of everyday communication needs (Johnson and Kress 2003). Knowledge today, it is argued, is highly situated and linked to a particular area of specialist knowledge or technology. It is rapidly changing at such a rate that truths and facts valid today are likely to be contested or invalid tomorrow and, particularly

diverse influenced and determined by the characteristics of a particular social or cultural context (Day 2002, Kalantzis et al 2003, Marx et al 1998). The new economy and new communication technologies have prompted a reconceptualisation of what literacy is and what kinds of literacy are needed by learners today in order to function effectively in tomorrow's economy and society. The concept of *literacy* has thus been broadened to include the concept of *multiliteracies*, a term which aptly reflects the massive qualitative shifts in the means people use to make meaning and communicate in the world of work, as well as in their public and private worlds (Johnson and Kress 2003). Literacy has moved away from the narrow definition of learning so called *proper usage*, learning the three *Rs,* and learning a confined body of truths and facts. It now embraces knowledge of the different uses of language in different contexts (multiple Englishes), knowledge of how to communicate effectively and negotiate differences in diverse discourse communities, and the ability to use various tools in order to make meaning. The explosion of communication technologies and the globalization of communication have led to the creation of a variety of new texts, genres, discourses and metalanguages. Fitzpatrick (2003) identifies at least four new types of literacy associated with the use of communication technologies that teachers and learners need to understand and master: scientific literacy, digital literacy, critical literacy and linguistic literacy.

Linguistic and cultural diversity which has become a trademark of today's societies and a defining feature of European space, has necessitated the development of yet another type of literacy, that of cultural literacy or intercultural

communicative competence. This involves, inter alia, critical awareness of your own culture and how it differs from others, an appreciation that each culture is unique and valuable in its own right, the ability to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstandings and conflict situations, and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for communicating with people from other cultures (Dooly and Villanueva 2006).

Society is looking to the school for the development of this new set of learner dispositions and competencies. Teachers are the main agents of this transformation and must thus strive to develop learners who are autonomous and self-directed, multi-skilled, able to take on a range of tasks and able to shift from one task to another, learners who possess problem solving skills, who learn as they go, who are flexible, creative and collaborative, able to navigate through change and deal with linguistic and cultural diversity, able to use various modes to make meaning integrating visual, gestural and spatial forms of meaning (Kalantzis et al 2003).

2.1 New roles and responsibilities for language teachers

The promotion and development of these qualities and competencies has called for significant changes in teacher roles, responsibilities, competencies and skills, and has in turn necessitated changes in the aims and content of teacher education programmes in order to effectively prepare teachers for their new agendas.

Language teachers are called to carry out a variety of diverse educational, psychosocial, technical and ethical roles (Garrido and Alvarez 2006). Their educational roles include: provider of language models, materials developer, assessor and

evaluator of student learning, and communicator. On the psychosocial level, language teachers are expected to be a motivator, a coach, a guide, a counselor, an advisor, and a supporter of student work. The technical/managerial roles that language teachers are expected to perform include: a resource, a resource manager, a monitor, a consultant, and a coordinator balancing the various elements which make up the new learning environments. The ethical roles teachers are expected to fulfill are associated with the intercultural dimension and the development of learners' intercultural competence. Language teachers are thus seen as cultural mediators enabling learners to "understand the world around them, to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (Kelly et al 2002), facilitating the development of learners' knowledge and understanding of a target language and culture, helping them at the same time to reflect on their own.

Language teachers are also increasingly expected to fulfill various *scientific* roles which in the past fell within the realm of educational experts. These roles include that of a needs analyst: teachers are expected to anticipate and identify their learners' needs and design learning experiences that would effectively cater for those needs. Teachers thus need to become responsive to and take into account students' cultural diversity, their learning styles, their wide ranging levels of competence and their learning expectations (Garrido and Alvarez 2006). Moreover, continuous developments in the field of modern languages and applied linguistics also require that teachers keep up to date with these developments, acting as action researchers able to continually adjust to the varying demands made on their

professional knowledge, and to bring about informed changes in their practices as a result.

Furthermore, in order to function adequately in the world of new communication technologies and effectively integrate technology with classroom practice, teachers need to become computer literate and develop the confidence to use the available technology adequately and apply it in a principled way to their subject matter. The integration of educational technology in teaching requires that the teacher take on a range of new roles and tasks, placing great demands on their organizational and planning skills (Grima and Fitzpatrick 2003, Volman 2005). Teachers will need to act as supervisors of the learning process, instructing, training, coaching and advising learners. Teachers must be knowledgeable about available computer programmes and applications, be able to judge which programmes and applications are suitable for their learners' needs and language level, and be able to bring together, balance and integrate these educational tools with everyday classroom practices.

2.2 Reconceptualising language teacher education

This daunting range of language teacher roles and complex assortment of tasks and responsibilities associated with them have prompted major changes in the nature, content and structure of teacher preparation programmes in Europe and elsewhere (see Crandall 2000, Kelly et al 2004). It is now widely acknowledged that teacher education programmes should deal with teachers in ways which are congruent with the new insights into the nature of knowledge, the new visions of classrooms, and the new visions of learning (Korthagen et al. 2006, Putman and Borko 1997). Teacher education programmes

are looking for innovative ways to help prepare teachers for the new challenges and situations which they will face in future. As a result, a shift towards constructivist perspectives of teacher learning is taking place in teacher education programmes, where conscious efforts are being made to focus on situated teacher cognition and practice and the development of concrete linkages between theory and practice (Crandall 2000, Freeman 2002, Marx et al 1998, Snow et al 2006, Troudi 2005). The fundamental changes in the nature and content of teacher education curricula have also been prompted by complaints from teacher graduates, school administrators and politicians about the irrelevance of teacher preparation courses for the realities and complexities of schools and classrooms (Ferguson and Donno 2003, Korthagen et al 2006, MacDonald et al 2001), as well as research findings from novice teachers who experience a reality shock when assuming their teaching responsibilities and revert to traditional established ways of teaching far removed from the insights gained at university (Cole and Knowles 1993).

Consequently, traditional transmission-oriented and prescriptivist teacher education curricula which present best practices and models for teachers to understand and imitate have been abandoned as they fail to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom and the demands of the new learning society. The huge differences amongst learners, programs, curricula, and social cultural environments of schools that teachers will be expected to work in have called into question “any set of ‘best practices’ or any attempts to transfer the knowledge and practice from teacher education programmes directly to teaching” (Crandall 2000:35). In order to prepare teachers to respond to

and cope with the unpredictability and multidimensionality of classroom and learners, teacher education programmes can no longer provide prospective language teachers with ready-made recipes for effective teaching or the handed-down wisdom of ivory tower academics (Newby 2003); teachers can no longer follow the dictates of dogma or act as retailers of packaged materials and methods they have not chosen. They need to enter into a dialogic process with theories, models and methods, critically assess innovative ideas, reflect on their own beliefs and become aware of the principles that inform their practice (Widdowson 2003). As a result, one of the main purposes of teacher education is to enable student teachers to develop their knowledge and understanding of subject matter, students, teaching strategies and the school curriculum, and to help them draw upon this knowledge in the shaping of their own classroom practice and the development of their personal teaching theories.

The *reflective practitioner* model has thus become the most widely promoted and adopted model of teacher education today. The origins of reflective practice and learning stem from the work of Dewey (concerned primarily with the cognitive processes involved in learning) and Schön (whose ideas have been widely embraced by the English language teacher education arena). For Dewey, reflective thinking involves a) a state of doubt, hesitation, or mental difficulty in which thinking originates, and b) an act of searching, hunting, or inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the complexity. Schön distinguishes between *reflection on action* and *reflection in action*; the former involves thinking back and talking about an action, possibly resulting in changes of a similar action in the light of this reflective process, while the later

involves thinking about an action while performing it, possibly resulting in changes to the particular action while it is in progress (Schön 1987, see also Wallace 1991). Reflection thus involves verbalizing actions and the rationales underlying them, scrutinising and critiquing and restructuring them, leading to reforms in classroom practice and heightened awareness. It has been argued that reflection helps student teachers meet the unpredictable demands of the future (Balassa et al 2003), raises student teachers' awareness of what constitutes appropriate pedagogic practice, and fosters the skills, habits and attitudes necessary for teachers' lifelong self-development (Brandt 2008, Kullman 1998). As Balassa et al (2003:308) point out, learning to reflect entails learning "the skills of reviewing, noticing, interpreting and evaluating; developing the subsequent skills of planning and selecting; and then using the three key facets of reflection (mirroring, thoughtful deliberation and modeling). All these skills depend on consciously linking interpretations of classroom events with personal constructed theories under expert guidance from mentors."

2.3 Redefining the aims of language teacher education

Changes in the nature of pre-service teacher education programmes have been accompanied by a reformulation of their aims. Thus, teacher education programmes must now aim to raise future teachers' awareness of the range of instructional theories and options available, and to develop their ability to critically appraise the effectiveness and appropriacy of various methods, models and theories to their teaching context and their learners' profile, and within this process become aware of their own preconceptions and beliefs and how these influence their

instructional practices. In other words, the aim of teacher education is not to indoctrinate teachers to operate in a particular manner (Kincheloe 2004), but

- to develop teachers' capacities and tools for a critical understanding of language, culture and appropriate methodologies.
- to develop teachers' ability to reflect upon their beliefs and practices and construct and reconstruct their personal theories of language and teaching.
- to develop positive attitudes of lifelong learning and professional self-development.
- to help deconstruct the myth of the native speaker and offer opportunities for teachers to recognize and value themselves as intercultural speakers.
- to raise teachers' awareness of diversity and focus on helping teachers construct attitudes, knowledge and skills which will be effective when working with diverse student populations.[1]

2.4 The aims of European language teacher education

Within the European education and cultural arena, it is being increasingly acknowledged that effective language teacher preparation is one of the essential components in the eventual education of all European citizens, and that the "training of language teachers has a strategic role to play in preparing Europe's education systems to meet the challenges of change

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[1] Crandall 2000, Dooly and Villanueva 2006, Garrido and Alvarez 2006, Newby 2003, Snow et al 2006.

and to equip students to respond effectively to those challenges" (Kelly et al 2002:3). In an effort to improve and sustain the quality of language teacher education throughout Europe and to provide a set of guidelines for policy makers and teacher educators to adapt their existing programmes to the needs of language teachers today, ultimately leading to an integrated approach for European language teacher education, the European Union has developed a *European Profile for Language Teacher Education*. This profile attempts to identify the essential principles of European language teacher education and the core pedagogical and linguistic skills necessary for today's language teachers.

