
Language Teachers as Autonomous Learners

How university language teachers approach
and pursue their own professional development

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To my parents, and to Leonard and Stephan

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Everything depends on you. You, the language learner, are the most important factor in the language learning process. Success, or failure will, in the end, be determined by what you yourself contribute.
(Rubin 1994: 3)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Frame of reference

The rapid changes in our globalised millennium have placed considerable pressure on educational systems for adjusting to the rapid developments in all sectors of life. Enhancing the quality of language learning, promoting innovation and improving the quality of teacher education have become acute priorities and goals in the political agenda of the member states of the European Union, the European Council and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as manifest in statements such as:

It [*The European Parliament*] emphasised that Member States must attach greater importance and allocate more resources to teacher training if significant progress is to be made in achieving the Lisbon strategy's Education and Training 2010 objectives, namely to boost the quality of education and reinforce lifelong learning across the Union (OECD 2010: 14).

Teacher professional development is not only the result of lifelong and ongoing learning processes but also the sum of individual, cognitive, affective, cultural and social processes. Teacher professional development, interpreted in this study as a dynamic process, is concerned with learning and growth and requires progressive change, together with a positive learning attitude. From this perspective, learning cannot be just a passive reception of knowledge, rather it is viewed as an active construction of knowledge (Lantolf & Appel 1994; Williams 1999; Vygotsky 1978).

Most of the studies on teacher development are concerned with the questions of whether teachers learn from development programmes and what the arrangements or the features are that have a positive impact on teachers' development. The duration of the programmes, activation of the teachers, and opportunities for collaborative learning, for example, are some of the most important features that have been highlighted as fundamental in supporting teachers in their development (Borko & Putnam 1995; Garet et al. 2001; Wilson & Berne 1999; Cochran-Smith & Demers 2010 to quote a few). This study does not question these insights, nonetheless, it assumes another perspective: starting from a teacher development programme, it looks instead at language teachers as autonomous learning professionals and examines one aspect that has not received sufficient attention in the research on teacher development, namely, the role of teachers' personal contributions to their own professional learning.

This presupposes a strong focus on the deliberate action of the learner (here the teacher) and an emphasis on the meta-cognitive dimension of teachers' professional development (without

neglecting that of the whole person).

This perspective intersects to a great extent with the concept of autonomous learning. Not only is there a great deal of autonomy implicit in any learning (Dam 2000), but also the status of the teachers investigated in this study relies strongly on it. This study focuses on one specific target group (university language teachers, mostly working as freelancers), which has been largely neglected in previous research on teacher development¹. As these teachers are relatively free, i.e. not compelled to attend any teacher in-service programme, the task of continuous development as a freelance language teacher in the universities of many European countries can be characterised as one that teachers must manage for themselves. From this point of view teachers must act as autonomous learners, and professional development involves to a great extent self-instruction and is a self-determined enterprise².

The complexity of teacher development requires looking at the research issue from a framework of multiple perspectives, and as a consequence, the theoretical framework of this study draws on insights from different research fields. The specific dimension of meta-cognitive awareness, assumed to be a crucial aspect and an indicator of successful language learning (Wenden 2001; Brown 1987), is assumed here to play a determining role in the professional learning of the teachers as well. However, this has been scarcely researched. The concept of professional competence and professional growth appear bound to individual critical abilities and to an increasing awareness of the “professional self” (Bauer 2000). Nonetheless, what these aspects demand from teachers has remained vague. The role of strategy use has been highlighted in studies on both successful learning and autonomous learning (O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Little 1997; Müller-Verweyen 1997). By contrast, the strategies teachers adopt to progress in their development have received little attention. The *leitmotif* connecting these various perspectives is the responsibility for one’s own growth – a concept very well known under the term ‘autonomy’ (cf. Chapter 2.7).

By focusing on the personal contribution of the teachers, the study adds a new perspective to teacher professional development, which suggests the adoption of an exploratory and qualitative approach to the phenomenon. In the attempt to investigate how this specific group

¹ To my knowledge studies on this teachers’ group, except for a few contributions (Johnston 1997, Vielau 2009 and Beaven et al. 2010), are very rare.

² This seems to hold outside of the university context for many language institutes and schools as well. In my experience, until recently, the majority of language schools were not engaged in supporting language teachers’ development. It is a recent positive phenomenon that language institutions (mostly at the national level, such as the Spanish, and recently the Italian Institutes) have realised the need to professionalise their language teachers and actively support them with teacher training activities. An exception at the local level in the German context is the Volkshochschule VHS Institution, which has a relatively long tradition of supporting language teachers through language specific teacher training.

of language teachers approaches the task of professional development and what are the difficulties they encountered, this research project seeks to identify how many forms professional development can take and what kind of competences the development task requires. The assumption behind this study is that the competence teachers need to develop as autonomous professionals, is not evident enough to them. Just as autonomy in language learning cannot be taken for granted, neither can ‘teacher agency’ in teacher professional development. Herewith, I endorse Kohonen’s (2000) insistence on the need for “making the learning process more visible to the learners”. This concerns what can be later applied to support language teachers in their continuing development task.

The present study has a number of aims: on the one hand to extend the existing debate on language teachers’ professionalism and to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamic way by which teachers make sense of their professional development. Further, it aims at investigating what are the critical features of the teachers’ personal contribution to the construction of their own professional competence. Lastly, as it assumes the intrinsic value of research insights for the practice of teaching, it is hoped that a contribution will be made to bridging the gap between research and practice, which notoriously divides the fields of Second Language Acquisition/Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching Methodology, by indicating how to augment existing reflective tools, such as teachers’ portfolios, designed to sustain reflection in language teachers and thus advance their professional development.

The guiding questions³ of this study are the following:

1. How do language teachers in a specific university context approach their own professional development?
2. What are their goals in their professional development?
3. What do they do in order to reach their goals?
4. What roles do their goals play in the development process?
5. What teacher profiles can be observed based on their goals and the factors that influence their goals?

1.2 Definition of terms

With respect to terminology, the field of teacher education has developed an increasingly specialised vocabulary. There are many terms used to refer to the learning process of the teachers, and it is important to make my own assumptions explicit. The major and basic

³ See details in Chapter 3.3.

definition governing this study involves the concepts of learning and development. As human beings are constantly learning, intentionally or by chance, with or without systematic processes, the distinction between the two terms is often not clear-cut, with the consequence that they are often used interchangeably. Phrases like ‘teacher learning’ or ‘teacher development’ recur as synonyms. However, to restrict the intricacy of the concepts, I adhere to Vygotsky’s distinction (1978), whose definition that learning “creates the zone of proximal development [ZPD]” (Vygotsky 1978: 90) means that learning is the prerequisite for development, if, through interaction with others the learning processes are internalised. Thus, learning represents the potential for development, or, as Vygotsky puts it “a necessary aspect of the process of developing” (*ibid.* 90), and constitutes the basis for successive development, (“learning converts into development”, *ibid.* 91). Vygotsky also argues that development may depend on the significance of the subject for the learner, thus stressing the impact of individual factors on the development process. When applied to the development process of teachers, a Vygotskian perspective would suggest that development is not an automatic process, and that it depends on their internalising and acting on the concepts, methods, and experiences from which the teachers have learned about themselves and their teaching.

When we extend Vygotsky’s definition, the relation between learning and development reflects the etymology of the term: “de-velop-ment” means “unfolding”, “bringing out the latent possibilities”⁴. By following this interpretation, in order to develop a working definition for the present study, I then propose to represent the process as an advancing line⁵ that symbolises the progression and dynamic character of the concepts.

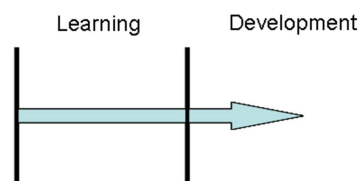


Figure 1.1 - Learning and development.

The two terms ‘learning’ and ‘development’ could be used interchangeably to refer to the first part of the process. Also the term ‘professional learning’ is used in this sense, to emphasise the necessity of continuing education for one’s profession and the developing dimension of teachers as ‘learning professionals’. However, I employ the term ‘development’ when

⁴ Quoting from Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php>).

⁵ Disregarding, for a moment, phenomena such as back-sliding to previous stages (Lantolf & Appel 1994: 15-6; Selinker 1972), fossilisation (Selinker 1972) or ‘U-shaped behaviour’ (Ellis 2008: 104-5) and that learning is “not entirely linear” (*ibid.* 104).

learning becomes part of the personal framework of the teachers in such a way that the teachers (as learners) become independent and, in Vygotskian terminology, progress to the zone of *actual* development [ZAD] (*ibid.* 85), that defines what the learners can accomplish without any assistance.

Another distinction must be made with respect to the terms ‘teacher training’ and ‘teacher development’, also commonly used interchangeably to refer to the activities designed to support teachers in their professionalisation. Freeman (1989: 41) defines them as strategies “that share the same purpose: achieving change in what the teacher does and why”. Among the differences between training and development, Freeman (*ibid.* 42) points to the criteria for assessing change in the teachers: they are external in teacher training but rather internal to the teachers in teacher development and less accessible from outside.

The difference may also here be very subtle and may lie in the kind of goals that these activities set. The goals may be pre-determined by others in the case of teacher training, whereas they can be determined by the participants themselves in the case of teacher development (Klippel 2010, personal communication). Williams (1999: 11) claims that the goals represent the difference between the two, in that training is concerned with short term needs, and development with the “more long-term aims such as enhancing the ability to learn and develop throughout one’s career”.

A final remark is devoted to teacher ‘development activities’: the term itself includes an underlying assumption. It is in fact believed that the activities designed to support the teachers, (such as workshops or other kinds of programmes) do indeed lead to development, although – as argued above – development can not be automatically taken for granted.

1.3 Overview of the book

Chapter 2 is devoted to the theoretical background of the study. It begins by illustrating the relevance of professional development as a research issue and then focuses on teachers’ competences, considering how they have been gradually becoming more comprehensive and aligned with the general discourse in professional competences. The chapter then summarises relevant issues in the field of teacher development and addresses main factors discussed in the literature for their impact on teachers’ development. Building on the insights gained from the literature review, the author then articulates some aspects that have not yet received sufficient attention, framing in so doing the perspective advocated for this study and presenting the overarching research questions.

Chapter 3 describes the design of the research project. It documents the methods used to

conduct the study and the rationale for using them. It includes a description of the participants and of the type of data on which this empirical investigation is based and details of the research questions.

In Chapter 4 the results of the data analysis are discussed. The chapter documents how the data have been explored in order to identify which forms the personal contribution of the teachers take when approaching the task of their own development and how these features may impact on the learning process. Lastly, an evaluation of the procedure used completes the discussion of the results.

Chapter 5 wraps up the findings, summing up major issues that emerged from the analysis. These are considered as a springboard for further examination of the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

2 Theoretical background

This study focuses on the professional development of language teachers and looks in particular at teachers in the learning mode. Specifically, because it attempts to understand teachers' professional competence and how the professional development of language teachers unfolds, the concepts of 'competence' and 'professional development' constitute the theoretical basis.

The first part of the chapter describes the relevance of the topic, explaining the reasons why professional development is an attractive research issue. In the second section the focus will concentrate on relevant issues in the debate on professional competence in order to highlight the specific significance of the term. The attention is then drawn to teachers' professional competence and to the way this concept has developed over time in teacher education, pointing out how the debate on teacher professional competence is now overtly aligned with contemporary conceptualisations of professional competence. The chapter then proceeds by reviewing the most relevant factors that are argued as playing an important role in teacher professional development. These factors consider the role played by practical teaching experience, teacher development initiatives, teachers' beliefs, reflection and theoretical knowledge. A special section is reserved for research that has explicitly addressed the teachers as learners. Most of the studies mentioned in the review were carried out from a different perspective to the one adopted in this study, which focuses on the learning-perspective of the teachers themselves. However, they still point towards significant aspects and can inform this study about important aspects of teachers' professional learning. Therefore, after reviewing these studies, I will look at their implications for the specific perspective of "teachers as learning professionals". A summary specifies relevant differences between the review and the present study.

Building on the insights gained from the survey, the last section of this chapter establishes the framework of the research study. It begins by indicating some gaps in research and the perspective that could be taken to look at teacher professional development. It emphasises the concepts of autonomy and meta-cognition as relevant to the perspective of professional development as autonomous enterprise. Then, it concludes with the research questions.