According to this report (Kelly et al 2004), European language teacher education programmes should involve training prospective language teachers

- in language teaching methodologies and in state of the art classroom techniques and activities.
- in the development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning.
- in the development of prospective language teachers' language proficiency.
- in information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom, for personal organization and resource discovery.
- in the application of various assessment procedures and ways of recording learners' progress.
- in the critical evaluation of nationally and regionally adopted curricula in terms of aims, objectives and outcomes.

- in the theory and practice of internal and external programme evaluation.
- in ways of adapting teaching approaches to the educational context and individual needs of learners.
- in critical evaluation, development and practical application of teaching materials and resources.
- in methods of learning how to learn and in the development of independent language learning strategies.
- in the development of reflective practice and self-evaluation and action research.
- in ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language competence.
- in the practical application of curricula and syllabus.
- in content and language integrated learning.
- in the use of the European language portfolio.

This impressive and exhaustive list of aims does not solely relate to pre-service European language teacher education programmes, but to in-service teacher education and the ongoing personal professional development agenda of language teachers as well. Undoubtedly, the roots of developing the appropriate attitudes, dispositions, values, knowledge and skills needed for the language teacher of the future are firmly grounded in pre-service teacher education programmes. It should be pointed out, though, that the knowledge, skills, awareness and attitudes developed through university courses is necessarily decontextualised, and cannot by nature encompass the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the classroom environment. The university can develop student teachers' understanding of a wide array of issues about learning and teaching, social and cultural contexts, but cannot assist them in

enacting these understandings in complex classrooms which serve increasingly diverse students.

The development of student teachers' personal teaching competence and a wide repertoire of practices, along with the knowledge of when to use different strategies for different purposes, to a great extent can only be achieved during practice teaching under the guidance of an experienced *mentor* teacher. In order to test and link theory and principles with actual practice, receive support and learn from experienced teachers, and be able to understand the complexities of the varied roles and tasks of language teachers, an increasing number of language teacher educators (see Crandall 2000, Feiman – Nemser 2001, Kelly et al 2004, Richards 1998) are calling for more extensive and intensive practice teaching experiences to be integrated through pre-service teacher education programmes. The well-structured and well- crafted practicum under the guidance of an experienced mentor teacher does not only serve as a bridge between theory and practice, but it is the context in which student teachers learn from expert practice in schools that serve diverse students, become able to contextualize and test theory, investigate problems and analyse situations that arise in the field, and develop more informed practice and a personal teaching competence. (Smith and Lev-Ari 2005). Before discussing the value of the teaching practicum and the contribution of the mentor teacher any further, it is important to highlight the different kinds of opportunities for knowledge and skill development each context (the university and the teaching practicum) can offer.

3. Understanding the student teacher

3.1 What kinds of learning does learning to teach involve?

Learning to teach entails much more than learning a skill (for instance, learning to ride a bicycle); it requires multiple forms of learning. Teaching is not a mechanical routine exercise, but an intellectual activity which requires a careful balancing of various concerns and a capability to reason about those concerns within the context of a particular classroom (Deng 2004). The processes of learning to teach are thus highly complex, and place heavy demands of a cognitive, affective and performance nature on the student teacher. The kinds of knowledge and skill that a student teacher needs to develop are (see Roberts 1998, Randall and Thornton 2001):

a) Subject matter or content knowledge: knowledge of the content of one's subject area including major concepts of the field and the relationships among them; an understanding of the various ways a discipline can be organised and the ways by which a discipline evaluates and accepts new knowledge. In the case of English language teachers, this includes knowledge of the English language which encompasses the teacher's own proficiency of the language and knowledge of the formal aspects of the language, and how people use language (Randall and Thornton 2001). Subject matter knowledge is *acquired at university.*

b) Pedagogical content knowledge: This includes awareness of the ways of conceptualising a subject matter for teaching, knowledge of students' comprehension of the subject matter, curriculum

knowledge, and knowledge of materials and resources available for teaching the particular subject knowledge. This type of knowledge essentially encompasses the methodology of language teaching theories of how languages are learnt, and how these relate to methods, techniques and approaches. This type of knowledge is *acquired at university and during practice teaching*.

c) General pedagogic knowledge: This is an area directly related to the practical activity of teaching and involves knowledge and skill in classroom management and control, dealing with students, etc. *Acquired mainly during practice teaching*.
d) Cultural knowledge: This does not only involve knowledge of the target language culture but an awareness of your own culture, as well as "modes of learning and sociolinguistic patterns of communication in the cultures of students that will affect their approaches to learning English" (Troudi 2005:121). *Acquired on a theoretical level at university, but developed during practice teaching and with experience.*
e) Appreciation of the moral issues involved in education: Caring for young people, preparing children to be a part of society, and influencing the way they relate to each other. *Acquired during practice teaching and with experience*.
f) Development of a range of skills: For example, skills for effective selection and use of activities and teaching strategies, learning to relate to reluctant learners, learning how to work with one's colleagues, ability to reflect on and evaluate one's actions, ability to reason

> about one's actions and to justify particular strategies, ability to negotiate and develop one's practice within the culture of the school, and learning how to cope with one's anxieties. *Acquired on a theoretical level at university, but developed during practice teaching and with experience.*

In the area of education, a distinction is made between two types of professional knowledge (Eraut 1994): Theoretical/propositional knowledge, which involves the external body of codified knowledge constructed and acquired at university, and craft/practical/process knowledge, which "is situational, informal and tacit, is learned through experience and through considered and deliberative reflection about or inquiry into experience" (Cohran-Smith and Lytle 1999:262). Roughly speaking, knowledge about teaching (theoretical/propositional knowledge) or conceptual knowledge (Johnson 1996) can be acquired at university but knowledge of teaching (practical, perceptual knowledge) can only be developed through active involvement in teaching.

3.2 The role of student teacher beliefs

Student teachers are not atheoretical beings before embarking on their professional education courses; they are not empty vessels who absorb wholesale the knowledge and skills transmitted by experts, and then automatically put into practice what they have been taught. Research has repeatedly shown that student teachers have deeply- grounded beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, and expectations about the role of the teacher formed on the basis of their extensive experience as

learners. By the time they reach university, students have closely observed teachers and scrutinized their behaviour for at least 12 to 13 years; students have spent thousands of hours in what Lortie (1975) has termed *apprenticeship of observation*. Throughout this observation period, they have developed a wealth of initial knowledge of teaching, a rich repertoire of images, models and taken for granted practices about teaching, they have developed a body of values, commitments and beliefs about teaching (Calderhead 1991).

The beliefs student teachers hold are implicit, informal and embedded in their mental images of classroom practice and often lead to the formation of inappropriate images and inadequate expectations of teaching. (Borg 2003, Calderhead 1991, Deng 2004, Freeman and Richards 1996, Kagan 1992, Nettle 1998, Roberts 1998). Beliefs are part of the student teachers' evolving identity as teacher; they represent the "medium for each person to negotiate his/her identity as a social being" (Cabaroglu and Roberts 2000: 388). Beliefs blended with experiences and theoretical and technical knowledge form student teachers' developing professional identity (Trappes-Lomax and McGrath 1999).

In his review of 16 studies of pre-service teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) concluded that student teachers' beliefs play a pivotal role in the way they interpret and acquire information from their teacher education courses. Their beliefs act as perceptual, self validating, selective filters which sieve information presented to them. This filtered information is then used to confirm and support rather than confront or challenge their pre-existing conceptions (Calderhead and Robson 1991, Doolittle, Dodds and Placek 1993, Kagan 1992, Puchta 1999,

Roberts 1998). Not only do their pre-existing beliefs mediate how student teachers interpret information about teaching and learning, but also how they translate that information into classroom practice; in other words, beliefs also shape, influence and guide student teachers' classroom practices and their professional development. These pre-existing beliefs remain with new teachers well into their first years of teaching (Cabaroglu and Roberts 2000, Calderhead 1991, Deng 2004).

Whether or not teacher education courses and practice teaching actually influence or change student teachers' pre-existing conceptions is a matter of heated debate, while related research results have been largely inconsistent. Many researchers have argued that student teachers' beliefs are inflexible, stable, and resistant to change (Freeman 2002, Kennedy 1991). They represent a *latent culture* which despite effects of training, is reinforced on entry to the teaching profession; as Calderhead and Robson (1991: 2) argue, "school experience is a powerful socializing agent which washes out the effect of training."

The inflexibility and stability of student teacher beliefs has been identified by a number of research studies (see Almarza 1996, Guillame and Rudney 1993, Johnson 1994, Nettle 1998). For instance, Peacock (2001), in his investigation of 146 TESL trainees' beliefs over three years of studies in TESL methodology, found that trainees' beliefs remained constant throughout the period of their training. The majority of trainees in their third year, and especially those with low proficiency levels, still believed, after years of training in communicative approaches and techniques, that learning a second language entails learning vocabulary and grammar rules. Similarly, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984),

investigating changes in student teacher beliefs over their practice teaching period, found that the majority of student teachers' perspectives solidified rather than changed over their 15-week practice teaching placement. They conclude "as the analysis continued, it became increasingly clear that the dominant trend was for teaching perspectives to develop and grow in a direction consistent with the latent culture that students brought to the experience" (ibid: 33).

Other research studies reach similar rather pessimistic conclusions (Brown and McGamon 1998, Doyle 1997, Fajet et al 2005). It seems that even if student teachers' beliefs converge during their teacher education courses, they tended to diverge after their practice teaching experience, thus suggesting that pre-service teacher education programs are ineffective in changing or influencing student teacher beliefs, and that in the end, as Kennedy (1991: 16) argues,

> …new teachers teach as they were taught. The power of their apprenticeship of observation and of the conventional images of teaching that derive from childhood experiences, makes it very difficult to alter teaching practice and explain in part why teaching has remained so constant over so many decades of reform efforts.

The inflexibility and stability of student teacher beliefs, though, has been questioned by a number of studies which have identified changes in student teacher beliefs throughout their teacher education courses and after their practice teaching placements (Cabaroglu and Roberts 2000, Hascher, Cocard and Moser 2004, Lightbown and Spada 1993, Sendan 1995). What these studies reveal is that belief development and change is

possible, but it is gradual and cumulative and highly variable among individual student teachers. Findings also suggest that certain beliefs are more susceptible to change than others. It is the central core beliefs that are more resistant to change (Peacock 2001).

Moreover, it has also been pointed out that the claimed inflexibility of student teacher beliefs may be due to shortcomings of the pre-service training programs rather than being an inherent characteristic of student teacher beliefs systems per se (Kagan 1992). Input provided in teacher education courses and classroom experience alone is necessary but not sufficient to effect a change in beliefs. Before student teachers can effectively integrate new information and detect inconsistencies in their beliefs systems, they first need to become aware of their personal beliefs and conceptions about teaching. (Williams 1999). Systematic opportunities thus must be given to student teachers through their teacher education courses to make explicit their beliefs, to analyse them, scrutinize them and challenge them (Almarza 1996, Crandall 2000, Deng 2004, Fajet et al 2005, Roberts 1998). If student teachers are not given opportunities to examine their beliefs, they cannot be open to new ideas and cannot be in a position to detect inconsistencies and reexamine their beliefs in the light of new data. Research has shown that practice teaching experiences may help student teachers in modifying their preconceived ideas about teaching and classroom instruction when encouraged by mentors to confront their beliefs (Joram and Gabrielle 1998).

4. The value of the teaching practicum

'I always thought that teaching would be like a fairy tale. All the children would have nothing but respect for their teacher. They would sit there and listen when the teacher was talking. …They would want to be at school and they would really enjoy learning. I thought it would be so easy to plan what you were going to do each day. I never realised how much would be involved in getting students motivated and keeping their attention.'

'What I learned was not at all what I had expected. I had thought that I would figure out a way to bring to life all the wonderful theories I had studied. ...I had aspired to use creative ideas to make every lesson interesting. What I actually discovered was that I had set too many high expectations, causing myself to burn out before I really got started. It was an extremely painful yet important lesson for me to learn. I naively plunged into student teaching expecting to accomplish goals that teachers with years of experience are still striving to attain. When I began to realize that I could not possibly live up to those expectations, I panicked. I became paralyzed.'[2]

The quotes above coming from student teachers completing their teaching practicum encapsulate most of the feelings of disillusionment, shock and fear that student teachers all over the world experience when starting their practice teaching. Indeed, for most beginning teachers, their teaching practicum is a period in which learning to teach is only one

[2] This is an account of two student teachers' experiences during the teaching practicum (From Cole and Knowles 1993: 462 & 464).

element. For them, this period may also mark their transition from adolescence to adulthood which is often accompanied by strong emotions, feelings of great stress of uncertainty, and sometimes despair. Practice teaching is a period during which student teachers are seriously tested as they try on their new roles; they are overwhelmed by the intricacies of the schools, by the pace and the complexities and circumstances of classroom life, and they are overcome by the problems of facilitating learning within the contextual realities of contemporary classrooms and schools. Research has shown that the practice teaching period is a time when student teachers experience great stress as they struggle to meet new role demands, and experience the fear of losing control and the esteem of staff and peers.

Despite the feelings of disillusionment and shock that student teachers' first experience when beginning their practica, research has shown that student teachers rate their teaching practicum as the most valuable part of their teacher education. The following comments by our own student teachers after completing their Practice Teaching course clearly indicate this:

- *It offers students-trainees the chance to observe classes in a real EFL classroom environment and to reflect on the process of learning and teaching.*
- *It provides the students-trainees with the opportunity to collaborate with experienced teachers (mentors), who give them guidance and advise them about how to manage a class effectively.*
- *Trainees consider this course a unique experience since they are able to involve themselves in the actual teaching*

of a class, it boosts their confidence, and it allows them to take decisions regarding their future careers.

- *It was interesting, motivating and challenging. It was well organized, boosted my confidence as a future teacher, got me involved in the teaching process, enhanced my teaching techniques, and gave me the opportunity to co-operate with experienced schoolteachers.*
- *Trainees were introduced to new teaching strategies and were able to practice them in a real class environment.*
- *They observed the teaching process and reflected on previous experience or knowledge in order to understand the needs of learners.*
- *They learnt how to organize teaching materials designed for a specific level, used teaching aids, and designed activities. They also prepared and marked tests.*
- *They had the opportunity to observe learners' response to different kinds of activities, and to search for ways to motivate students.*
- *The interaction with learners was a joyful and fruitful experience.*

Studies of teaching practica in Israel and the Netherlands (Smith and Lev-Ari 2005) have revealed that:

- student teachers' stress decreased significantly by the end of the practicum.
- students rated the practicum as the main source of most aspects of teachers' professional knowledge.
- the practicum changed their views on the roles of teachers.

- the most useful tool for reflection on practice teaching as perceived by 70% of the students was the feedback session.

These are the students' perceived benefits of practice teaching. But what does the literature on teacher education and research have to say? It is widely accepted that practice teaching experiences are an essential and indispensable part of the education of student teachers, supplementing, complementing and extending the work of university-based teacher education courses (Grossman and Richert 1988). The practicum does not only serve as a bridge between theory and practice, but it is the context in which student teachers develop a personal teaching competence (Smith and Lev-Ari ibid).

Especially within the field of language teacher education, calls have been made (Crandall 2000, 1994, Johnson 1996, Brandt 2006, Kelly et al 2004) by language teacher educators for the integration of more extensive and intensive field experiences within pre-service teacher education courses, thus "providing prospective teachers with greater opportunities to link theory with practice and to receive support and learn from experienced teachers, while also offering experienced teachers an opportunity to learn from their new counterparts" (Crandall ibid:41).

The raison d'etre of teaching practica stems from the conviction that learning becomes meaningful and is enhanced when knowledge and skill is integrated and applied in the real world (Allsopp et al 2006). Teaching practica provide a protected field of experimentation where student teachers, under the guidance of a experienced mentor, are provided with opportunities to apply, contextualise and evaluate knowledge, and to make concrete linkages between theory and practice. The

interaction between the experienced mentor and the student teacher, when enriched with reflective discussion and analysis of the teaching process, assists the latter in transforming knowledge into theory and constructing meaning and theory from practice (Freeman 2002, Hacher et al 2004, Smith and Lev Ari 2005, Vansledright and Putnam 1991). Field experiences are also effective in developing the more tacit components of knowing how to teach, such as making on-the-spot decisions, handling spontaneous problems, and managing classrooms.

Moreover, studies (Hascher et al 2004) showed that as a result of practice teaching, there was an increase in student teachers' professional skills, that student teachers showed more beneficial attitudes towards pupils, and that they improved their self-esteem and well-being.

Based on empirical evidence, practica have been considered an important pre-service learning context because they (Hascher et al 2004, Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1999, Invargson et al 2007, Wang 2001):

- provide classroom experiences.
- are useful in evaluating teaching ability.
- support socialisation within the profession.
- stimulate the development of teaching skills.
- provide a protected field of experimentation.
- allow insights into new perspectives.
- increase motivation to continue studying.
- provide student teachers with a wider view of education and professionalism.
- help student teachers transform their subject knowledge for the purposes of teaching and to connect such knowledge to students with diverse backgrounds.

Practice teaching has also been found to have a powerful role in shaping student teachers' behaviour (Almarza 1996) and to promote change in student teachers' thinking (Cabaroglou and Roberts 2000) and their cognitions/beliefs (MacDonald et al 2001). Additionally, practice teaching acts as a "rite of passage" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1999), familiarising the student teacher with the roles and responsibilities of a teacher, sensitising them to the ethical and normative dimensions of practice (Deng 2004), and socialising the student teacher into the technical culture of schools (Kleinsasser 1993, Cope and Stephen 2001). This socialisation process, termed *acculturation*, enables student teachers "to ritually pass from a previous 'non-teacher' existence to being accepted as a member of the profession- part of the teaching community" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1999:283) and is an affective processs as well as a cognitive one, a process driven by the need of the student teacher to "fit in".

The carefully designed teaching practicum has thus a vital role to play in the professional development of student teachers and cannot be viewed as a luxury add-on. Without it, student teachers are either knowledgeable about teaching but cannot apply that knowledge, or can display classroom-like behaviour in one context, but cannot learn from experience nor use professional analytical skills to make sense of new teaching situations and act appropriately. Knowledge *about* teaching can be learned in theoretical courses provided at university (see section 3.1). However, as Feiman- Nemser (1992:2) points out, "no college course can teach a new teacher how to blend knowledge of particular students and knowledge of particular content in decisions about what to do in specific situations."

Thus, the knowledge *of* teaching, the professional content knowledge of teachers, *knowing how, knowing when, knowing why,* can only be acquired by active engagement in teaching during practice teaching under the guidance and support of an experienced mentor teacher.

5. Pre-service teacher education and mentoring practices

"Training can never prepare you completely for the job. As a teacher you have to be a lifelong learner"

(Szesztay 2003)

In the world of teacher education, the phenomenon of the mentor − an experienced teacher who is well trained to guide student teachers during practice teaching and is co-responsible for the education and training of student teachers − is not new. Mentoring (at pre-service and beginning teacher level) burst onto the educational scene in the early 80's as part of a broad movement of improving the quality of teacher education, teaching and education more generally (Feiman-Nemser 1996). In European countries, experimentation with the participation of trained mentors in the initial education and training of teachers started in the early 70s in northern Germany and in a number of Dutch universities and in Nordic countries. The starting point for this development was the attempt to bring together theoretical knowledge about teaching and teachers' practical knowledge. There is no valuable theory which is not connected with good practice because practitioners need that theory as a frame for reflection on their actions.

The renewed interest in mentoring today has, in the first instance, arisen in those countries where such cooperation was not established and the gap between teacher training institutes and the schools remained intact. Many questioned the relevance and quality of pre-service teacher education when carried out exclusively at university. In these countries (the US and the UK) the main responsibility for the initial training of teachers has now shifted from the universities to the schools. In the UK, for example, initial teacher training has become more school-based, that is, extensive attention is paid to practice-oriented professional development of teachers. The UK Department of Education, through Circular 9/92, strengthened the role of schools in the training of pre-service teachers which receive part of the funding from their partner institutions and take an active role in determining the nature of the teacher education programme and delivering it. Mentoring constitutes a central element in this partnership, and mentors have been placed in a pivotal position between the trainee teacher and the training institution. Student teachers are required to spend two-thirds of their 36-week course in schools. (see Christie et al 2004, Ferguson and Donno 2003, Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1999).