Structure of the chapter:

- 2.1 Research interest: Why study teachers' professional development?
- 2.2 Teachers' Professional Competence
- 2.3 Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)
- 2.4 Main factors affecting the teachers' development process
- 2.5 New focused perspectives on teachers as learners
- 2.6 Summing up
- 2.7 Teachers as learning professionals - Framing the research questions

2.1 Research interest: Why study teachers' professional development?

Nothing in the field of research about language teaching over the past few decades has been felt more necessary than reform and change in the way language teachers teach. The extensiveness of the literature about teachers' professional development indicates its increasing importance for both teachers and researchers. "Why bother with professional development?" is, for example, the title of a chapter in *Pursuing professional development* by Bailey et al. (2001: 6-10), who, in answering this question, point out many reasons for teachers to pursue it. Among them are: acquiring new skills/knowledge, coping with the changing world, overcoming teachers' sense of isolation, "expanding one's conceptual understanding of teaching and one's vocabulary for discussing that knowledge". One additional reason is that teachers – as do most professionals – gain self-confidence through their job and a sense of identity when recognised in like-minded circles (*ibid.* 10).

There are good reasons for researchers as well to focus on teacher professional development, the main reasons concern quality and innovation in language teaching. The interest of researchers in teacher development is based on the assumption that well informed teachers will perform better and will, in so doing, positively affect the outcomes of their learners. To illustrate this assumption graphically:

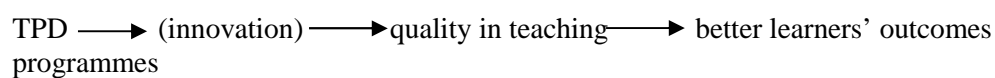
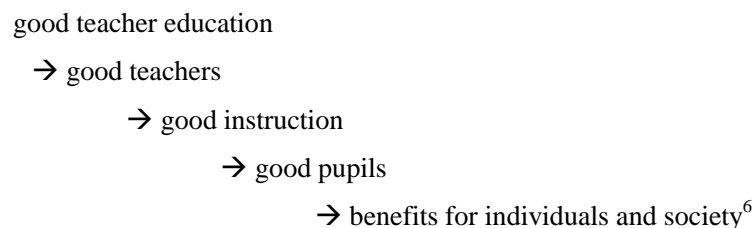


Figure 2.1 Assumptions behind interest of research on teacher professional development

A proportional relationship is usually assumed between teacher professional development and learners' learning: successful school development is believed to be dependent upon successful teacher development (Day 1999: 2; similarly Campbell 2009: 15). In summing up the lessons we can learn from research findings, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1999: 377) state that there is growing evidence that what teachers know substantially influences what students learn. They cite Ferguson's (1991) study in which teachers' expertise was coupled with

students' achievements in reading and mathematics. The study indicates great variations in teachers' expertise, and argues that the qualifications of the teachers had an impact on the differences in the students' achievement. Such results are corroborated by similar studies that found substantial positive effects for certified teachers in contrast to uncertified teachers (Lipowsky 2006: 51; Darling-Hammond 1999 quoted in OECD 2010: 22).

Kraler (2008: 170) points to a similar postulate as the basis of any assumption about the efficacy of teacher development initiatives, whose logic connects teacher development in a chain with individual and social benefits, as he illustrates in the following:



From the reasons described so far, it becomes evident that the role of teachers is an important one: they have a significant impact on endeavours to improve schools (Hawley & Valli 1999: 128), and are as such, the mediators between innovation efforts and learners:

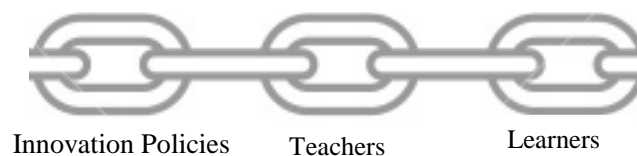


Figure 2.2 - Teachers as chain links

It is clearly teacher change that is the desired outcome of teachers' development programmes and initiatives. However, equating professional development and teacher innovation would be as dangerous as equating teachers' instruction and learners' learning. The brackets around the word 'innovation' in Figure 2.1 indicate that innovation, i.e. changes in teachers, may occur but may not, as there is no guarantee and no causal link between teaching and learning. Firstly, teacher change is complex and unpredictable (Day 1999: 15; Freeman 1989: 42). Secondly, some scholars, as for example Lipowsky (2010: 52), suggest caution when linking teaching, teacher training and learners' learning, arguing that no linear connections exist among them. However, keeping this qualification in mind, it may be helpful to point out some empirical studies which investigate the effects of training and relate them to learner outcome. The studies by Vehmeyer et al. (2007) and Kleickmann & Möller (2007), for example, claim positive evidence for the experimental groups of teachers and the progress of their students. Even if the aim of professional development programmes is not always immediately related to

⁶Author's translation.

the learners' outcomes, the intention of many researchers is that teacher education "become[s] sufficiently powerful to immunize teachers against the conservative lessons that most learn from practice" (Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999: 6). This in itself is a worthwhile reason to pursue professional development and to conduct research into it.

Teacher professionalism is a recurring concern of research, which has increasingly focused on the competences that teachers need to make progress on. How the concept of teacher professional competences has evolved is the concern of the next section.

2.2 Teachers' Professional Competence

Professional competences are used as an obvious term when referring to the necessary requirements to carry out a profession. I will first examine the concept of professional competence and will begin with a short analysis of the way the term has evolved recently, presenting the most relevant insights into research on professional competence. In the following subchapter the focus will be restricted to teachers' professional competence. The aim is twofold: to understand the development and the key aspects discussed in the debate on teacher professional competence in more depth on the one hand, and to uncover the points of overlap and interdisciplinary connections on the other.

2.2.1 Professional Competence

In this section some key aspects related to the concept of professional competence will be highlighted. The notion of competence has received such increasing attention recently that, in agreement with Jung (2010: 41-58), it can be said that the shift from a knowledge society to a "competence society" now distinctly characterises our epistemological context.

In his in depth analysis and discussion of this complex concept, Jung (2010: 41-44) describes how, due to social and economic changes, the responsibility for the development of competence has been transferred from the institutions to the individuals. Jung shows how earlier terms related to indispensable job requirements in the post-industrial society have been replacing each other in succession, beginning with "qualifications" (characterized by clearly defined capacities), moving on to "key qualifications" (i.e. domain specific and general abilities) and then to the current requirement of "professional competence". In short:

"qualifications" → "key qualifications" → "professional competence"

Figure 2.3 – Succession of job requirements in the post-industrial "competence society"

Adapted from Jung (2010: 41)

According to Jung (2010: 42-43), the competence demands in our society are closely related to new technologies, which require new and specialized activities, that are based on the

intrinsic motivation of the employees. Jung, however, considers it too restrictive to explain competence only from the perspective of liberal economic policy. His suggestion accentuates the dimension of self-activation and participation of autonomous individuals. Quoting Höhne (2006), Jung's (2010: 41) analysis emphasises how the abilities of self-organisation and self-regulation have become constitutive characteristics of the "competence society".

One issue that has been debated in this regard relates to the relationship between knowledge and competence. Jung (2010: 37) explains the difference between the two and at the same time gives a short definition of competence:

Knowledge remains knowledge! To refer to the human capacity of the holistic, complex and purposeful concurrence of *knowledge, will, action and reflection* there is another term, namely competence (italics in the original; author's translation⁷)

Following Jung, the difference between knowledge and competence lies in the fact that competence is more than knowledge: it has to do with the management of knowledge and includes the personal and professional abilities needed to face professional challenges. In this sense the acquisition of new knowledge only defines a part of the concept of competence. Recent insights in the research on competence (Jung 2010; Bader & Müller 2002; Kraler & Schratz 2008; Gruber & Rehrl 2005) emphasise the interdependence of self-competence (including all the cognitive, emotional and volitional⁸ processes relevant for development) on other competence dimensions (knowledge, methodological, social and self-regulative competences). Volitional and motivational aspects play a determining role in both affecting the effort expended and the perseverance devoted to a task. In a similar vein, Eraut (1994: 81) includes "control knowledge", which

refers to knowledge that is important for controlling one's own behaviour [...] and covers all of the following areas: self-awareness and sensitivity, self-knowledge about one's strengths and weaknesses, the gap between what one says and what one does, and what one knows and does not know; self-management in such matters as the use of time, prioritization and delegation; self-development in its broadest sense, including knowing how to learn and control one's own learning; the ability to reflect and self-evaluate, that is, to provide oneself with feedback [...].

Eraut (1994: 95) adds that this kind of knowledge is considered "meta-knowledge"⁹, i.e. knowledge about knowledge and its use, which guides our thinking and one's learning". His

⁷ "Wissen bleibt wissen! Für die menschliche Befähigung des ganzheitlichen, komplexen und zielgerichteten Zusammenwirkens von *Wissen, Wollen, Handeln* und *Reflektieren* gibt es einen anderen Begriff, den der Kompetenz" (Jung 2010: 37).

⁸ Volition refers to the control devoted to attention, motivation and emotions in attaining an aim (Corno 1993; Götz 2006: 23; Schmitz 2001). It is considered a process of self-regulation.

⁹ In accord with Flavell (1987: 24), who argues that becoming aware of our intellectual experiences is synonymous with meta-cognition.

pioneering and demanding view of professional knowledge clearly extends the concept of traditional competences, calling for a sense of responsibility in professionals. Eraut (*ibid.* 81) bemoans that control knowledge “is rarely given much explicit attention” despite the fact that it has a superordinate role in professional development “because it incorporates the means by which one uses all the other forms of knowledge”.

Some researchers, such as Jung (2010: 46), emphasise one specific property of competence, namely its relationship to reflection. According to Jung, each reflective action leads to the development of competence, if the new is linked to the search for its realisation, exploration and implementation. In this sense reflection turns into competence only when it is related to action.

This more comprehensive understanding of competence seems to accord with Weinert's (2001) as well. In an extensive analysis of the various meanings of the concept of competence, Weinert shows how broad the concept has become over time. He points to the difficulty in conceptualising competence, which should be understood primarily as “the mental conditions necessary for cognitive, social, and vocational achievement” (*ibid.* 56). When describing the different uses of competence in the course of time, Weinert indicates that competence depends on more than cognitive prerequisites, involving also motivational and volitional aspects and deliberate practice. This understanding of competence is also suggested in R. Brown (1994: 292), who maintains that to be able to cope with complex demands in professional practice, meta-competence is necessary. This is defined as the ability to transcend and to direct other competences.

Further, Weinert (2001: 54-60) argues that it is necessary to distinguish between competences and meta-competences: the latter refer to the awareness of what we do and are based on the ability to introspect cognitive processes. Meta-cognitive competence is recognised in Weinert's account as the necessary “expertise about oneself as a knower, learner and actor”, which allows goal-directed behaviour. As with Eraut's control knowledge, meta-competences therefore also have for Weinert (*ibid.* 60) a superordinate role inasmuch as they serve to “organize and reorganize available competencies in adaptive and flexible ways”.

Jung (2010: 4-5) proposes 'competence acquisition' as a comprehensive term, which includes different appropriation processes: competence mediation and competence development. Instruction and guidance prevail in the former, whereas construction and self-regulated development characterise the latter. In accord with Eraut's and Weinert's perspective, Jung (2010: 14-17) argues that competence acquisition depend on will (motivation and disposition), cognition (subject specific abilities and knowledge), and skills (Figure 2.4).

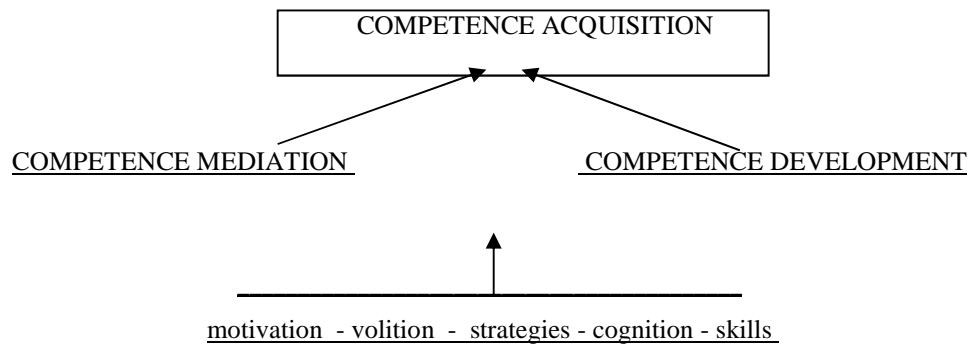


Figure 2.4 - Processes leading to the acquisition of competence - Based on Jung (2010: 4-5)

It is exactly the integration of motivational and volitional aspects that identifies processes of competence acquisition. As Jung explains, the application of knowledge or rules alone is insufficient. Challenging situations are conducive to the development of competence only when the will to overcome difficulties caused by them arises in the actors. The key to acquisition and development of professional competence is seen in self-competence, in the individual disposition to perceive opportunities for development (Jung 2010: 29). Those who do not even perceive the need to improve or accept suboptimal situations will less probably develop competence. In these terms it seems to me that competence coincides with Weinert's understanding of the term as the "mental condition" described above. Thus, Jung's concept of competence has the merit of conceptualising competence in a very comprehensive way, as a link between the individual goals, abilities or skills (social, cognitive or behavioural) and the collective demands¹⁰.