In Scotland, partnership arrangements between schools and teacher education institutions in the initial education of teachers have been established, and a Teacher Induction Scheme with a mentoring component was introduced in 2002 as a means of reducing the high attrition rates amongst beginning teachers. The induction scheme includes the guarantee of a year's placement in school, reduced workload and the support of a senior member (called *supporter*) to support the learning of student and

beginning teachers within the wider context of professional development (see O'Brien and Christie 2005).

In the US, mentoring was introduced in the early 80's in order to reduce teacher attrition rates and as a means of improving the quality of teaching and the preparation of prospective teachers, as both were viewed as significant factors affecting the future of society (Andrews and Martin 2003). Later on, *The No Child Left Behind Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (adopted in 2002), was accompanied by a set of measures to improve the quality of teacher education, including increased number of field experiences with trained cooperating teachers and more collaborative efforts to connect public school and university educators (see Copa and Loadman 2004). According to Marable and Raimondi (2007), mentoring is now mandated by over 30 states and implemented in some form by at least 47 states.

Belgium, Holland and Germany operate partnership systems where groups of schools clustered around a Higher Education Institution become actively involved in the training of student teachers. These countries have well-established mentoring schemes (see MENDEVAL Project).

Hungary is one of the few well-documented cases of mentoring EFL student teachers. After the collapse of communism, there was an unprecedented demand for English language teachers, since Russian was the compulsory language taught in Hungarian schools until then. The Hungarian Ministry of Education, with the support of the British Council, set up teacher training colleges throughout Hungary, offering fast track three-year training courses for prospective English language teachers, focusing on the use of eclectic methods based on a

communicative approach, and aiming at developing student teachers' reflective skills that would lead to lifelong professional development. Although Hungary had established a mentoring system for nearly a century, there were no mentors of student English language teachers. As a result, qualified English language teachers in schools who had no experience of supervising student teachers were asked to act as mentors. This cadre of teachers had to be trained in the new approaches promoted by the teacher training colleges and in the practice of reflection. Intensive mentor training courses (see Malderez and Bodoczky 1999) were set up throughout the country, and now around 400 trained mentors are working throughout the country. Moreover, by 2012 all mentors (of any subject) are required to complete a two-year postgraduate mentoring certificate course (Balassa et al 2003, Kullman 1998).

Moreover, within the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (Kelly et al 2004), the value and importance of mentoring is highlighted. Mentors, according to the profile (page 8), "perform a valuable role in supporting the trainee through the school-based experience and helping them make the transition from trainee to qualified teacher." Member states of the European Union are encouraged to establish mentoring schemes, offer training opportunities for mentors, and assign trainees to a mentor for the duration of the practice teaching.

Today, most countries around the globe have implemented mentorship programmes (for example, for Israel, see Smith and Lev-Ari 2005, for Hong Kong see Tang and Choi 2005, for China see Wang 2001) and part of the initial training of student teachers is carried out on site at schools under the guidance and support of an experienced and trained mentor teacher.

5.1 Defining mentoring

Providing a definition of mentoring is far from straightforward, since the roles and practices of a mentor and the meaning of mentoring vary in different disciplines, in different educational and school contexts, and over time (Tang and Choi 2005). Not only are definitions of mentoring elusive (see Roberts 2000 for a comprehensive review of the various definitions), but mentoring has been implemented in different ways in teacher preparation programmes, and many comparative studies of mentoring have highlighted that educational and school contexts determine the nature of mentor practices and the evolving relationships between mentor and student teacher (Hawkey 2006, Wang 2000). With this proviso in mind, an attempt will be made to synthesise and present the common essential elements of mentoring practice.

According to the General Teaching Council for England (2002: 2) "mentoring is a structured sustained process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions."

A well-quoted definition of mentoring is offered by Carmin (1998 cited in O'Brien and Christie 2005:191) "Mentoring is a complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychological development, career and/or educational development, and socialisation."

In both these definitions (and others see Roberts 2000), it is implied that mentoring involves both a process and a relationship; the process aspect aims to facilitate student teachers' induction into the teaching profession, while the relationship aspect implies that this should be done in a caring

and supportive manner (Kwan and Lopez-Real 2005). The relationship is contained in the process, which is learner-centred and goes well beyond the transmission of knowledge and skill.

5.2 The roles and significance of a mentor

A mentor is not exclusively responsible for the development of the teacher trainee. The mentor is one element of the partnership between the school and the university. The mentor brings to that partnership a personal understanding of teaching/learning and experience in applying that expertise and knowledge on a day-to-day basis with students. For the trainee, this day-to- day experience is vital; it is something which they would not have access to if training was exclusively university-based. The mentor teacher can help prospective teachers learn how to teach and how to reason about and learn from their teaching. According to Wang (2001:53), "the support of experienced teachers is crucial for a novice to learn something at the level beyond his or her independent exploration. Experienced teachers are able to help novice teachers learn teaching skills that novices cannot develop by themselves alone."

Mentoring thus has two dimensions: a) emotional support, providing a comfortable relationship and environment for the new teacher to develop; and b) professional support, based on a principled understanding of teachers and how they learn.

Effective mentoring combines official procedural roles (observing, advising assessing), and befriending and counselling roles. The relationship between the mentor and student teacher should transform into emerging colleagueship.

A mentor is thus an experienced teacher who guides, supports, encourages, counsels and befriends a student teacher in order to promote the latter's professional and personal development.

Mentors may serve as work supervisor, performance appraiser, adviser, project collaborator and friend. As Johnson and Ridley point out (2004: xv), "mentoring relationships are dynamic, reciprocal personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé). Mentors provide protégés with knowledge, advice, counsel, support and opportunity in the protégés' pursuit of full membership in a particular profession."

During practice teaching, mentors are called upon to perform different roles (see Kwan and Lopez –Real 2005, Roberts 2000). These include:

Model: to inspire and to demonstrate setting a good example to student teachers.

Acculturator: to show the student teacher the ropes, to help the student teacher get used to the particular school culture.

Observer: to observe student teachers' lessons, attitudes and general behaviour.

Supporter: to be there, to provide safe opportunities for the student teacher to let off steam, release emotions and to act as a sounding board.

Critical friend: to offer constructive criticisms to student teachers about their teaching performance.

Educator: to act as a sounding board for the articulation of ideas, to consciously create appropriate opportunities for the student teacher, and to help the student teacher set and achieve professional learning objectives.

But most importantly, "the mentor is not there to provide technical and practical support for novices but to help them in critiquing existing routines and practice, discussing alternative ways to structure a lesson, reflecting on the theory and rationale underlying instruction" (Wang 2001).

5.3 The origins of mentoring

> *When you start on your journey to Ithaca*
> *Then pray that the road is long*
> *That the summer mornings are many*
> *That you will enter ports seen for the first time*
> *With such pleasures and joy…*
> *…To learn and learn from those who have knowledge*
> (Cavafis 1976:36)

Mentoring is not a new concept. Mentor was a character in Homer's *Odyssey*. Before Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, went off to war, he hired Mentor and charged him with the responsibility of educating and guiding his son, Telemachus, during his absence from Ithaca. Mentor is a trusted servant and a member of the court; his authority is derived from his wisdom, and not his rank. Mentor serves as Telemachus' teacher, role model, counsellor, facilitator, supportive protector and guide. Mentor acts in most situations as the mouthpiece of the goddess of wisdom, Athena. It is she who offers advice and wisdom to Telemachus. Her guidance is eminently practical. She protects him from harm and directs his steps in his search for his father. She helps Telemachus work through the problems and challenges he faces by guiding him to see new ways of solving them. Although Athena, in the shape of Mentor, has power to act for Telemachus, she often stands back from the action in order to let him "show his stuff".

The roles that Mentor played as the teacher of Telemachus are the roles that we associate with mentors today. The mentor must know when to stand back, while the protégé must show a willingness to take on the task alone. The mentor must guide but not take control of the protégé's actions. Mentors are trusted guides because they have made the journey before.

Although the term *mentor* is first used in Homer's Odyssey, mentoring as a practice and as a relationship has its origins in the Hebrew bible, where a mentor-mentee relationship existed between Moses and Joshua, and between Elijah and Elisha (for the origins of mentoring see Awaya et al 2003, Colley 2002, Gabel-Dunk and Craft 2004).

5.4 Characteristics of a mentor teacher

A competent and experienced teacher does not necessarily make an effective mentor. For a mentor to be effective, he/she needs to possess certain qualities and characteristics, including:

- A willingness to reflect on his/her own experience and to explore his/her practice with trainees. Teachers who can teach a lesson and then openly evaluate it are making their own knowledge and values accessible to student teachers, and are also encouraging an openness and willingness to engage in self-evaluation together with the development of reflective evaluative skills.
- An understanding that his/her approach to teaching is not the only one. Being a competent practitioner able to demonstrate a variety of techniques requires a reasonable level of confidence and competence by mentors, but perhaps as important is a willingness to experiment and develop their own practice.

- Accessibility – having a sympathetic, supportive, understanding attitude towards the student teacher. Learning to teach is for many student teachers anxiety provoking, particularly when students realize that it is far from easy to become the teacher that they would like to be. The emotional stresses of teaching may inhibit student teachers' receptiveness to new learning (Hawkey 2006). A mentor, therefore, needs to be able to put student teachers' experience into perspective, to help them face their anxieties, and to provide any necessary support.
- Being a good listener and communicator. In-service teachers have often developed a great deal of their practices through individual experience, and as a result they have never been placed in the position of having to talk about what they do and why. This is partly due to their inability to articulate the implicit assumptions and understandings within their practice. In a mentoring context, the development of a language to discuss teaching has obvious advantages in helping the student teacher to interpret their observations and to reflect on teaching and learning.
- Ability to set realistic targets. Learning to teach involves setting oneself realistic targets for development. When students are unfamiliar with the curriculum, the learners, and the classroom context, they can easily set goals for themselves which are unrealistic and inappropriate. Mentors can help students think about and set appropriate targets that are motivating and achievable.

- Understanding professional development. Student teachers learn to teach in different ways, coming from differing backgrounds with differing values and types of expertise. Helping student teachers to become more accomplished teachers requires some tolerance or a multiplicity of vision of what good teaching might be like, but also some perception of how student teachers typically develop.

Other important mentor competences and traits identified through research and experience include:
interpersonal skills: is able to maintain a trusting professional relationship, is patient, approachable, fair, calm, direct, and shows a willingness to share.
communication skills: is able to articulate effective instructional strategies, asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding, and offers feedback in positive and productive ways.

An effective mentor should also have professional know-how (i.e. be able not only to react to student teachers' queries and problems, but actively provide ongoing professional development opportunities), should demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning, and should show a willingness to learn new strategies from the student teachers (see O'Brien and Christie 2005, National Education Foundation).

5.5 The process of mentoring

The role of the mentor has become highly significant in determining the quality of training provision. For some student teachers, the mentor can be the main source of information about teaching, the main sources of advice and feedback about

their own practice, and the main confidant and counsellor when things go wrong.

A trainee teacher will be looking to a mentor for his/her experience and expertise in

- ways of organizing and managing a classroom.
- providing a range of experiences suited to the abilities of the learners.
- dealing with difficult learners.
- a range of marking and assessment techniques.
- practical strategies for making lessons run smoothly.
- ways of coping and managing when things go wrong.

Passing on this expertise is a complex process; it is not sufficient to simply show or tell a student how to do something in a particular way. What is required is a more exploratory and discursive process, where trainee and teacher-mentor consider particular teaching strategies in detail, based on things that the trainee has experienced in the classroom as an observer or as someone being observed. In order to achieve this, mentors need to separate and recombine the assumptions about teaching that they have as teachers in order to discuss and explain them to the student teachers. Indeed, learning to mentor has been interpreted through the metaphor of "learning a second language of teaching" (Orland-Barak 2001); it is "a highly conscious and gradual process of reorganising and restructuring beliefs and understandings that the mentor holds as a teacher in order to make sense of the new context of mentoring" (Orland-Barak ibid: 53).

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that mentoring is not a monolithic routine process but an intentional, structured process which goes through different stages as the relationship between mentor and student teacher develops, and as the student

teacher develops professionally. In the first stage (the initiation/ prescriptive stage), the mentor establishes rapport and mainly directs the student teacher. In the second stage (the persuasive stage), the mentor leads and guides the student teacher. The third stage (the collaborative stage) is characterised by the mentor jointly working with the student teacher in applying technical skills and in problem solving, while in the final stage (the confirmative stage), the mentor delegates responsibilities to the student teacher who acts independently, relying on the mentor only for confirmation (see Roberts 2000).

In a similar vein, McIntyre and Hagger (1993, cited in Christie et al 2004) identify four models (or phases) of mentoring, depending of the level of student teacher expertise: "zero level mentoring" focuses on interpersonal skills and building rapport with the student teacher; "minimal mentoring" involves the supervision of student teachers' practice and assisting in the planning and implementation of lessons; "developed mentoring" involves collaborative teaching allowing student teachers access to the mentors' craft knowledge and providing opportunities for the discussion of ideas behind the practice of teaching; finally, "extended mentoring" takes place when the student has achieved basic competence as a teacher, and so can be seen as an equal partner in the relationship. This model may also involve providing the student with access to expertise on a range of whole-school issues" (Christie et al 2004:112).

5.6 Ways mentors can influence student teachers

There are a number of techniques (listed below) a mentor can use in order to guide and influence student teachers during practice teaching.

- Influencing by example: Mentors influence their student teachers by providing a model; it may be a model in the form of their own behaviour − a demonstration lesson or a particular strategy − or in the form of suggested lesson plans, ideas for activities, or specific recommended actions to take to overcome particular difficulties. The mentor is the source of actions and solutions.
- Influencing by coaching: This involves focused ongoing support requiring careful observation and follow-up discussion, together with repeated practice of particular strategies or skills or types of lesson. Distinguishing features of the coach are observation and discussion, the breaking down of a task into performable parts, and attention to detail. Schon suggests that mentors communicate their knowledge, understanding and practical skills by relying principally on three strategies: *joint experimentation,* involving mentor and student working together in solving problems, *follow me,* in which the mentor talks about his own work, and the *hall of mirrors,* in which the mentor aims to expand the alternative ways in which the student might perceive a particular situation.
- Influencing through practice-focused discussion: This might involve abstract discussions about teaching

approaches or about theoretical ideas and their implications for practice, or more specific discussions about lessons that students have observed or taught themselves. Student teachers learn a great deal about practice through talking about it, and often become more aware of aspects of their own practice as a result of such discussion.

- Influencing through emotional support: students often experience a great deal of uncertainty and self-doubt in the process of learning to teach, and the support and encouragement offered by others may be an important factor in maintaining motivation, involvement and the persistence to find solutions to experienced difficulties. Mentors are viewed as an important source of this encouragement, and mentors themselves have often found to rate this aspect of their role highly.
- Influencing through devised learning experiences: Mentors may construct particular school-based tasks to promote student teacher learning. For example, they may require the student teacher to teach a particular subject area so that they become better acquainted with that content or ways of organising the class for that subject.

5.7 Providing effective feedback

Feedback is crucial to learning and development (forming a key component of several prominent learning theories, such as those of Lewin and Dewey); we understand this as teachers and apply it daily with the learners we teach. Yet, we are often less free with feedback to colleagues. In studies of practice teaching,

student teachers have been found to highly value feedback from their mentors, regarding it as the most useful element of their practice teaching experience (Brandt 2008, Hyland and Lo 2006, Kwan and Lopez-Real 2005, Kullman 1998). Feedback is an essential, vital tool in helping student teachers develop new skills and integrate them into their practice, and in reinforcing student teacher professional discourse (Bailey 2006). As Ingvarson et al (2007: 374) point out, "One of the key elements in linking theory to practice is feedback. New understandings, skills and attitudes are rarely acquired without timely, relevant and informative feedback about our actions and their effects."

Feedback may be defined as the information provided to the student teacher on some aspect of their performance with a view to enhancing practice (Brandt 2008). The purpose of feedback is to identify effective teaching, to identify less effective teaching, and to promote positive change (Bailey 2006).

According to Brinko (1993 cited in Brandt 2008), feedback is effective when a number of conditions are met. These include:

- the setting is psychologically safe.
- information is gathered from a number of sources.
- Feedback is focused and contains relevant meaningful, concrete information, accurate and specific data, and irrefutable evidence.
- It focuses on behaviour rather than the person.
- It is descriptive rather than evaluative.
- It considers the recipient's experience and developmental stage.
- Negative information is sandwiched between positive information.

- It reduces uncertainty for the recipient.
- It allows for response and interaction.

There are a number of points that should be borne in mind when providing feedback to student teachers (see also Randall and Thornton 2001):

- Be positive first. It is discouraging for the first few words to be negative. Talking about the positive aspects of trainee's performance will relax the trainee and reinforce those aspects in the trainee's mind, making difficult truths more acceptable.
- Focus on and describe behaviour, not personality. Focus on behaviour that the trainee can do something about (e.g. talking louder), and not on aspects of the trainee's personality that cannot be changed (e.g. asking a timid person to become *outgoing and cofident)*.
- Try to give specific examples rather than generalisations. Be specific about the aspects of the trainee's behaviour/performance that require attention and how and why they should be improved.
- Be constructively critical. Never just point out a shortcoming; always invite the student to reflect on how something could have been better.
- Try to create an action plan which can be used in the near future.
- Give only as much as the trainee can absorb, not everything you wish to say, taking into account the trainee's level of development.

An effective feedback session will send the participants away feeling that

- it was useful − something was learned or realised.
- it gave ideas for future action for mentor and trainee.
- it provided an opportunity to say things that were really felt, rather than just what was expected.

Feedback can focus on a variety of issues relating to teaching performance/behaviours of the student teacher, lesson planning skills, and use of teaching strategies and techniques. The various foci of feedback may include:

Personal Qualities:

- presence/style
- voice quality
- rapport with pupils
- co-operative skills

Planning:

- aims and objectives
- appropriacy of activities
- shape and balance of activities
- preparation of materials/resources
- anticipation of difficulties

Implementation:

- class management
- pace and timing
- use of teaching aids/ materials
- clarity of explanation/instruction
- questioning techniques
- accuracy/appropriacy of language
- L1 vs. L2 use
- pupils' involvement

- treatment of errors
- achievement of aims

5.8 Strategies for encouraging reflection

The ability to reflect on one's actions has been seen (as mentioned in section 2.2) as an essential means of raising student teachers' awareness of appropriate pedagogic practices and the principles that inform their practice, of linking theory to practice in concrete, personal and contextualised ways, of allowing student teachers time to absorb material, of promoting change, and of laying the foundations for the development of lifelong learning skills. Reflective skills are developed gradually in a structured way by giving the student teacher systematic opportunities to analyse, critique, and scrutinize what transpired in a lesson. Various techniques have been suggested to stimulate reflection while leading the post observation feedback session. These include (see Kullman 1998):

- Clarifying (before the lesson observation) the purpose of the observation, the focus of the observation, and what techniques (e.g. a structured observation form or a task sheet designed by the mentor) will be used while the observation is being carried out.
- Not allowing the interaction during the feedback session to get stuck at the level of feelings and emotions.
- Using a variety of questioning techniques leading the student teacher to reflect, e.g. asking the student teacher to recall specific incidents in the lesson and proceeding to probing questions which will encourage the student teacher to think about and analyse the incidents more

deeply, reflecting on the possible causes of these incidents, suggesting alternative courses of action, etc.
- Avoiding using closed questions which require a *yes/no* response.
- Making perceptions of what transpired during a lesson explicit to student teachers.
- Agreeing with student teachers' targets for future lessons.

6. The multiple benefits of the mentoring experience

Studies of mentor programs suggest that mentors do help novice teachers during the critical first years of teaching (Andrews and Martin 2003, Marable and Raimondi 2007, Tang and Choi 2005). Neophyte teachers seem to benefit from the emotional and moral support as well as pedagogical guidance as they negotiate the reality shock of their initial teaching experience.

As mentioned in section 4, research has shown that student teachers rate their teaching practicum as the most valuable part of their teacher education. For instance, studies in Israel and the Netherlands showed that student teachers' stress decreased significantly by the end of the practicum, that students rated the practicum as the main source of most aspects of teachers' professional knowledge, that the practicum changed their views on the roles of teachers, and that the most useful tool for reflection on practice teaching as perceived by 70% of the students was the feedback session (Smith and Lev-Ari 2005). Other studies (Hascher et al 2004), showed that as a result of practice teaching, there was an increase in student teachers' professional skills, that student teachers showed more beneficial

attitudes towards pupils, and that they improved their self-esteem and sense of well-being. In addition, other studies have shown that effective mentoring programs increased the retention of novice teachers in the teaching profession (Kajs 2002), led to the development of larger and more sophisticated repertoires of teaching strategies, stronger classroom management skills, increased ability to deal with behaviour and discipline problems, improved professional identity, greater professional competence, and decreased job stress and role conflict (Andrews and Martin 2003, Johnson and Ridley 2004).