Another fundamental aspect that has been touched upon in the discussion about competence regards the relationship between competence and innovation, a relationship which is at the core of debates in teacher education, and is thus relevant for this study. Jung (*ibid.* 2) considers competence acquisition a key competence nowadays for all processes concerned with innovation. The meaning of competence in Jung has, in my view, essential consequences for language teachers, in the sense that it is no longer bound to the 'classical' knowledge dimensions of competence (such as subject-matter knowledge, methodological knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, etc) but is connected instead with the ability of the professionals to cultivate and regulate themselves to meet social demands¹¹. In Jung's (*ibid.*

¹⁰ „Kompetenz definiert sich als die individuelle oder kollektive Befähigung eines Individuums kognitive, soziale und auch verhaltensmäßige Fähigkeiten, Fertigkeiten und Kenntnisse so zu *organisieren*, dass die individuelle oder kollektive Wünsche, Ziele oder auch gestellte Aufgaben und Anforderungen erfüllt werden können“ (Jung 2010: 13, quoting Frei 1993; italics in the original). (For a similar view, cf. White 1959 as quoted in Weinert 2001: 49).

¹¹ This poses fundamental difficulties when attempting to set standards for teachers' actions (Baumert & Kunter 2006: 478) and even more when attempting to measure or test professional competence on the one hand, or for teachers to prove their own standing on the other.

18) view what is crucial is the willingness of the “actors” to accept challenges and demands as opportunities in which they can cultivate their job design on their own.

A recent perspective on competence focuses on its emancipatory character¹². In this regard the distinction between narrow and broad conceptualisations of competence is fundamental. As Jung (2010: 51) expounds, narrow views of competence (for example transformative, linguistic) find the distinction between competence and performance¹³ useful. From this perspective however, because of the influence of individual (motivation-knowledge) und social (norms) factors, performance can not be understood as a direct transformation or realisation of competence. Unlike narrow views, broad conceptualisations of competence see it as emancipatory in the sense that the ability to integrate cognition, will, reflection and performance in action can lead to the self-realisation in a social context¹⁴.

A final aspect of professional competence selected for the purpose of this study is offered by the concept of "action competence"¹⁵ (Weinert 2001; Bader & Müller 2002). This complex theoretical construct defines the prerequisites necessary in order “to fulfill the demands of a particular professional position” (Weinert 2001: 51; similarly Gruber & Rehl 2005: 6-8).

Action competence corresponds to the current shift in the professional domain and is defined as the competence which allows "individuals to understand the increasing complexity and uncertainty of their environment by approaching it with confident, goal-orientated, flexible, rational, critical, reflective and responsible behaviour"¹⁶ (Jung 2010: 58 quoting Pätzold 1999; author's translation). This very extensive understanding of competence is tied to a functional and social view of competence, linking individual learning and action (performance) and including the individual (cognitive, motivational prerequisites and social abilities) and the social context (performance demands as well as task and specific knowledge demands).

¹² This accords with the emancipatory view of reflection by Vieira & Marques (2002), cf. Chapter 2.8.

¹³ In the present study the researcher does not suggest separating competence from performance, for a number of reasons. Firstly, I agree with Weinert (2001: 58-9) in considering the concept of competence as proposed by Chomsky as not suitable for non-linguistic purposes. Secondly, it is not always possible empirically to distinguish metaknowledge from motivational and volitional processes. As suggested by Weinert, what we measure is always a conglomerate of metacognitive judgements, feelings of efficacy, and volitional control beliefs. Thirdly, the concept of action competence as advanced in recent psychological research instead can be regarded as a way to overcome the separation of competence and performance (Gruber & Rehl 2005: 6). A further advantage of this concept is constituted by the fact that it gives space to individual differences, which were ignored in Chomskian tradition (Weinert 2001: 58).

¹⁴ This again constitutes a challenge for testing professional competence.

¹⁵ "Handlungskompetenz" is the German term. I use "action competence" as the translation of this term as it is used by Baumert & Kunter 2006, Gruber & Rehl 2005, both articles refer to Weinert 2001.

¹⁶ Jung (2010: 58): "die zunehmende Komplexität und Unbestimmtheit seiner Umwelt zu begreifen und durch ziel- und selbstbewusstes, flexibles, rationales, kritisch reflektiertes und verantwortliches Handeln zu gestalten".

Contrasting other conceptualisations of competence that accentuate either domain-specific or domain-general abilities, cognitive or motivational aspects, action competence is a multidimensional construct that attempts to overcome these separations and offers a very comprehensive perspective on competence:

The theoretical construct of action competence comprehensively combines those intellectual abilities, content-specific knowledge, cognitive skills, domain-specific strategies, motivational tendencies, volitional control systems, personal value orientations, and social behaviors into a complex system. (Weinert 2001: 51)

Similarly, the way Gruber & Rehr (2005: 6) understand action competence¹⁷ overcomes the dichotomy between competence and performance because, as they explain, the construct emphasises knowledge as a central component, while at the same time tackles the ability to perform a task. However, although Gruber & Rehr¹⁸ regard competence acquisition not simply as the addition of new knowledge or as simple practical professional experience, unfortunately they do not address one aspect which seems to me crucial in this regard¹⁹, as recognised in the discussion so far: that the ability to restructure existing knowledge requires a corresponding attitude of the individuals.

To sum up, the development of the concept of professional competence reflects the new understanding that being capable of competent performance requires more than knowledge. The way professional competence has recently been conceptualised includes the ability to cope with challenges and involves the complex interaction of knowledge, will, attitudes, self-regulation, reflection and action as integral parts of competence. Meta-competence is one key aspect of professional competence and is viewed as the pre-requisite for developing complex capacities and an awareness of what is to be accomplished.

Competence acquisition is as important as professional competence in itself. It depends on demands and challenges in any given context, which are deemed to be accepted and mastered

¹⁷ The concept of action competence has been applied especially in the analysis of the necessary conditions for success in meeting task, goal, and success criteria in selected fields of action. As reported in the next subchapter, it is at the basis of the model of “teacher action competence / Lehrerhandlungskompetenz” proposed by Baumert & Kunter (2006).

¹⁸ Gruber & Rehr (2005: 6-8) define action competence as “the ability not only to grasp the demands placed on them [in relation to one domain] with their theoretical knowledge, but also to overcome these demands successfully” (author’s translation). They propose four relevant aspects: 1. Knowledge and Memory (which refer to the ways in which competent professionals organise specific knowledge), 2. Problem-solving and decision-making (this aspect refers to the ability to find appropriate solutions), 3. Routines (this refers to the ability of professionals to comprehend rapidly what is required in specific situations thanks to activation of cognitive schemata) and 4. Communities of experts (integration and consequent recognition of competent individuals in a social context and in a community).

¹⁹ They address instead another aspect and elaborate on a model of dynamic memory organisation, to represent the acquisition of experiential knowledge.

on the part of the professionals. The key to acquisition and development of competence is viewed in self-competence and resides, as such, in the individuals. Comprehensive perspectives on competence have been proposed, such as the construct of "action competence" making the strong claim that knowledge and reflection will turn into competence when they are skillfully and deliberately translated into action.

These ideas will be discussed further in the next subchapter, which turns to the concept of professional competence in the field of language teacher education and focuses on essential milestones in the debate about teachers' professionalisation.

2.2.2 Teachers' Professional Competence

The issue of language teachers' competence has become increasingly relevant over the last few decades. For a long time teachers' competence has been conceptualised as a "knowledge of content", as Shulman (1986: 7-8) laments. There have been many attempts to identify the "core" knowledge base of second language teacher education. Richards (1998: 1-14) considers six areas as constituents of this core: theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge. Traditionally, according to Reynolds & Salters (1995: 355), to be a competent teacher means being "able to use knowledge to decide what to do in a situation, to act on that decision to bring about some objective, and to do this in an effective and appropriate manner".

Shulman presented a new perspective on teacher knowledge, and suggested a seminal distinction between teacher knowledge as subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curricular knowledge as constitutive of professional knowledge. This tripartition²⁰ was intended to render more appropriately aspects that had been neglected up to that point, such as the complexities of teachers' understandings of their work, the source of their knowledge and their interaction with this knowledge (*ibid.* 8).

Shulman's (*ibid.* 8) appeal that research on teaching should focus more on teachers' learning and his effort to establish a different perspective from the traditional view of teachers' knowledge have fortunately been increasingly accepted in research on language teacher education, so that the debate has yielded many fundamental insights. As a result, in attempting to reconceptualise teachers' competence, some researchers have recently claimed that teachers' competence does mean more than knowledge. Leung & Teasdale (1999: 65-7) for example have advocated a differentiation between teacher professional knowledge and

²⁰ This proposal was later revised and expanded with the "foundations of education" (Shulman 1989 quoted in Baumert & Kunter 2006: 481; 484).

teacher professional competence, implying that professional competence is a complex construct that involves more than cognitive activation, subject matter expertise, pedagogy and school development. In this regard, Reynolds & Salter (1995: 352-8) propose a holistic model of teacher competence which goes beyond mere experience and knowing. They suggest that knowledge and understanding are essential factors in teacher competence, but that competence depends upon experience and executive abilities as well. They also include individual characteristics (such as intention, dispositions and mental habits) as crucial factors that allow for flexible performance. Going beyond knowledge thus consists in the ability of the teachers to value new information, and in their commitment. Development is related to the teachers' abilities to elaborate on information and "to form a network of understanding or schemata which allows a flexible response to changing situations" (*ibid.* 352). The development of this network depends upon vocational and cognitive skills, and practice. Expertise in this model is not directly measurable "through simply observing behaviour and ticking off elements on a checklist" (*ibid.* 353) because it has to do with enduring latent abilities, general capabilities and dispositions. Reynolds & Salter view the teachers' interpretation of the situations as an essential distinctive trait of professionals, and argue that competent teachers draw their "theory-impregnated" (*ibid.* 356) perceptions and decisions from both their previous experience and their framework of knowledge. In my view, the merit of their approach is in having recognised the need to integrate elements that ensure dynamics in the concept of competence.

Reynolds & Salter' model seems to be in line with the 'reflective cycle' proposed by Wallace (1991) in his influential model of professional development:

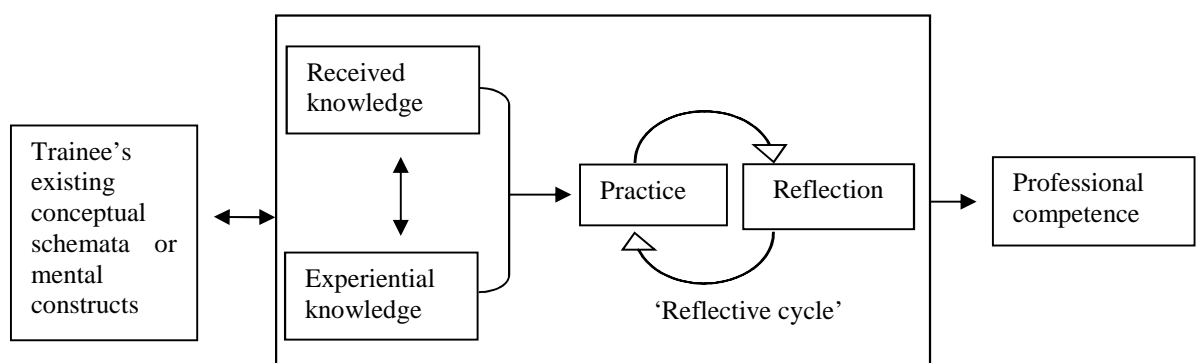


Figure 2.5 - Reflective practice model of professional education/development.
(Source: Wallace 1991: 49)

Three key issues are recognised in the model and outlined in the following discussion. The first is related to the fact that trainees seldom enter the professional situation "with blank minds and/or neutral attitudes" (Wallace 1991: 50); this addresses their underlying beliefs (included as "conceptual schemata or construct" in the model). The second regards the key

elements of "received knowledge" and "experiential knowledge" and refers respectively to the knowledge that teachers "receive" (facts, data or research-based theories) and experience in action. The last issue emphasises the reflective cycle as an ongoing process of reflection on the two types of knowledge, and thus indicates the importance of merging both in professional action as crucial for development. What is evident in Wallace is the shift from a view of language teaching as a mastery of discrete skills to a view that emphasises the process of learning to teach, with an implicit progressive component, which means that the process is continuous and dynamic. Despite the merit of this proposal, the learning processes involved for the teachers are not visible enough in Wallace's model of professional development. They emerge more clearly in the next models outlined below.