Apart from the immediate benefits of mentoring for student teachers, mentoring schemes offer benefits to the school as a whole, helping to develop a more professional culture where it is natural to share thinking and practice. In addition, for higher education institutions, mentoring helps smooth the transition from the university to the classroom. For professional teacher associations, it represents a way to serve members and guarantee instructional quality, while for students and parents it means better teaching.

Moreover, reports from other studies imply that mentor–student teacher relationships can also enhance the professional development of experienced teachers (Balassa et al 2003, Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1999, Kwan and Lopez-Real 2005, Sinclair et al 2006). The programs afford opportunities for continuous discussion of pedagogical and curricular issues, thereby potentially enhancing the professional growth of experienced teachers. By answering questions that student teachers ask and in helping them overcome obstacles, mentors are sometimes forced to review their own beliefs and look for alternative strategies. The dialogue between mentors and

trainees heightens mentors' awareness of aspects of their own practice which under normal circumstances they may not think twice about, and provides a channel of reflection which is often missing from the careers of many teachers (Moon 1994). Mentors frequently report that working with trainees has forced them to be reflective about their own beliefs about teaching, students and learning, and provides them with opportunities to validate the experience they have accumulated over the years, leading them to a heightened awareness of the complexity of teaching (Huling and Resta 2001).

Mentors thus report gains in professional growth and personal growth. More specifically, mentors (in various mentoring contexts) have reported the following benefits (see Balassa et al 2003, Huling and Resta 2001, Sinclair et al 2006):

- internal satisfaction and fulfilment
- development of interpersonal skills
- enhanced creativity and professional synergy
- career and personal rejuvenation
- strengthening of mentors' commitment to the teaching profession
- development of a loyal support base
- recognition by the organisation for developing talent
- development of a loyal support base
- increased professional confidence
- a feeling of belonging to a professional community
- opportunity to relate theory to practice

7. The Pre-service Programme

7.1 The nature of the programme

Responding to the new challenges our student teachers will face in the professional arena and to the multiplicity of tasks and responsibilities that they will be expected to deal with as language teachers in the Greek educational context and in line with the goals of European language teacher education, at the Faculty of English Studies, University of Athens, we have made conscious attempts throughout the past few years to restructure the aims, content and learning experiences, modes of delivery and assessment of our Pre-service EFL Teacher Education and Training Programme (PETETP). The PETETP took its present form in 1994, but the PEDYAS project provided an opportunity for reform and innovations to this programme. On the basis of internal evaluation, new actions are introduced each academic year with the intention of providing our students with the knowledge and training they need to meet new educational and professional demands in the field of TEFL.

7.2 Aims and rationale of the programme

The PETETP offered by the Faculty of English Studies integrates academic study and practical experience of teaching with a view to developing the professional awareness and the competences required to teach effectively. More specifically, the PETETP aims to:

- develop in student teachers the essential knowledge and skills of teaching (subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge)

- develop student teachers' abilities to question, reason and critically reflect on mainstream teaching practices, and to understand social needs for language learning in the united Europe of today and tomorrow
- provide students with the discourse and vocabulary − the metalanguage − that will allow them to analyse and discuss their personal teaching theories, and provide a rationale for their teaching,
- develop awareness of the roles and responsibilities of foreign language teachers in the Greek educational context, thus preparing students on a cognitive, affective and performance level for their future role as English language teachers

In order to effectively prepare students for the multiple dimensions of teaching, various learning activities have been designed and are offered in the courses of the PETETP, such as seminars and talks by university staff and external experts, peer teaching sessions, video classroom observation and analysis, practice teaching, practical projects involving the design and evaluation of lessons, activities and materials, and the development of the professional portfolio.

7.3 Staff

The PETETP has been designed by the following members of staff at the Department of Language and Linguistics. All four, with expertise in the field of foreign language pedagogy and teacher education, are also responsible for the implementation of the programme and its internal assessment:

- Professor Bessie Dendrinos

- Professor Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra
- Professor Anastasia Papaconstantinou
- Dr Kia Karavas and
- Dr Mary Drosou (instructor of the TEFL practicum and Teaching Practice course)

Experienced primary and secondary school teachers seconded to the University, subject-specialist tutors, and external experts in the field also assist in the coordination and delivery of the programme.

7.4 Structure of the programme

The PETETP is offered to third- and fourth-year students of our Faculty. It is built around two compulsory, mainstream courses (Applied Linguistics to English Language Teaching and Learning, and ELT Methods and Practices) and a series of elective courses (see Appendix 3):

1. The Pedagogic Discourse of ELT
2. European Perspectives in Foreign Language Teaching Learning and Assessment
3. Language and Culture: Implications for Foreign Language Teaching/Learning
4. Error Analysis
5. Foreign Language Classroom Discourse
6. Writing Theories and Practices
7. TEFL Practicum
8. Practice Teaching in TEFL

8. PETETP innovations

8.1 The professional portfolio

The development of the professional portfolio for student teachers was introduced in 2004. The portfolio provides a record of student teachers' growth and development by documenting the knowledge, skills and expertise they have developed during their studies at the Faculty. It aims at raising student teachers' level of professionalism and at facilitating the evaluation of the effectiveness of the student teacher for employment decisions or postgraduate study. Students develop their portfolio throughout the fourth year of their studies and are assisted in their task by a university tutor. Informal feedback from our graduates shows that the portfolio has helped them immensely in applying for postgraduate studies in the field and for applying for teaching posts in the private sectors.

8.2 Developing skills in ICT

In order to raise our students' awareness of ICT and its applications in the language classroom, extra seminars and workshops on the integration of new communication technologies in language teaching are offered systematically to our students throughout the third and fourth year of their studies.

8.3 Developments of the Practice Teaching course

At the Faculty of English, we have always recognised that university-based coursework and fieldwork offer different but complementary opportunities for the growth of both teaching knowledge and skill. As a result, practice teaching has always figured prominently in the teacher education curriculum, and

has always been regarded as an essential, indispensable component in the preparation of our students for their future role as English language teaching professionals. In an effort to make the practice teaching experience more substantial, meaningful and effective, two basic changes were implemented. Firstly, the practice teaching experience has become much more structured. Throughout the first few weeks of the practice teaching placement, student teachers acting in the role of informed observer complete structured observations forms designed by members of the faculty, focusing on various aspects of teaching. The second major change that was implemented within the framework of our Practice Teaching course is the systematic training of our cooperating teachers as mentors. This handbook represents a means towards the achievement of that aim.

9. The Practice Teaching in TEFL Course

9.1 Aims of the course

A component of the Faculty's PETETP, the Practice Teaching course builds on the knowledge and skills that students developed by having successfully completed, in previous semesters, two relevant core courses (Applied Linguistics to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning and ELT Methods and Practices).

Its purpose is threefold. Firstly, it aims at providing trainees with the opportunity to take the position of an informed observer in an EFL classroom in a Greek school and to systematically follow and reflect on the processes of teaching and learning therein. Secondly, it aims at familiarizing them with

classroom conditions and the discursive practices of participants in the teaching/learning process from the position of a teaching assistant. Thirdly, it aims at providing them with an opportunity to carry out supervised teaching for a short period of time. The trainees are evaluated by the EFL class teacher they assist, but also by the course instructor, who assesses trainees' experience recorded by them in written form and evaluated in seminars. The final exam on required reading counts towards the overall course grade. (Required reading includes books, articles and handouts from the course instructor.)

9.2 Structure of the course

The organization of the Practice Teaching course and allocation of student teachers to various schools begins well before the start of the course (March). In December of every year, students who have signed up for the course are given a form to complete which asks for personal details and their preferences for types and location of schools (primary/lower, secondary/higher, secondary/ technical school, private or public) where they would prefer to carry out their practice teaching. The allocation of student teachers to schools (on the basis of their preference form) is carried out throughout January, and by February of every year, students are informed of their allocated schools. In cases where student teachers live outside Athens and have difficulty in commuting to schools, special arrangements are made with schools close to their area of residence so that student teachers can complete their practice teaching.

The Practice Teaching course lasts from March to the end of May and during this period of time, student teachers attend classes at their allocated school on a systematic basis,

that is, at least twice a week, so as to observe at least two English language classes per week. The student teacher consults with the mentor teacher, and together they decide which days and hours the former will be observing classes.

During the first few weeks of the course, student teachers are requested to complete structured observation forms developed by University staff focusing on various aspects of teaching. Ten observation forms have been developed; all students must complete forms 1 and 10, and they can choose any three from forms 2-9. All observation forms are assessed.

The focus and purpose of each observation form is presented below:

Observation form 1a

This form is completed on the basis of the total number of classes that the student attended and elicits information on:

- uniformity of the level of knowledge of English of the pupils/learners
- use of supplementary material
- use of new technologies
- class-management techniques
- L1 use in the EFL class
- motivation of pupils to learn English

Observation form 1b

This form is completed on the basis of one class that the student systematically observed and elicits information concerning:

- class level
- gender differences in the behaviour of the learners and in the teachers towards the learners

- sexist behaviour or language use on the part of the learners or the teacher
- main textbook used and its paraphernalia
- approach on which the main textbook is based
- adaptation of the main textbook to the Greek EFL learners' needs
- concern for the development of the learners' linguistic and/or communicative competence and cultural and/or intercultural awareness
- main concern for learning and/or teaching
- provision of opportunities for autonomous or self-access learning
- use of project work

Observation form 2: *Maintaining control and discipline*
Aim:
- to become aware of how teachers respond to instances of students' misbehaviour

Observation form 3: *Openings and closings*
Aims:
- to become aware of the variety of ways in which teachers can open and close their lessons.
- to develop the trainee's skill in identifying openings and closings of the lessons

Observation form 4: *The use of teaching aids*
Aims:
- to develop awareness of the role of different types of materials and resources in the classroom
- to understand the uses and purposes of various teaching aids

Observation form 5: *The stages of the lesson*
Aims:

- to develop awareness of how lessons are structured and sequenced

Observation form 6: *Organising pair/group work*
Aims:

- to increase awareness of how the teachers set up, carry out and conclude pair/group work activities
- to raise awareness of teacher and learner roles in these activities

Observation form 7: *Grammar presentation*
Aims:

- to become more aware of the techniques teachers use to present grammar
- to investigate if grammar is presented in a meaningful context

Observation form 8: *Vocabulary*
Aims:

- to become aware of the different ways in which vocabulary can be presented to learners and then practised

Observation form 9: *The use of the L1*
Aim:

- to become aware of the different ways in which teachers and students use the L1 in the classroom

Observation form 10:

- In this observation form, student teachers are requested to provide a detailed description of the two teaching sessions in which they taught one or two particular classes.