When looking closely at the constituents of teacher professionalism, Schratz et al. (2008: 129-135) suggest five components for teacher professional development: reflective and discourse ability, professional awareness, collegiality, ability to differentiate and personal mastery. These components pertain to various domains, such as the ability of collegial sharing and cooperation, of observing oneself critically and of knowing how to cope with learners' diversity. Furthermore, Schratz et al. claim that teachers' competence includes, but is not limited to, self-reflection. What is required in addition is the ability to recognize what is characteristic for the profession and to be open to change. Finally, teachers' professionalism involves knowing how to deal with oneself in a professional way, for example, preventing knowledge from becoming inert, or learning from errors. This requires the ability to perceive oneself as a learning self (*ibid.*135). In essence, I see the value of Schratz et al.'s proposal in the fact that they suggest an extended understanding of teachers' competences, which includes individual (dispositional) and social aspects, and whose common denominator consists, in my view, of the teachers' increasing awareness of the five components listed above.

Under the premise that there is a considerable lack of empirical evidence with respect to the significance of professional competence, Baumert & Kunter (2006: 479-486) suggested another model of teacher professional competence, "professionelle Handlungskompetenz". They reflect on the complex nature of teacher competences and point to some paradoxes of research perspectives on this issue: on the one hand, the difficulty of standardising teachers' action, on the other, the many attempts to develop teacher standards that can frame and define teacher competences. Building on previous conceptualisations of teacher professional competence, such as Shulman's (1986), and on milestones in the debate about reform and

innovation in teacher education²¹, Baumert & Kunter (2006: 480) recognise that these conceptualisations are consistent with the theoretical construct of 'action competence' as suggested by Weinert (2001; cf previous subchapter) and propose their model of teachers' professional competence as a more comprehensive and more appropriate competence in education. This competence arises from the interplay of four components: declarative and procedural knowledge; values, beliefs, and goals; motivational orientations; metacognitive and professional self-regulative skills.

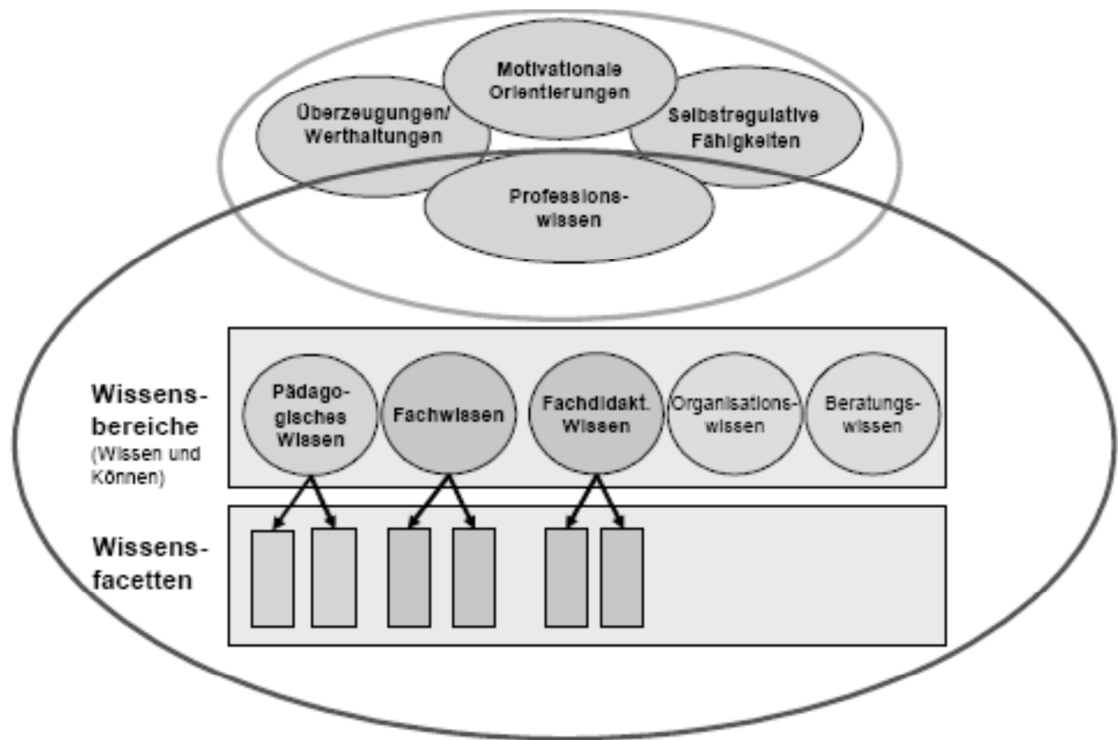


Figure 2.6 - Baumert & Kunter's (2006: 482) model of teachers' professional competence

The model that Baumert & Kunter present extends teachers' competences beyond the traditional domains of teachers' knowledge and proposes a multifaceted perspective of teacher knowledge and competence, which includes personal, motivational and self-regulatory dimensions in the understanding of competence. Self efficacy²², as a mechanism of self-regulation²³ that allows for goal oriented action, and intrinsic motivational orientation are important components of teachers' competence as well. Baumert & Kunter indicate that other

²¹ The milestones they mention include the *AERA Panel on research and teacher education* (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner 2005) and the volume *Preparing teachers for a changing world* (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005) for the English-teaching context and the *Abschlußbericht der Lehrerbildungskommission Perspektiven der Lehrerbildung in Deutschland* (Terhart 2000) and the Swiss Research Report *Wirksamkeit der Lehrerbildungssysteme* (Oser & Oelkers 2001) for the German-speaking context. They also draw on the standards "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do", developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS 2002).

²² The concept of self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's capability to perform a task despite difficulties (Schunk et al. 2010: 139). It has been elaborated extensively by Bandura (1997).

²³ The concept of self-regulation will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.7.

mental aspects beyond cognition, such as values and convictions, are also central in the task of development. Their understanding of self-regulation is, however, different from that of psychological research, in fact they describe it as management of stress to prevent burn-out rather than regulation of one's own learning process. Nonetheless, one important issue should be noted here: their model of teacher competence is overtly aligned with contemporary conceptualisations of competence. Unlike Weinerts' and Jungs' conceptualisations of professional competence, all components of competence are integrated in Baumert & Kunter's model in a non-hierarchical manner. As a consequence, self-regulation skills do not play a superordinate role and cognitions about the self, related to learning for teaching, are included as beliefs. This is a point of divergence with the present study, which assigns a superordinate role to the metacognitive, strategic and self-regulatory dimensions which are responsible for the necessary dynamics²⁴ required in professional development. To summarise, Baumert & Kunter's merit consists first in the fact that they name their model "professional competence" to accentuate the importance of including motivational and self-regulatory aspects in the concept of professional development. Second, their model of "teacher professional competence" extends teachers' competences, adopts a multidimensional perspective and emphasises the interaction between cognitive, motivational orientations and values, professional action and professional knowledge. Their model is, further, a valuable attempt to embed teachers' professional competence in a meta-theoretical framework that allows theory-based discussions (*ibid.* 470; 481) about this issue.

The marked movement away from a rather narrow conception of competence towards a more comprehensive one is also apparent in recent research accounts of teacher competences, such as the one pursued in the study "Professionalitätsentwicklung von Lehrer/innen(teams) PEL(T)" (Stern & Streissler 2007). In this study, teacher competences are defined as explicitly going beyond knowledge (subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge) and extending to the abilities to apply this knowledge in practice. To be able to face the new challenges in education and meet the expectation of being change agents, teachers must be able to update their knowledge and expand their competences, i.e. be able to develop in a lifelong dynamic learning process (*ibid.* 2). The suggested understanding of teacher competence is, in their view, less and less restricted to the "core business" of the classroom. Teachers are now expected to be involved in reflection about themselves and the role of their teaching community, in an attempt to create a balance among four dimensions: action,

²⁴ As also recognised above by Reynolds & Salter (1995) and later by Freeman (1989) and Terhart (2002); cf. Chapter 2.7.

reflection, autonomy and networking (quoting Altrichter & Krainer 2002, *ibid.* 3). They address new critical aspects of teacher professionalism and claim that teachers can construe their development, confront new challenges and critically monitor their learning process (*ibid.* 3). The characteristics of teacher competence they support refer to three areas: “classroom”, “school and society” and “professional and personal development” and are meant as a basis for the self-assessment of teachers. In this, Stern & Streissler’ (*ibid.* 3) research findings clearly indicate a new view of teachers, whose meta-cognitive activation in the conscious control of their professional development²⁵ is an essential feature of teachers’ professional competences.

Similarly, Lipowsky (2006: 55) includes self-related cognition (“selbstbezogene Kognitionen”) in his list of teachers’ competences and mentions as examples displays of competence, such as setting higher goals and planning. With the inclusion of such competences, the dimension of self-regulation surfaces again as an integral component of teacher competence.

Some essential ideas that have emerged in the discussion so far in relation to the professional competence of teachers culminate in the concept of the “professional self”, as proposed by Bauer (2000), which links professional competence with the issue of professional identity. Bauer (2000: 64-5) claims that teachers' professionalism manifests itself not only in action, it necessitates an ‘inner representative’ and the formation of a professional self, whose critical components are autonomy, reflective ability, cooperation, teacher knowledge and a specialized professional jargon. Bauer explains that this view of the professional self enables continuity and also allows for professional change. Thus, through the "professional self", Bauer adds a new dimension to the concept of professionalism, and this accounts for the internal dynamic processes of the teachers. The following Figure 2:7 shows that the ‘professional self’ develops from the interaction between internal processes and external factors.

²⁵ "Lehrer/innen können ihre Professionalitätsentwicklung in die eigene Hand nehmen, [...] und dabei ihren Lernprozess selbstkritisch überprüfen" (Stern& Streissler 2007: 3).

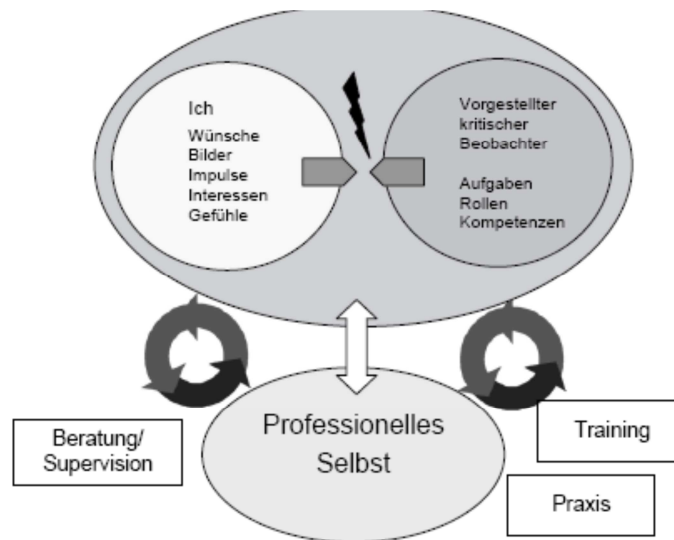


Figure 2.7 - Origin of the ‘professional self’. (Source: Bauer 2000: 65)

According to Bauer (*ibid.* 65), professionals need to find a balance between their own aspirations, values, beliefs and personal competences and the expectations of a “critical observer”. The latter seems to be an internal, built-in monitor, which has the role of being a critical and productive source of conflict. The ‘professional self’ thus becomes evident not only in pedagogical action but also as an internal representation of the individuals who feel in charge of their development. An important implication of Bauer’s (2005: 75-87) ‘professional self’ is that it acknowledges the drive to move forward – intrinsic in the concept of “professionalism” – as its own drive; growth (resulting from curiosity to discover new things or to see old ones from a new perspective) becomes, in this model, a personal and professional requirement.

Other similar concepts of professional identity have also been proposed: Pennington (1999: 106) for example speaks of a ‘professional persona’. Campbell et al. (2009: 29-30) consider the exploration of teachers’ professional identity as essential to professional performance. They cite Maclure (2001), who suggests that identity can be an organising principle in teachers’ jobs and lives and that teachers’ identity constructs can be seen as “devices for justifying, explaining and making sense of one’s career, values and circumstances”. Similarly, Johnston et al. (2005: 57) investigated how ESL teachers develop professionally by relying on the concept of ‘professional identity’ as “negotiated identity”, shaped by contextual factors and by the agency of the teachers. The difference between these constructs and Bauer’s ‘professional self’ is that, although appealing, the former remain to a certain extent vague and do not address appropriately the creative and complex accomplishment of professional development which occurs within an individual and in interaction with the environment. In this respect, the construct of the ‘professional self’ proposed by Bauer represents a more effective metaphor to account for both the personal contribution of the teachers and the

influence of the context, as well as being able to generate a stronger appeal and higher identification effect for teachers.

Summary

One objective of this chapter was to understand the evolution of the term "professional competence" and to analyse key aspects which have emerged in the debate on teacher-specific professional competence. The most relevant features in research on teachers' competences have been highlighted, emphasising a salient shift. From an initial focus on content and subject matter knowledge, teacher competence has been expanded to include self-competences, individual and social aspects and meta-competences, which are thought to be superordinate and responsible for the dynamics required in teacher development.

Another objective of this part of the review was to uncover areas of overlap with the contemporary conceptualisations of the term in general professional competence. By that, the review also illustrated fundamental interdisciplinary connections, and pointed out how the debate on teachers' professional competence is now overtly aligned with contemporary conceptualisations of professional competence which include cognitive, strategic, meta-cognitive, motivational and attitudinal components. This inclusion strengthens individual accomplishment in the development of professional competence and suggests that teachers are the main contributors to their own professional development. It also addresses the creative and complex accomplishment of teacher development, including the interaction between the individuals and the environment, and above all emphasises the process and its dynamism. This is a pertinent and fundamental aspect of the professionalisation of language teachers, because this issue is linked to innovation in language teaching. Professional competence emerges as a dynamic concept including self-renewal competences as key elements for all processes concerned with innovation and thus with the development of teachers' professional competence itself. In this sense the acquisition and the ongoing development of competence are integral parts of professional competence as well as the dispositions of the professional actors involved.

Furthermore, the new understanding of teacher competence is relevant for the present study not only because it broadens the scope of professional competence, but also because it raises further questions, such as what professional competence means for teachers and what the processes are behind this competence. This will be elaborated on in subchapter 2.7.

To look more closely at relevant aspects of the development process of the teachers, the next sections turn to the central concept of professional development, beginning with a definition of it.

2.3 Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

In concordance with Campbell et al. (2009: 16), “defining professional development is not an easy task”. A good starting point is looking at both components of the term. ‘Professional’ contributes to our understanding by addressing the specialised, exclusive and continuative character of teaching, whereas the term ‘development’ implies any increase in degree or quality and the move from simple stages to more complex and advanced ones. When we consider how the term ‘professional development’ is used in the literature on the subject, it appears to function very much like an umbrella term. It can indicate the activities, courses or programmes that teachers attend, or teachers’ acquisition of specific subject knowledge and skills, or the process of teachers’ growth. This confusion has been noted in some accounts about teacher professional development: Freeman (1989: 37) points out that the terms Education, Preparation, Teacher Training and Development “have been and often continue to be used interchangeably”. He preserves the term Education for the superordinate, and suggests Teacher Training and Teacher Development for describing the strategies by which teachers are educated.

There is further disagreement about what can be considered ‘professional development’²⁶: as Freeman observes, workshops were and are the most common activity type, but other new forms are emerging (Darling-Hammond & Sykes 1999, Johnson 2009, Campbell et al. 2009, Bailey et al. 2001, Richards & Farrell 2005). Others argue that professional development can be extended to all forms of learning, including private, informal activities or hallway conversations (Borko 2004: 4). Not dissimilarly, the concept of ‘professional development’ that Day (1999: 2-3) suggests includes:

- the largely private, unaided learning from the teaching experience
- informal development opportunities in schools
- the more formal ‘accelerated’ learning opportunities available through internally and externally generated in-service education and training activities.

A further relevant feature of “professional development” is presented in Wallace’s (1991: 58) definition of professional competence as “a moving target²⁷ or a horizon, towards which professionals travel all their professional life but which is never finally attained”. This view of

²⁶ All attempts to define professional development will probably ignore to some extent the role of personal qualities such as enthusiasm for the job, because they defy standardisation and definition. This is the case when we read that “professional development is above all about developing extraordinary talent and inspiration” (Campbell et al. 2009: 16, quoting Blunkett 2001).

²⁷ The same view can also be seen in the concept of the ‘moving image’ (Campbell et al. 2009: 28-9).

professional competence explains a core element of professional development which implies at least two considerations. It can first be assumed that this ‘moving target’ may be destabilising, requiring a great degree of ambiguity tolerance and the corresponding personality trait on the part of the teachers²⁸. The second consideration is that the essence of professional development as a moving target presupposes the ability and the disposition to perceive it as such, together with the responsibility to commit to it and pursue it. Whether this can be taken for granted is left open in all definitions and accounts of professional development, and this is at the core of what will be addressed in the present study (cf. Chapter 2.7).

Teachers’ professionalism can also be included in a more comprehensive view which makes other relevant connections obvious, as Hargreaves (1994: 242) suggests: he defines teachers’ professionalism as a synthesis of two theoretical suggestions: there is little significant school development without teacher development, and there is little significant teacher development without school development. Hargreaves remarks that the second proposition sounds less obvious and more shocking than the first, but becomes an operational philosophy in schools that see school improvement as a means of improving teacher quality. This definition challenges the simpler view that improved schools result from improving individual teachers.

I suggest a broader conceptualisation of the term ‘professional development’ for language teachers, in a form that incorporates the attitudes towards the process. In my view, the concept of teacher professional development goes very much beyond the acquisition of techniques and knowledge, and for use in this study, one of the most comprehensive definitions of professional development has been selected. This definition contains many of the relevant factors that contribute to its understanding: “*a process of continual, intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers*” (Lange 1990 quoted in Bailey et al. 2001: 4). This definition stresses its developmental character (“process”) and the on-going necessary engagement over time (“continual”), points to the conscious and reflected character (“intellectual”), acknowledges the role of experience (“experiential”), takes into account the personal attitude towards the process (“attitudinal”) and includes the concept of ‘development’ (“growth”).

So far, relevant definitions of professional development have been focal in the discussion. In

²⁸ Psychological traits will not be addressed in the study, which does not mean that they are not relevant. For some accounts of the role teacher personality may play cf. Mills 2003 or McCrae & Allik 2002.

the following section, I will select studies that highlight significant aspects about teacher professional development and will focus on the factors that in the literature seem to affect the teacher development process.

2.4 Main factors affecting the teachers' development process

In this section, I will review relevant literature about teacher professional development and will concentrate on the factors that stand out in the literature for their influence on the teacher development process. Two considerations are made here as premise to the review, with respect to its perspective and the selection on which it is based. First, although the focus of the following studies was not specifically directed at "teachers as learners", as in the current study, they can provide information for the present investigation by indicating important aspects of teachers' professional learning and by considering some of the diverse ways teachers make sense of the learning situations at hand. Thus, after each review section, I will briefly look at their implications for the specific perspective of "teachers as learning professionals" adopted in this study. The second aspect refers to the selection of the salient factors that affect teacher professional development. The difficulty of the selection lies in the different foci of the studies and the levels that they address. Some studies, for example, investigate which factors affect teachers' participation in development activities, other studies examine the impact of the teacher development programmes either on teachers' practice, or on their knowledge or attitudes, or on their learners' outcomes.

The factors selected for the purpose of this study look at the role that practical teaching experience and teacher development initiatives play in the development process, followed by the role played by teachers' beliefs, reflection and theoretical knowledge. The factor that will be examined first, regards the significance of practical teaching experience in teacher development, together with its limitations.

2.4.1 The role of practical teaching experience

Practical teaching experience is undeniably a crucial element in the life of teachers. Maintaining Kwo's (2010) comparison between teachers and trees in her edited collection *Teachers as Learners*²⁹, practice is to teachers, then, what soil is to trees. In this section I will first mention some of the relevant functions that language teaching practice has for teachers³⁰,

²⁹The cover of this collection shows trees. This image is used as a metaphor for teachers as "a form of vital energy" and is accompanied by the Chinese proverb: "It takes ten years for growing trees, but a hundred years for growing people".

³⁰ Many of the following studies had not been set up to investigate the specific meaning of practice, therefore I will be reading between the lines of research accounts on teacher development.

and then go on to the limitations that have been proved in research.

In a paper concerned about the role of the teacher in classroom language learning, Breen (1991) looks specifically at the teaching processes of 106 experienced teachers and aims at discovering teachers' understandings of classroom work. The teachers were asked to write down what specific techniques they used to help the learners during the lessons and to explain why they adopted each technique. From the hundreds of justifications given by the teachers and clustered within seven major pedagogic areas of concern (Breen 1991: 222-227), the focus on the learner accounted for half of all the reasons for the techniques that teachers employed. From Breen's report we can draw the relevant insights that while teaching, teachers learn to make sense of the situations at hand: they become skilled at attuning to learners' reactions and needs, involving the learners, taking into consideration their background knowledge and their cognitive processes, and reflecting on the appropriate ways to deliver the subject matter to the learners. Despite the inconsistencies between the techniques employed and the reasons teachers gave, as Breen notes, through their practical experience in the classroom teachers create their own meanings, and develop their implicit theories as well as their own conceptualisations of their roles as teachers.

The scope of the teaching experience is also evident in Denscombe's (1982: 257-260) analysis, according to which classroom experience is the salient factor that shapes teachers' attitudes and activities. Moreover, Denscombe (*ibid.* 260) adds that teaching practice fosters teachers "practical competence" which enables teachers to give pragmatic responses to a variety of classroom pressures. Furthermore, Richards (1996) points to another function of practical teaching experience for teachers: from the experience of teaching they develop operating principles, that Richards calls "maxims". They represent "working principles" (*ibid.* 282) and are, as such, vital for teachers to manage their classroom work. That teachers' expertise is inconceivable without practical teaching experience is confirmed by other scholars. Tsui (2003: 11-12) argues that experts' know-how is experiential and the tacit knowledge that experienced teachers develop is an essential part of their "effortless and fluid" performance.

Finally, the pervasiveness of teachers' propensity to rely on their practical teaching experience (Day 1999: 50-52) is reflected in the widespread endorsement that professional inquiry as well as teacher development programmes should be centred in practical experience. Many scholars (Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999: 23-4; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 1999: 378; Gruber & Rehr 2005) maintain that a crucial feature of development programs is to allow teachers to learn about practice during practical programmes and to develop their experience-based knowledge.

So far, practical teaching experience has been proved to be a valuable source of ideas and reflections as well as the time when teachers form and test their own hypotheses, learn to make fast and appropriate decisions to the teaching situations, and above all recognise, react and adapt to learners' needs in flexible ways. At the same time it is also agreed that the experiences gained from practical teaching experience alone are not a sufficient basis for professional development (Richard & Lockhart 1994: 4). The research suggests that many experienced teachers develop routines and strategies that become almost automatic and do not involve a great deal of conscious thought or reflection (cf. Parker 1984, quoted in Richards and Lockhart 1994: 4). Furthermore, practical teaching experience can indeed render teachers, as practitioners, blind:

[...] as a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing in practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing. [...] And if he learns, as often happens, to be **selectively inattentive** to phenomena that do not fit the categories of his knowing in action, then he may suffer from boredom or “burn-out” and afflict his clients with the consequences of his narrowness and rigidity. When this happens, the practitioner has “overlearned” what he knows.

A practitioner's reflection can serve as a corrective to overlearning. (Schön 1983: 61; emphasis in bold added)

In his seminal work, Schön points out that the knowledge gained in the classroom through practical experience alone may not lead the practitioners to challenge assumptions and routines: teachers may develop frameworks of taken-for-granted assumptions which create order and continuity and enable them to survive. In this way their learning may be limited to ‘single loop learning’³¹, which is a way of responding to new situations without changing the framework of assumptions (cf. also Myers & Clark 2002). Although this learning mechanism allows teachers to control new situations with minimal effort, it also reduces the teachers' motivation to review their practice. Day's (1999: 24) suggestion is therefore that teachers “engage in ‘double loop learning’ in which tacit assumptions are made explicit, challenged and reassessed”. However, he also makes clear that this approach to learning is difficult to achieve on one's own. Woods (1996: 252), too, points out the same limitations and explains that this may be the case when “some unit of behaviour has become an unconscious routine and [is] carried out as [an] unanalyzed chunk”. Similar arguments resonate also by Rudduck (1988: 206-8) who notes that routines make it difficult to step back. He adds that 'blind habit' is a strategy for avoiding deliberation, after which practitioners may lose their capacity for 'constructive discontent'.

Further limitations have been put forward with respect to teaching practice as insufficient for

³¹ This definition is derived from Argyris & Schön 1974, quoted in Day 1999: 23-5.

teachers' growth. Tsui (2003: 13, drawing on Dreyfus & Dreyfus' 1997 model of expertise) for example, indicates that whereas practical teaching experience is undoubtedly a crucial factor in teacher development, however, "it does not necessarily result in the development of expertise". Some teachers never seem to improve despite their long experience. According to Tsui, practical teaching experience will only contribute to expertise if practitioners are capable of learning from it. To learn from it teachers are required to constantly reflect on their practices³². In line with Tsui, some researchers, for example Berliner (1993: 121), warn us not to confound teaching experience and teachers' expertise. Similarly, in his analysis of the limits of experience, Day (1999: 50-52) warns about an over-reliance upon learning from direct experience, because this ignores that 'experienced' teachers, despite their expertise, are often "imprisoned" by familiar situations. This leads Day (*ibid.* 52) to conclude that "learning from direct experience of practice alone indicates at best limited growth".