By the end of the Practice Teaching course, student teachers are requested to have taught two classes on their own under the guidance of their mentor teacher. Their performance is assessed by the mentor teacher on the basis of a specially designed Teacher Assessment Form.

9.3 Student teacher assessment

Multiple forms of assessment are used throughout the course. Student teachers are evaluated via the final exam and various coursework projects and activities. More specifically, course assessment consists of:

1. the pre-course questionnaire, which counts for 2% of the final grade
2. Observation form 1, which counts for 14% of the final grade
3. up to three of Observation forms 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, which count for 21% (7% each) of the final grade
4. Observation form 10, which counts for 20% of the final grade
5. course evaluation, which counts for 2% of the final grade
6. extra credit project, which counts for 15% of the final grade
7. the final written exam, which counts for 40% of the final grade.

The pre-course questionnaire (1), Observation form 1 (2), Observation form 10 (4), Course evaluation (5) and the final exam (7) are compulsory. Each student can hand in up to three observation forms (from Observation forms 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

and 9). However, students observing the same class are not allowed to hand in the same three observation forms.

9.4 The student teachers' responsibilities during practice teaching

Throughout the student teacher's placement period, he/she will be expected to:

a) carry out structured observation tasks (forms 1-10 described above) provided by the University as part of his/her assessment in the Practice Teaching course.

The scheduling of the observations will be negotiated by the mentor and the student teacher. It would be useful for the mentor teacher to speak to the student teacher before the lesson about any aspect of the area under observation that may be useful for him/her to know about.

After the observation, the mentor teacher should carry out a post-observation discussion with the student teacher about what has been observed − he/she may have specific questions that need to be answered, or may have more general issues he/she wishes to discuss.

The mentor teacher can also arrange for the trainee to observe a colleague's class if this proves possible.

b) participate in collaborative teaching. By this we mean any lesson that has been jointly planned and taught by the trainee and the mentor. The degree of collaboration may vary – the mentor may plan the lesson outline and suggest a specific part they wish the student trainee to take responsibility for, or the mentor may give responsibility to the student teacher to carry out the whole lesson on her/his own. Whatever the degree of collaboration, the lesson should be one where the

student teacher has a clearly defined responsibility (even if it's only a minor task).

Below are suggestions for some of the tasks the student teacher may be assigned:

- giving task instructions
- organizing/chairing a group discussion
- checking on learners' answers to an activity
- monitoring learners during pair/group work
- using audio/visual material
- providing extension activities
- correcting homework

c) <u>take over a class for two sessions:</u> It would be valuable for the development of the student teachers' competence and confidence in teaching if he/she were given the opportunity to teach the class for at least two full sessions.

After the lesson, the mentor teacher should provide feedback to the student teacher on his/her performance, pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of the performance and suggesting ways of improvement.

9.5 Mentoring responsibilities

During the teaching practicum, the mentor can be expected to have responsibility for:

a) <u>the induction of the student teacher, i.e.</u>

- providing the student teacher with information about the school, the local community and its learners
- introducing the student teacher to staff members
- guiding the student teacher around the school
- drawing the attention of the student teacher to school rules

- negotiating a realistic plan of action with the student teacher

b) <u>the professional development of the student teacher, i.e.</u>

- organizing student teacher observation of effective practice (student teachers will carry out observation tasks devised by the University)
- discussing with the student teacher and reflecting on observed practice
- observing the student teacher in pre-defined tasks assigned to him/her (collaborative teaching)
- writing a short report/keeping notes of the student teacher's performance in pre-defined tasks
- providing regular feedback to the student teacher, focusing on what he/she did well and what not, and providing suggestions for improvement
- aiding the student teacher in developing self-evaluation techniques
- informing the University if serious problems arise with the practice teaching (absences, problems of communication with student teacher, etc.)
- completing the Teacher Assessment Form (provided by the University) and carrying out a post-practice tutorial discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the student teacher's overall performance during the practice teaching.

10. Programme evaluation and the Practice Teaching course

The impact and usefulness of our PETETP was investigated by a postgraduate student for his dissertation (Giotis 2008). Through the use of questionnaires distributed to a sample of graduates from the Faculty, graduates in their first years of teaching clearly indicated that the training received through their university courses assisted them to a great extent in all the main dimensions of teaching. Most graduates (48%) reported that they now taught based on the training they were provided with at university rather than following the practices they had experienced when they were learners or following the coursebook methodology.

Based on our own systematic evaluation of the Practice Teaching course and the METP so far, we have had very positive feedback regarding the need and usefulness of well-crafted and well-designed field experiences for our student teachers. The vast majority of our student teachers have stressed how important and useful they have found the PETETP, and stress the need for the Practice Teaching course to last longer and to become compulsory. Our student teachers also stress how fruitful, helpful and insightful they have found the relationship and interaction with their mentor teachers. More specifically, the students appreciated both the opportunity they were given to be part of the teaching process under real circumstances, and the guidance they received from experienced teachers. Moreover, they believed that the assignments given helped them actually realize what they did in

class, and the fact that an experienced teacher was observing them helped them realize their weak and strong points.

For the vast majority of our student teachers, practice teaching was definitely a positive experience, as they had the chance to actually teach in a real class and deal with groups of students with different learning needs and different learning styles. Also, all students appreciated the fact that they had the opportunity to observe an experienced teacher while teaching, and in particular while dealing with student discipline problems.

Mentors themselves also found the experience rewarding and reported gains on a professional and personal level. The evaluation of the mentoring programme revealed that for the majority of mentors the experience was very beneficial, as they felt more responsible and were made to reflect on their own teaching methods, explore new ways of teaching, and even improve their methods. Moreover, on a personal level, mentors realized that the student teacher brought a breath of fresh air into their classroom, which motivated and inspired them, while at the same time boosted their confidence and self-esteem.

11. The future of mentoring at the Faculty

Our mentor teachers, despite drawbacks such as the lack of financial compensation for their extra work and responsibility, the lack of official recognition of their role, the skepticism displayed by other colleagues in their schools, and even the obstacles created by some school principals to the mentoring process, continue to volunteer for the programme, with no reduction in their workload, even accepting two student teachers into their classrooms when necessary. Under these

adverse and demotivating circumstances, the willingness of EFL teachers to continue cooperating with the Faculty and the enthusiasm with which many take on their role, clearly show that they are driven by an intrinsic motivation, as well as by a sense of collegiality and a sense of personal satisfaction, that they can and should contribute to the development of tomorrow's workforce. Their participation in the various training events organized by the Faculty of English Studies is testament to their felt need for specialized training in order to enact their role as mentor more effectively and responsibly. All this points to the fact that mentoring schemes can and should work in Greek educational reality.

Mentoring as discussed in section 5.5, is a well-established practice in most countries and educational systems of the world. Mentors form a specially trained body of highly respected professionals who are regarded as teacher educators in their own right, who are compensated for their work either financially or by a reduction of their teaching and administrative workload, and whose role is officially recognized. This is what we would like in some way to achieve for our mentor teachers as well.

Through actions such as the mentor training seminars, the mentor conference, the development of a website dedicated to the Practice Teaching in TEFL course and the METP, through the continuous formative and summative evaluation of the practice teaching experience and presentation of the results at national and international conferences, through publications concerning the mentor's work and the process of mentoring, we aim to inform the public of the mentor's role and to motivate official bodies such as the Greek Ministry of Education and the

Pedagogic Institute to take action for the official recognition of their role and the rewarding of their work. Indeed, through the European Language Label award our work with mentors is becoming known. We hope that other teaching departments will soon become interested in further developing their practice teaching courses and in setting up mentoring programmes. The positive evaluations of the PETETP and the METP provide us with further motivation to continue our efforts in improving these programmes. Our future plans include the establishment of a Pre-service Teacher Education Centre at the Faculty, the development of a website dedicated to the Practice Teaching in TEFL course and METP, and finally the systematic evaluation and research of the impact of our PETETP in preparing our student teachers not only as future language teachers, but as European language teachers of the future as well.

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APPENDIX 1

Coordinators and participants in the Practice Teaching and Mentor Training Programmes

Coordinators
Mary Sifianou (Professor, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Scientific Coordinator of the Practice Teaching programme)
Kia Karavas (Lecturer, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Deputy Scientific Coordinator of the Practice Teaching programme and Scientific Coordinator of the Mentor Training programme)
Mary Drossou (Adjunct Lecturer ΠΔ 407/80, Coordinator of the Practice Teaching programme and of the Mentor Training Programme)

Working Groups
Sofia Papaefthymiou-Lytra (Professor, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Coordinator of the Pre-service Teacher Education Programme)
Bessie Dendrinos (Professor, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Coordinator of the Pre-service Teacher Education Programme)
Anastasia Papakonstantinou (Professor, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Coordinator of the Pre-service Teacher Education Programme)

Scientific Associate
Katerina Zouganelli (Tutor, Hellenic Open University, Scientific Advisor, Pedagogic Institute, Scientific Associate of the Mentor Education Programme)

APPENDIX 2

MENTORING CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Title of conference:
Mentoring Student Teachers of English: Issues and Possibilities
Date of conference:
23-24 February 2007

The first day of the conference included:

- Welcoming addresses by professors B. Dendrinos and M. Sifianou, and an opening address by Ms T. Droulia, representing the Ministry of Education
- Introduction to the nature and goals of the conference by Dr E. Karavas
- An overview of the pre-service teacher education programme of the Faculty by Prof. S. Papaefthymiou-Lytra
- "Claiming ownership of English and its pedagogy," presented by Prof. A. Holliday (Canterbury Christ Church University)
- "Mentoring trainee teachers: A European perspective," presented by Dr S. Lawes (School of Culture, Language and Communication, Institute of Education, University of London)
- Experiencing mentoring: The school's perspective, presented by Mr G. Drivas (Director of Studies, Department of Foreign Languages, Doukas School)
- Experiencing mentoring: The mentor's perspective, presented by Mr G. Giotis (English Language Teacher)
- Experiencing mentoring: The trainee's perspective, presented by Ms R. Nanou (Student Teacher)