Lipwosky (2010: 53) also seems aware of these limits when he emphasises the relevance of outside impulses for teachers in order to build on their own professional knowledge. He relies on findings from studies which show that the absence of external input hinders the growth of professional knowledge. The risk, he warns, is that teachers are actually strengthened in their beliefs and continue their practical teaching experience without questioning their own convictions. Brumfit (1995: 35) reiterates these positions when he claims that "[t]here are limits too to practical activity as a basis for development" and argues for the necessity of "cross-breeding of ideas" as "the basic requirement for any individual, who is concerned with true professionalism".

Further caveats are mentioned by Appel (2000), who engaged in an in-depth analysis of everyday language teaching experience of English teachers in German secondary schools with the main aim of discovering what they experience during their everyday teaching, how they process it and what kind of knowledge it generates. Appel's investigation uncovers that practice is not neutral (*ibid.* 15), it affects teachers' personalities, perceptions, emotions and biographies³³, which then serve as a basis for its evaluation³⁴. Among the relevant results by Appel (*ibid.* 278-9), a fundamental feature of practice and its management stand out: the immediate character of the teaching situations leads teachers to think in terms of tasks that

³² This will be elaborated on in the subchapter 2.4.4.

³³ Not dissimilarly, Woods (1996: 69) points out that teachers interpret a teaching situation in the light of their beliefs about learning and teaching.

³⁴ This dynamic interaction between action and event is highlighted also by Woods (1996: 63) who draws on the role of schemata in cognition (Rumelhart 1980) to explain how the schema influences the perception of the event; and the perception of the event influences the evolution of the schema.

solve problems and to bypass the theoretical knowledge acquired in teaching and methodology courses. As a consequence, practical teaching experience is not monodimensional but rather complex and constantly facing dilemmas. "Erfahrungswissen", the specific knowledge that according to Appel teachers develop in practice, is highly contextual and situative. Appel points to the risk that this "Knowledge-through-experience" may become inert and that the development task of teachers consists exactly in avoiding this. And even in this very delicate task, as Woods (1996: 285) indicates, experience plays a vital role.

Therefore, some researchers advocate "reflective practice" (Kelly & Grenfell 2001: 29; Gruber & Rehrl 2005: 11) which connects knowledge, reflection and practical teaching experience. In this sense, the concept of practical teaching experience is extended and includes the teachers' active processes in the construction of their professional competence³⁵.

SUMMARY

To sum up, practical teaching experience serves many vital functions in the development of teachers. From the perspective of teachers as learning professionals, the research findings presented in this section indicate that teaching practice represents a key component, from which teachers learn enormously and develop the ability to cope with their professional task. Research emphasises some tendencies, such as the teachers' propensity to over-rely on their teaching experience and to focus on the learners. Although teachers' expertise seems inconceivable without the indispensable role that practical teaching experience plays for their professional growth, many researchers argue that practical experience is not enough to be a productive source of change and represents only a starting point in helping teachers to grow. Because of automatised routines, teachers may not be prompted to review and challenge their behaviour, which hinders their professional self-renewal and consequently innovations in practice. In addition, practice may also imply teachers' isolation, not only in the classroom but also isolation from professional discourse (Braslavsky 2002). Therefore, sustained opportunities for continuing development are thought to be fundamental and the necessity of "cross-breeding of ideas" (Brumfit 1995) has been advanced. Research addressing this issue will be the focus of the next section, which examines the effects of teachers' programmes on the teachers' development processes.

³⁵ Similarly, Allwright (2003) sees practical teaching experience as exploratory and proposes "Exploratory Practice" as a blend of theory and action in practice, whereby teachers "practise theory and theorise practice" (cf. also Kane 2002 and Tsui 2003). The role of theoretical knowledge in teacher professional development will be elaborated further in the Chapter 2.4.5.

2.4.2 The role of teacher development initiatives

When looking at research findings about the beneficial effects of professional development programmes from the perspective of the teachers as learners, the question that guided the analysis was the following: Do teacher education programmes make a difference?

Most of the studies on teacher development are concerned with the questions of whether teachers learn from development programmes, what they learn and what the arrangements or the features are that have a positive impact on their development. A significant body of research has produced positive evidence that teachers change and are capable of changing. Almarza (1996), for example, found that teachers efficiently implemented the method learned, but that their acceptance exhibited a wide range of variation. She concluded that if given the chance to reflect, teachers explore theoretical aspects of the profession. She refuted suggestions that only experienced teachers reflect, claiming that beginner teachers do so as well (*ibid.* 70-1). This finding suggests that supporting teachers in the process of reflection means creating a scaffolding and learning zone, or in Vygotskian terms, a zone of proximal development, in which teachers can grow (cf. Chapter 1.2).

Borko and Putnam (1995) report very positive findings from three teacher development programmes (in mathematics and science). They show that while development programmes which provide opportunities to actively construct knowledge of subject matter are successful, on the other hand, “change efforts based on the expectation that teachers will receive and practice information and skills presented by others are unlikely to succeed in fostering meaningful changes in the ways in which teachers interact with their students” (*ibid.* 59). They argue that taking into consideration teachers’ beliefs as essential resources upon which to build was an important factor in helping teachers to expand their repertoire of instructional practices and new beliefs.

Other studies that claim positive effects of professional development programmes indicate that teachers who participated in them developed new norms for professional discourse and a deeper understanding of the subject matter which could lead to improvements in practice. Although Borko (2004: 6-10) points out the fact that teaching practices apparently change more slowly than knowledge does, and that “discussions that support critical examination of teaching are relatively rare” (*ibid.* 7), she also reports that research provides evidence that strong professional communities can foster teacher’s learning.

The effects of teacher educational programmes are also mentioned with respect to teachers’ progression to higher developmental stages. Andreassen et al. (2007) report in their study with mathematics instructors that teachers may progress through at least four stages when making

changes in their practice. These stages included: 1. resistance to change, 2. talking about changing practice, 3. mimicking³⁶, 4. changing practice. By the end of the four-month study, there was a variation in the progression. Many of the teachers bridged the gap to a new stage as a result of the professional development project, most of them reaching at least the mimicking stage. Two teachers reached the stage of actually changing practice; however, as the authors point out, there was some evidence that changes were beginning to take place before the professional development began³⁷. These results corroborate other research accounts, for example by Avalos (2011). She reviewed 111 research publications on teacher professional development and teacher learning over a decade (2000-2010). What emerges from her review is that professional development is related to certain tools: reflection, co-learning or collaboration. Besides obvious differences due to the different cultural contexts under review, she also found positive evidence that diverse professional development initiatives do have effects on teachers' progress:

... there is a similitude in the processes whereby teachers move from one stage to the next in different contexts, that appears to be supported in the research reviewed, although with different manifestations (*ibid.*17).

However, despite some strong findings confirming teacher learning and change, she concludes that:

... we know little about how pervasive these changes are and to what degree they sustain continuous efforts to move ahead. Although it was clear from the successful experiences narrated, that prolonged interventions are more effective than shorter ones, and that combinations of tools for learning and reflective experiences serve the purpose in a better way (*ibid.*17).

What is also apparent in her review is that shortfalls or negative data - for example cases in which the teachers did not change, or rejected the provision of contrary evidence or did not see any gap between their beliefs and practice (cf. Ross & Bruce 2007: 155) - , could be explained on the basis of existing beliefs (this issue will be dealt with in depth in 2.4.3).

A strong advocate of teachers' change as a result of teacher development programmes is Guskey (1986) who affirms that staff development programmes as a systematic attempt to bring about change in teachers' practices and beliefs are successful: teachers do alter their practice and their beliefs as well. He proposes a model (cf. Figure 2.7) that describes the process of teacher change and suggests an alternative perspective to traditional approaches to

³⁶ By this the authors mean that the teachers began to use the activities exactly as they had been presented in the workshops, without finding or inventing new ideas.

³⁷ Whether these results can be considered stable is left unanswered. Not only the restricted time frame (4 months) by Andreassen et al., also Avalos' (2011: 17) warning words quoted in the following paragraph might invite the readers to caution before any conclusion about change in teachers is made.

teacher development. Whereas many teacher development programmes first attempt to alter teachers' beliefs and attitudes (and seldom succeed in this attempt), presuming that this will lead to changes in their teaching practice, Guskey's (*ibid.* 6-7) model is based on a different temporal sequence of the outcome of teacher development. Significant changes in teachers' beliefs are likely to take place **after** changes in student learning outcomes which result **from** instructional changes or some modification in teaching procedures or classroom format.

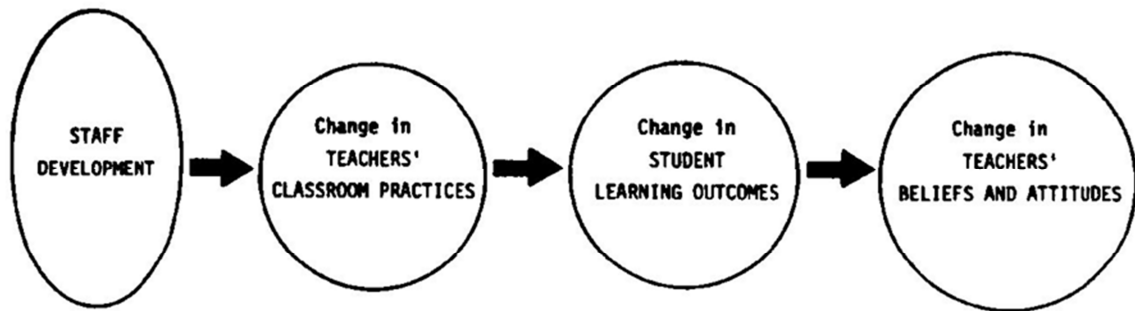


Figure 2.8 - A Model of the Process of Teacher Change (Source: Guskey 1986: 7)

It was teachers' commitment to new practices and their seeing change in students' learning that resulted in changes in beliefs. Guskey's model underlines that teachers' change is a process and stresses that "teachers' knowledge of teaching is validated very pragmatically" (*ibid.* 7). The implications of Guskey's model are that if teacher development programmes are to be successful, they must be pragmatically implemented, be explained in concrete terms and take into consideration the process of teacher change as well. Although I share with Guskey the view that development is not a product of training, his model does not seem to be confirmed in practice. In fact, it has been repeatedly shown in research that teachers do not alter their practices so easily (cf. Chapter 2.4.3).

Research has also indicated that some key features seem to foster teacher professional development, however no single feature appears to be "the" one that can bring about success. According to Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1999: 378-381), for example, crucial features of development programmes are the provision of opportunities for teachers to learn about practice *in* practice, long-term learning opportunities and professional communities. In line with this view, Loewenberg Ball & Cohen (1999: 19) explain that developing communities of practice which offer shared approaches to the study and analysis of teaching are key agents in shaping teachers' norms and in sustaining change. The communities of practice arise when teachers work with other professionals and are seen as sites of communication, as opportunities for cultivating professional discourse and clarifying their own understandings – in short, as learning opportunities that avoid the construction of knowledge being "confined to the private world of each practitioner" (*ibid.* 19). They propose

that deliberate development of the profession, to be educative, would depend on the development of a pedagogy for teacher education that finds ways of using practice as a site for inquiry.

All factors mentioned so far highlight a complex understanding of professional development and prove the collaborative nature of teacher's professional learning. At the same time they expand the traditional view of teachers to that of researchers. Action research in particular, as advocated by Carr & Kemmis (1986), for example, accentuates the role of teachers as researchers. It represents a form of inquiry undertaken by teachers who investigate their own practices in collaboration with colleagues, as a response to questions and needs that they themselves have identified. In a similar vein, Campbell et al. (2009) advocate that teachers require the kinds of support that empower them through active participation in research, which would allow them to investigate and shape the knowledge base of their teaching. This may be "a key factor in defining their professionalism" (*ibid.* 26).

A recent model that adds valuable information to this approach has been developed by Lipowsky (2010). In an attempt to answer the question of how teachers acquire competences and change their teaching practice in a way that promotes learners' progress, Lipowsky refers to recent research findings about the effects of teacher development programmes and suggests a comprehensive framework to explain the development of teachers and to capture the many factors involved (cf. Figure 2.8). Under "context" he includes the broad school environment (including colleagues and the school context after the teacher development programme) and the programme itself (goals and conception, structural characteristics, content and referees' expertise)³⁸. The teachers' characteristics, which Lipowsky assumes determine development, include goals, personality, beliefs and knowledge, volition and self-regulation abilities, as well as private life situations. Among the critical factors identified by Lipowsky (2010: 53), the perception of the relevance of teacher training on the part of the teachers appears to be central. This was the strongest predictor of changes in the teachers and of the success of the development programmes. Lipowsky also found that the claim advanced in theories of self-regulated learning (Deci & Ryan 1993), according to which the sense of relevance of the learners affects their participation, aptly describes the teachers' development and their motivation in applying and transferring what they have learned during the workshops.

³⁸ The learners' dimension does not feature in the model because it only addresses teachers' development in relation to teacher development programmes.

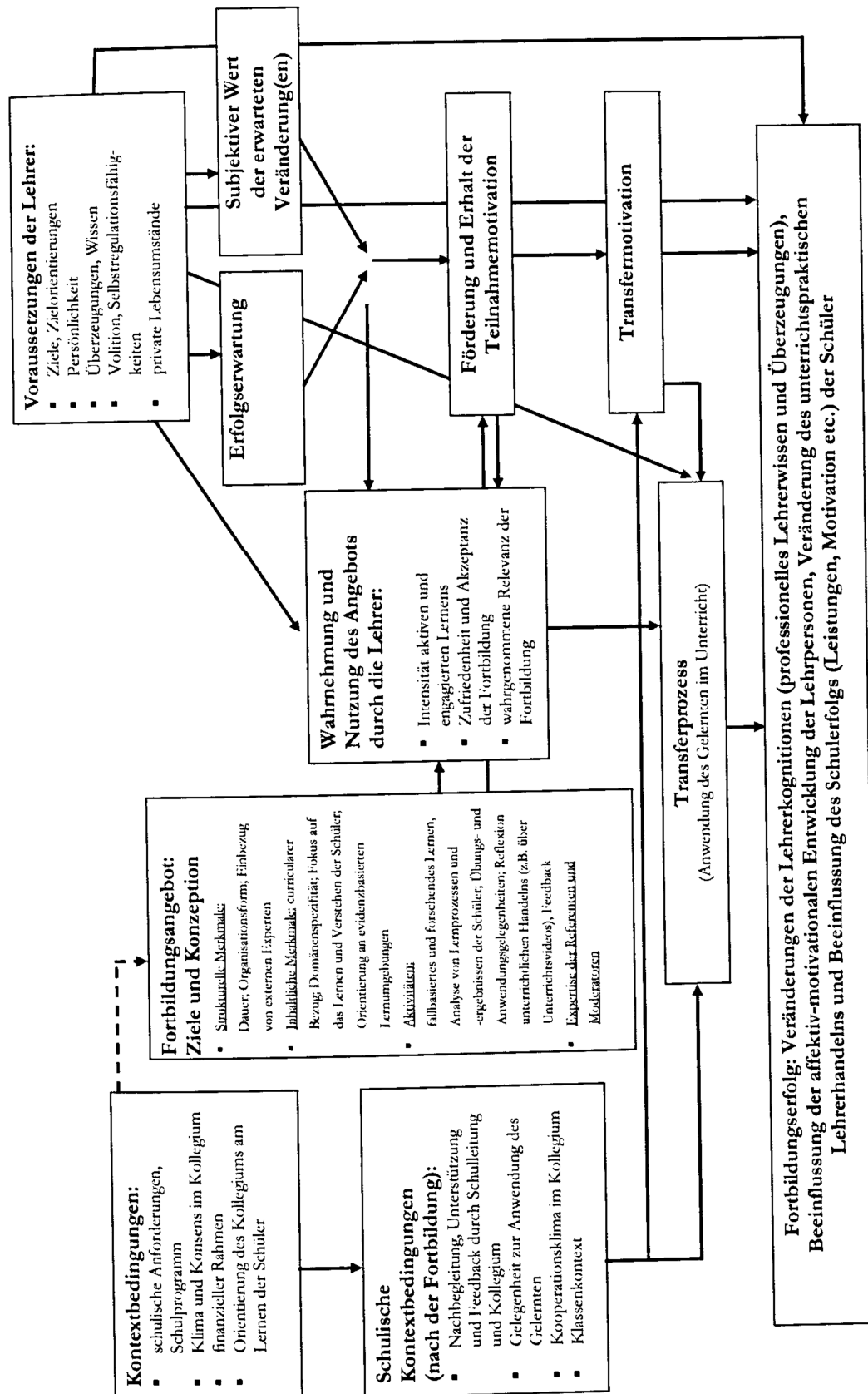


Figure 2.9 - Efficacy of teacher training and teacher development (Source: Lipowsky 2010: 63)

Other features that seem to promote change in teachers are also mentioned by Lipowsky (*ibid.* 64): he draws on recent studies to conclude that it is the opportunities to experience ‘cognitive dissonances’ or even to be challenged in one’s existing beliefs that stimulate the teachers to

reflect on their practice and beliefs and that motivate them to undergo a “conceptual-change-process”. Central in his model is the interrelation between the factors: the individual prerequisites affect teachers’ expectations, which in turn, together with the contextual factors, affect the way in which teachers perceive the relevance of the professional development and their subsequent transfer motivation, i.e. the disposition to apply what has been learned.

The novelties in this model are represented by the inclusion of the following aspects:

- a. the contributions on the side of the teachers is more visible in this model. First, the dimension of awareness, addressed in Freeman (1989, cf. chapter 2.7.1), is foreshadowed under “volition³⁹ and self-regulatory abilities”. Secondly, the model adds teachers’ goals under teachers’ prerequisites, which are assumed to have an impact on development. Lipowsky (2010: 65) remarks that we can theoretically **assume** that “motivational, personality related and cognitive prerequisites” affect the teachers’ attribution of relevance and participation in the teacher development activity on offer. Goal-oriented behaviour is also **assumed** to be essential to development. These aspects are, however, not further specified. Their integration in the model is based on an assumption. The focus of the present study builds on exactly this aspect, in an attempt to shed light on neglected aspects of teachers’ personal contribution to their development, including the role of goal-directed behaviour in teacher development.
- b. by taking account of recent research findings, the model also confirms the complexity of professional development, suggesting caution against viewing a linear connection between teachers’ knowledge, teachers’ action in the classroom and learners’ success. Instead, it makes clear that, in analogy to learners’ learning, a cluster of variables, rather than a single factor, is implied in explaining teacher development.

While the importance of providing professional development opportunities to teachers may seem obvious, the reality too often shows its limits. Arguing for the necessity of sustaining teachers, Hawley & Valli (1999: 137) at the same time denounce the chances to learn available to educators as “usually infrequent, poorly designed and inadequately delivered”. To a large degree there is agreement that professional development must be continuous if it is to yield positive results. Constant support seems to be a critical factor. Campbell et al. (2009: 14), for example, state that there has been ‘a gradual recognition over the last ten years of the importance of continuing professional development’. Garet et al. (2001) conducted a study of approximately 1000 mathematics and science teachers on the effectiveness of professional

³⁹ Cf. Chapter 2.2.1.

development features. They operationalise as “structural features” the characteristics of the structure or design of professional development activities such as form, duration, and collective participation and, as “core features”, the focus on content, the opportunities for active learning and the coherence in teacher professional development programmes. Garet et al. (*ibid.* 935) found that some “structural features”, such as duration and collective participation, and “core features” were more important than the type of learning. Whether the activity was traditional (for instance workshops) or modern (such as mentoring or coaching) was less a predictor of success than sustained support, content-focus and opportunities for active learning⁴⁰. They also argue that the continuous deepening of knowledge and skills is an integral part of any profession, and add that “teaching is no exception” (*ibid.* 916 quoting Shulman & Sparks 1992).

That sustained support of teachers is a key feature for teacher professional development is also confirmed in other research findings. It is precisely in the repeated opportunity to participate in teacher professional development initiatives that the potential for development resides; as suggested in Loucks-Horsley (2000: 2): “effective professional development is continuous, ongoing, sustained over time. We know that it's not just a training workshop, it may begin with a training workshop, but it also has sustained experiences over time”.

There is less agreement as to whether professional development displayed an evaluational character or not. For some, evaluation of professional development activities seems to be necessary to ensure a direct impact on teaching and learning, while others argue against it. Day (1999: 14) doubts that evaluation is meaningful, his logic being that teachers’ work can be assessed in relation to their success in enabling students to achieve the desired results. Although for some, as Hargreaves & Fullan (1992: ix), it is reasonable to think that the “quality, range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth, with the way they develop as professionals”, Day (1999: 57) contends that competence does not necessarily lead to the expected level of performance, for this will be affected by disposition, capacity and context. Tsui (2003: 5) also warns about regarding student achievement as a criterion for determining excellence in teaching.

Alongside these positive positions about the effects of professional development programmes on teachers, there are negative findings, too. What is interesting in these studies is not so much *that* teachers may not show signs of change, but *why* they do not change. Researchers offer some explanations in this regard: teacher professional development initiatives fail to

⁴⁰ This is interesting because workshops have begun to acquire a negative reputation in the relevant literature (cf. Darling-Hammond & Sikes 1999; Diaz-Maggioli 2004; Hargreaves 2000 to quote some).

impact on teachers mainly due to deeply ingrained teacher beliefs. This will be dealt with in chapter 2.4.3. Further evidence for failure of teacher development programmes seems to be ascribed to the fact that they are too theoretical. This issue will be reviewed in chapter 2.4.5. Other reasons why teacher education is not successful are described by Loewenberg & Cohen (1999: 5). According to them, teacher education offers a weak antidote to the powerful years of 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975), which is more effective than formal teacher education. As Loewenberg & Cohen put it, teachers' experiences, i.e. university courses and professional work as well, seem to reinforce the pervasive "conservatism of practice". Furthermore, they contend that lack of change and innovation is only in part due to the context. In my view, the personal professional contributions of the individual teachers stand out in their words as the flipside of the problem:

Weak teacher education, inherited conservative traditions, and little professional capacity for learning and change combine to inhibit reform (Loewenberg and Cohen 1999: 5).

What this capacity for learning specifically entails, is unfortunately not elaborated on in detail in the studies above. Teachers' learning will be more closely examined in Chapter 2.5 and in 2.7, in order to gain more insights into teachers acting as professional learners.

In summary, a significant body of research has produced positive evidence that teachers learn in many different ways and are capable of change. From the perspective of teachers as learners, some features of the professional development programmes seem to be relevant for their professional growth, such as continuous support over time, or opportunities of collaboration with colleagues. Teachers' individual characteristics, such as goals or perception of relevance of the teacher training programmes are also assumed to be central (Lipowsky 2010). However, the evidence is divided as regards the effects of professional development initiatives: they do not occur automatically. The factors that may impede professional growth are mainly teachers' past experiences (Lortie 1975, Loewenberg & Cohen 1999) or their beliefs (Avalos 2011).

The next sections to which I now turn will focus on some of the major factors that are mentioned in the literature for their impact on teachers' professional development. The first is constituted by teacher beliefs, one of the most investigated areas in research on teacher professional development. The role of reflection will follow for its impact on changing teachers' beliefs. The other factor that will be examined relates to the role of theoretical knowledge on innovation and professional growth.

2.4.3 The role of teachers' beliefs in the development process

Since the educational research agendas moved away from the process-product paradigm (Freeman 1996: 360), whereby teaching was understood in terms of the learning outcomes it produced, the teachers mental processes have become a major concern in research on teacher professional development. Within this perspective, educational beliefs, those we refer to when speaking about teachers' 'beliefs' (Pajares 1992: 316), have received particular attention in research as windows to teacher thinking. Teachers' beliefs and their functions will be briefly defined in the next section, before their impact on the development process of the teachers is considered in detail.

Beliefs are generally thought of as personal constructs that people have about the world. Many scholars have pointed out the over-abundance of terms used when referring to teachers' beliefs (Borg 2003; Woods 1996: 192; Caspari 2003; to quote only a few). Pajares (1992: 309), in his attempt to shed some light on this confusion, lists some of the alias under which the elusive construct of teachers' beliefs can be found:

They travel in disguise and often under alias - attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.

Educational beliefs can serve teachers in vital ways. I will sum up the main insights derived from the literature on teachers' beliefs:

- as Pajares (1992: 325) illustrates, they have an existential and ordering function, in that they help people to understand themselves, others and their place in the world ("the nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted"
- they give teachers confidence ("people grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their 'self'", *ibid.* 318)
- they also support teachers' cognitive activity ("organizing knowledge and information", *ibid.* 325) and provide justifications for action (Breen 1991: 215). This function echoes a similar one pointed out by Pajares (1992: 318), who indicates that teachers' beliefs simplify understanding ("help reduc[e] dissonance and confusion").

The list makes clear that teachers' beliefs have fundamental functions. Moreover, through the proposition of the BAK (**B**eliefs, **A**ssumptions and **K**nowledge) construct, Woods (1996) convincingly showed how language teachers' beliefs are intricately interwoven with assumptions and knowledge, forming in the minds of the teachers a unity, whose various

components and their use are difficult to separate from each other.