The second day of the conference included:

- Evaluation of the teaching practicepractice teaching course by Dr E. Karavas and Dr M. Drossou (Coordinator of the Practice Teaching in TEFL Course)
- "On being a mentor: Roles and responsibilities," presented by Dr E. Karavas
- "Observing trainees and providing constructive feedback: Workshop/Swap Shop," presented by Dr M. Drossou and Ms A. Zouganeli (Academic Associate in the Mentor Education/Training Programme)

European Language Label 2006

awarded to the

Practice Teaching in TEFL –
Mentor Education/Training Programme
of the Faculty of English Studies
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

APPENDIX 3

THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION and TRAINING PROGRAMME

Core courses

1. APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Term: Winter (planned to be offered to Faculty students in their third year of studies)

This is a core course which all students of the Faculty are required to take during their third year of study. Its overall purpose is to provide course participants with awareness, knowledge and skills related to the teaching and learning of languages, particularly relating to English as a foreign language in Greece as a member state of the European Union. Therefore, European language education policies and recommendations are taken into serious account.
Specifically, the basic aims of the course are:

- to demonstrate the relationships between theory and practice so that course participants may understand the underlying rationale of mainstream and alternative foreign language pedagogy.
- to introduce course participants to theories of language and theories of language learning which have influenced the development of current thought regarding foreign language teaching and learning practices and approaches to curriculum/syllabus design, to materials development, and to the development of tools for the assessment of linguistic and communicative competence.
- to familiarize students with curriculum/syllabus documents for the teaching of English in Greek schools, with the

national curricula for languages in other member states, and with European language curricula guidelines.

- to enable students to evaluate teaching/learning approaches and methodology in relation to the pedagogic, political and social goals that these fulfill.
- to enable students to assess pedagogic aims and suggested classroom practices in connection with educational and language policy aims.
- to build a framework for conceptualising approaches to language teaching and learning that serve the needs of their prospective students operating in particular sociocultural contexts.
- to introduce students to the principles of communicative theory underlying the evaluation and analysis of classroom interaction.

The work in class moves from theory to practice and from practice to theory. Students are encouraged to do reading and guided project work. Students enrolled in the course can find useful course material for support and self-access learning through our e-class, accessed with a special password.

2. ELT METHODS AND PRACTICES

Term: Spring (planned to be offered to Faculty students in their third year of studies)

This is a core course which all students of the Faculty are required to take during their third year of study. The overall aim of this course is to provide students with a critical awareness of ELT practices and to develop their theoretical and practical knowledge related to the teaching and learning of languages, particularly English as a foreign

language. It is a core course, like the Applied Linguistics to ELT course, which is its prerequisite. An equally important general aim of the course is to prepare students as future teachers of English. To this end, the course has the following goals:

- to provide a basic understanding of recent developments in ELT approaches, methods and techniques and their underlying principles, particularly in view of the position of English today as a "world" language.
- to raise awareness of how developments and research in theoretical linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, educational linguistics and discourse analysis have informed language teaching/learning approaches, classroom practices, assessment and materials design.
- to become familiar with critical trends in the mainstream ELT field and begin thinking of alternative ways of teaching languages in a European setting which aspires to promote plurilingual citizenry.
- to introduce students to ways in which language teaching/learning/assessment approaches and methods can be employed in ELT programmes (i.e., in the classroom, in self-directed learning, in EFL teaching materials).
- to build an understanding of the perception and production skills that are involved when dealing with oral and written texts so as to realize the implications for the development of these skills in an ELT programme.
- to become familiar with the underlying principles of techniques for the teaching/testing of the lexicogrammatical elements of language.
- to demonstrate to students how to apply these techniques in various teaching/learning situations.

- to provide opportunities to students for controlled practice teaching.
- to promote a positive and open attitude to teaching and assessment, and to sensitise students to factors affecting the teaching and learning environment.

Students are encouraged to do reading and practical work on their own, guided project work, and to undertake peer-teaching sessions. Students enrolled in the course can find useful course material for support and self-access learning through our e-class, accessed with a special password.

Elective courses

Depending on staff availability, a number of additional, elective courses related to various areas of EFL teaching and learning. are offered to prospective teachers of English in the third and fourth year of their studies

Elective courses that have been developed and offered in the last five years are:

- The Pedagogic Discourse of ELT
- European Perspectives in Foreign Language Teaching Learning and Assessment
- Language and Culture: Implications for Foreign Language Teaching/Learning
- Error Analysis
- Foreign Language Classroom Discourse
- Writing Theories and Practices
- TEFL Practicum
- Practice Teaching in TEFL

Course descriptions follow:

1. THE PEDAGOGIC DISCOURSE OF ELT

This elective course has been designed and taught by Professor Bessie Dendrinos. Open to senior students of the Department of Language and Linguistics in the form of a seminar, the course had as prerequisites the compulsory courses in (1) Applied Linguistics and (2) Methods and Practices of ELT. Its overall aim is to address a number of questions with a view to denaturalising commonsense knowledge as this is being constructed in the field of ELT.

In exploring the complex concept of 'pedagogic discourse' as this is connected with foreign language education in Europe and especially with ELT as an academic subject and professional field, the course attempts to raise and answer questions such as the following: *What is the nature of discourse as disciplinary knowledge? Which are the discourses of language-related disciplines and of the foreign language education enterprise? Which is the discourse of English, and what is the nature of the discursive practices of the English language teaching (ELT) field? How does one build on the notion of pedagogic discourse? Which is the mainstream pedagogic discourse of ELT, and how is it shaped by the (cultural) politics of English? How does the pedagogical discourse of ELT figure in the politics of the European promotion of plurilingualism? Which are the foreign languages legitimated as official school knowledge, and which are those delegitimated by their exclusion from school curricula? What are the ideological underpinnings in ELT curricula and syllabuses, and which are the pedagogic practices promoted therein? How can we trace the ideological meanings in classroom practices, textbooks, other teaching materials and assessment procedures? What type of*

pedagogic relations do ELT practices foster, and what type of pedagogic identities do they construct? What type of foreign language literacy are pedagogic practices of traditional forms of foreign language teaching promoting?

On the basis of the questions raised, a number of theoretical issues are posed. However, discussion in class is consistently of practical value. Ultimately, a basic goal of the seminar is to motivate alternative ways of thinking about foreign language literacy in Europe, which needs to create a cohesive sociality by respecting the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of its member states. There is no single textbook to cover all the issues to be dealt with in this course, and so students are asked to read a series of relevant papers and articles. Reading assignments involve students in a variety of tasks which, when successfully completed, are assessed for extra credit. There are also some out-of-class assignments requiring extra reading.

2. EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

This elective course has been designed and taught by Professor Bessie Dendrinos. Open to students in their third year of studies in the form of a seminar, the course has no prerequisites. Complementing the relevant core courses, it attempts to explore commonsense ideas about 'foreign' language teaching and learning. In doing so, it turns to issues related to the language politics and to the language education policies in Europe.

The syllabus is related to a series of questions that the course raises, such as the following: *Why do views about teaching, learning and assessment change over time and vary from one society to another? In what ways are the aims and language education*

policies and planning related to sociopolitical goals? How are foreign language education programmes and assessment systems affected by the demand to sustain a multilingual Europe and develop plurilingual citizenry? What is the relationship between the pedagogic and the social identity of the foreign language learner? Is there a link between foreign language learning and the development of intercultural awareness? Which are the European recommendations for language teaching, learning and assessment today?

These are a few of the important questions that this course attempts to answer, through discussions in class and extra-credit project work. It demands that students come to class sessions prepared to participate in discussion and think through issues posed. It also requires that they read from additional sources which are made available electronically.

3. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

This course examines the relationship between language and culture, the facts and the processes that have conditioned this relationship and the conflict outcomes if language and culture felicity conditions are violated. Moreover, it looks at issues in cross-cultural communication, linguistic and cultural switching and understanding. Finally, it examines the cross-cultural dimension of foreign language learning.

4. ERROR ANALYSIS

This is a practical course designed and offered by Professor Spyros Hoidas. It aims at the identification and evaluation of Greek EFL

speakers' errors and the effects of different types of errors on the communication situation. Specifically, the course deals with the identification and description of errors. It also attempts to explain certain interesting categories of grammatical and stylistic errors made by Greek learners of English in controlled and spontaneous written work, by reference to differences between the two languages. Finally, the course looks at ways of "remedying" errors. The usefulness of error analysis and the prediction of interlingual and intralingual learning difficulties is considered for teaching practices, syllabus design and material production.

5. FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This course has been designed and offered by Professor S. Papaefthymiou-Lytra. It deals with the ELT classroom discourse and the major factors (such as linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural etc.) that may influence it positively or negatively. Specifically, it focuses on (a) teacher talk and its function in the classroom in relation to the approach, material etc. adopted for learning/teaching purposes, (b) learner talk and its function concerning language learning and language use in the aforementioned context.

6. WRITING THEORIES AND PRACTICES

This course, designed and offered by Dr Bessie Mitsikopoulou and also by Dr Elly Ifantidou, adopts an interdisciplinary orientation to writing theories. The first part of the course explores writing research issues and includes topics such as literacy and writing, writing research in English L1 and L2 contexts, writing technologies and how these have affected the notion of 'text', multimodal texts and new technologies. The second part of the course examines

different orientations to writing instruction, such as product, process and genre-based approaches. Drawing insights from writing theories and research, the third part of the course has a practical orientation and deals with instructional approaches and techniques.

7. TEFL PRACTICUM

This course, designed by Dr Kia Karavas with the collaboration of the course tutor, has been offered by visiting Lecturer, Dr Mary Drossou, for the last five years. It builds on the knowledge and skills that students developed by having successfully completed in previous semesters two relevant core courses which are prerequisites: Applied Linguistics to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning and ELT Methods and Practices. Conducted in the form of seminars and workshops that are organized in thematic areas so that trainees can choose among aspects of TEFL that interest them the most, the purpose of the course is to provide them with opportunities to develop practical knowledge with regard to the teaching of English in different learning situations. Seminar and workshop instructors carefully guide them to put into practice current educational and language teaching/learning approaches, methods and techniques in planning courses and lessons for children, adolescents or adults who are learning English for different purposes; in designing, adapting and evaluating materials; in testing and assessing learners' ability to use English; and in facilitating the learning process through the use of audiovisual aids and computers. By the end of the course, participants are expected to have developed differential skills, evaluated through a portfolio approach.