Language teachers' beliefs have received increasing attention in research on teacher cognition *per se*, as windows on teachers' personal thinking and on their implicit theories of teaching. There is an extensive body of research that attests to the pervasive nature of teachers' beliefs and to their powerful influence on teaching practice (Freeman et al. 2001, Bailey et al. 1996, Almarza 1996, Woods 1996, Borg 1999 and 2003, Richards & Lockhart 1994, Appel 2000). The role of teachers' beliefs and how they shape the approach to teaching has become an issue of growing significance and has been repeatedly considered as central to teacher development. Williams & Burden (1997: 206) argue that "teachers' actions in the classroom and their interactions with their learners will mirror their own beliefs about learning, their views of the world, their self-view, and their attitudes towards their subject and their learners".

Because beliefs affect teachers' behaviour in many ways, this has increasingly been the target of research attention and will be discussed in the following. From the vast corpus of literature on teachers' beliefs some examples are selected here to show how teachers' beliefs affect a) teachers' behaviour in the classroom, b) the implementation of curricula and c) the impact of professional development initiatives.

A) Teachers' behaviour in the classroom - Teachers' beliefs are thought to be one critical factor that influences the types of decisions teachers make. In a qualitative study, Smith (1996) investigated whether teacher decision making was influenced by beliefs about the second language (L2) teaching and learning and found that the central role that beliefs played was evident not only in how the teachers organized curricula or designed tasks, but most significantly in their approach to instruction. The teachers who considered grammar and accuracy to be a priority in instructional goals emphasised the language code, whereas the teachers concerned with language for communicative purposes emphasised student interaction and meaningful communication. Although this behaviour could be attributed to two separate paradigms, i.e. on the one hand the view of language teaching that emphasises the mastery of discrete language items (product approach) and on the other a view of language teaching that emphasises the use of language for communication (process approach), the study also proved that this separation does not exist so neatly in practice. It also attests to a coexistence of the two, showing how complex teaching situations can be and also how far they can be from "clean" research theories. All the teachers in the study thought that student-interaction tasks were "beneficial for learner language development", but were guided by their beliefs and the eclectic use of theory and in the way they implemented the tasks:

The more product-oriented teachers, consistent with their beliefs in the importance of structural mastery, developed student interaction tasks with grammar-based objectives and were more concerned primarily with the accurate completion of the task product. On the other hand, the more process-oriented teachers were concerned more with task process and communicative language use, although they frequently included language code components and products in the task design. (Smith, 1996: 208)

Smith concluded that her findings suggest that theoretical ideas are adopted by experienced teachers **when they correlate with their personal beliefs**. Teachers' eclecticism in their instructional implementations is apparent also in another study in which Appel (2000: 278) illustrates the collision between teachers' beliefs and didactic concepts exemplified in the use of L2 in language teaching. Although the teachers in this study firmly believed in teaching exclusively through the L2, which is also anchored in the national curricula, they very often did not succeed in doing so. Their beliefs constituted the interpretive frame that filtered didactic concepts. In this sense Appel concluded that innovations are successful in language teaching when they solve problems and do not place increased demands⁴¹ on teachers.

B) The implementation of curricula - Investigating the nature of negotiation in content-based Italian courses, Musumeci (1996) for instance, found that the beliefs of the teachers affected the communication in the classroom. She demonstrates that in content-based language classes the focus of instruction is the subject matter and that instruction and communication in the classrooms rely completely on the use of the L2 as an integral part of the course. The rationale behind this kind of content-based instruction is based on the 'modified output hypothesis' by Swain (1993), which stresses the importance of negotiation in directing learners' attention to structural features of the message, prompting continuing refinement of learners' output and – in so doing – allowing them to progress towards higher language learning competence levels. The hypothesis posits crucial consequences for both teachers and learners: they are in fact equal partners and both share the responsibility of making the communication successful. Musumeci proved that teachers fail to signal to their students that their message was not comprehensible: if on one hand they aimed at helping their students save face, on the other they were not promoting the kind of negotiation which, according to the 'modified output model' is necessary for the learners to progress in the development of their language competence. The belief of the teachers in Musumeci's study that it is "*their* responsibility as teachers to make sense of what the students say to ensure that communication is successful" (*ibid.* 316; italics in the original) is at odds with the design of the course, where the negotiation of meaning (manifested in asking for clarification,

⁴¹ As apparently the exclusive use of the L2 does.

signalling non-understanding, etc.) is meant for both sides⁴². This example makes clear how teachers' beliefs can affect teachers' behaviour in the classroom, as well as how they can have devastating repercussions on the implementation of a course and on the core tenets of a teaching approach (in this case the communicative and content-based approach).

Other effects of teachers' beliefs in the implementation of curricula are reported in Avalos (2011: 15), who shows in her review that teachers' beliefs accounted for the limitations and shortfalls experienced during the implementation of teacher development programmes that had been designed to introduce innovative teaching. What these studies make clear is that innovation relies mostly on the teachers' acceptance of what is new (cf. Appel 2000: 18). This is also confirmed by Musumeci (1997) who extends the perspective back to past centuries of language teaching. She focused on the history of Western education and in particular on the guiding principles of three famous reformers from the fourteenth up to the seventeenth century, G. Guarini (1374-1460), I. Loyola (1491-1556) and J. Comenius (1592-1670): three influential practitioners, whose pedagogical ideas were renowned across Europe and had a great influence on the teaching of Latin (at the time the universal language of scholarship) and on education. Their innovative approaches to language teaching failed because of the attitudes and beliefs of those who were involved in the implementation of their ideas (teachers, principals – or, in the case of Guarini, his own son Battista).

C) The impact of professional development initiatives - Changes are extremely difficult to bring about at all (Almarza 1996; Pennington 1996), and teacher education programmes seem to have a very limited impact on changing teachers' beliefs. There is extensive evidence that teachers have internalised models of teaching formed by their "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie 1975) during their early school experience, which constitutes "a more powerful influence than teacher education programmes" (Almarza 1996: 51). Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) have reported that university teacher education does not have a considerable influence on the attitudes and practices of teachers because it seems to be "washed out" by school experience. The limited effects of an education course were also observed by Almarza (1996: 72), who found that there were transformations in teachers' pre-training knowledge, and they were probably due to the teacher programme, but also that this was only superficial behaviour. The pre-existing beliefs were still the basis of their reflections about the ways they taught. Almarza explains that the knowledge teachers derive from diverse personal learning experiences is "rich, diverse, complex, and probably different from the prescriptive mode of

⁴² Interestingly, the beliefs of the teachers in Musumeci's study seem to be in agreement with the expectations of the learners, who judged a teacher positively if her explanations were clear enough, and did not require them to ask for clarification, i.e. to negotiate (Musumeci 1996: 319-20).

knowledge with which they are presented during teacher education” (*ibid.* 51).

Zeichner & Liston (1987: 36) report on two studies about the influence of student teaching experience on the development of student teachers’ perspectives toward teaching. They found that the program had little effect on student teachers’ perspectives toward teaching. Students came into the program with initial attitudes and beliefs about the role of the teacher and the curriculum, and left with those same beliefs essentially intact.

The filtering function of beliefs, addressed above in Pajares (cf. Chapter 2.4.3), is manifest in Marland’s (1995: 131) account, according to which teachers explain what they do by drawing not on what they hear in teacher education programmes, but on “internal frames of reference” deeply rooted in personal experiences, and that are based on “interpretations of those experiences”. In her review of three studies on the role played by pre-existing beliefs, Kagan (1992: 140) found that all three “testified to the stability and inflexibility of prior beliefs and images“. According to Kagan, elements that can shape these prior beliefs are exemplary models of teachers and self-images as learners.

By contrast, positive evidence of the effects of teacher training on teachers’ beliefs are reported in Lipowsky (2010: 55), who draws on recent longitudinal studies (Gärtner 2007 and Lipowsky et al. 2006) which furnish evidence of significant changes in teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practice. McDiarmid (1990: 18) set up a course designed to challenge prospective teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning. Teacher education students were “brought face-to-face with their assumptions” (*ibid.* 12). He found some evidence that the student-teachers appeared to reconsider their beliefs, although he is sceptical about the depth of these changes (*ibid.* 18).

In summary, from the perspective of teachers as learners, research shows that teachers’ beliefs are vital in many ways to teachers. At the same time, it also shows that teachers’ behaviour is affected by beliefs in many ways and that beliefs are regarded as the major hindrance to innovation and professional development. In the studies mentioned above, beliefs about grammar teaching or the use of the L2 seem to stand out, probably belonging to what has been described in past research as “resilient teachers’ beliefs” (Clark & Peterson 1986; A.V. Brown 2009). Although teacher professional development can be represented visually as an unwavering force for innovation and advancement, research on language teachers and teacher professional development show that language teachers are resistant to innovation; this can be illustrated as follows:

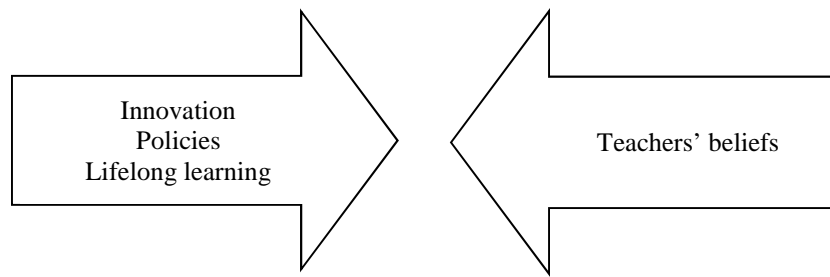


Figure 2.10 - Teacher professional development and teachers' beliefs

The challenge for the field of teacher education is making these beliefs explicit and challenging them, as Richards (1998: 62) suggests. One of the components of teacher development initiatives thought to be essential in acting upon beliefs and boosting teacher development is represented by reflective opportunities, which is addressed in the following section, before turning to the role of theoretical knowledge.

2.4.4 The role of reflection in the teachers' development process

Reflection is a widely researched area because it seems to be necessary to impact on teacher development, and today there is a considerable body of literature that emphasises its importance. Schön's (1983) term "reflective practitioners" contributed enormously to the debate and to its popularity. He criticised the positivist epistemology of the then dominant 'technical rationality' model of professional knowledge, which seemed to him inadequate in accounting for many features of expertise. He distinguished between *reflection in action* (the process of decision making by teachers while they are engaged in teaching), which is context specific, and *reflection on action*, which occurs outside the teaching situation and is not immediately bound to the context and the actions. Schön made a case arguing that reflection enables practitioners to examine their practices and assumptions and thus to identify why they might need to change them. As Day (1999: 27) put it, his merit is to have "legitimized teaching as knowledge-based, intellectual activity in which teachers are not only capable of deconstructing but also reconstructing experience". Another of Schön's merits is to have established an operative direction for teacher education.

The need for language teachers to reflect – as *the* path that may lead teachers to review their own beliefs – is recognised by many researchers and it is now paramount in teacher professional development initiatives to help teachers to reason about their teaching role and practice (Shulman 1987; Day 1999, Richards & Lockhart 1994; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999; Johnson & Golombek 2002). Action research⁴³, is advocated for its potential to lead teachers to reflect. Carr & Kemmis (1986), for example, argue that it is important for teachers

⁴³ Action Research usually refers to those forms of inquiry in which teachers engage in investigations of their own practices, cf. Carr & Kemmis (1986).

to investigate their own practices and beliefs within their own contexts.

Richards (1998) argued for reflection as a key component of teacher development that helps teachers move to higher levels. He considers reflection a process whereby an experience is consciously recalled and evaluated for a broader purpose. Assuming a reflective view of teaching enables the teachers “to develop pedagogical habits necessary for self-directed growth” (Richards 1998: 21). This accords with Day (1999: 22), who states that:

[...] teachers who reflect in, on and about the action are engaging in inquiry which is aimed not only at understanding themselves better as teachers, but also at improving their teaching.

Bailey et al. (2001: 26-44) share a similar view, highlighting other aspects involved in reflection: the major benefits consist of becoming cognisant about oneself, promoting self-awareness and self-observation and adopting a critical attitude towards oneself by challenging one's own personal beliefs about teaching. The authors argue that teachers must learn to be reflective, but at the same time indicate that, because reflection involves affective and cognitive processes, changing is not an easy task and may even be “threatening” (Bailey et al. 2001: 44 quoting Birch 1992).

Despite its uncontested potential, many studies have highlighted the limits of reflection. Reflection is perhaps necessary, but not sufficient for expertise (Day 1999: 2). When time is short, the scope for reflection is limited (Eraut 1994: 144). Also the depth of reflection may depend

on energy level, disposition of the teacher and ability to analyse not only the practice but also the context in which the practice is occurring – all within an extremely short time-frame. Even if longer in-class time for reflection (e.g. when students are engaged in individual reading or writing or self-directed group work) were possible, it would not provide time for deliberative reflection (Day 1999: 27).

Zeichner & Liston (1996: 1) warn against simplistic conceptions of reflection. They point out that simply thinking about teaching does not necessarily imply reflective teaching:

If a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his or her work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions, then it is our belief that this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching”.

Day (1999: 28) specifies that reflection may not lead to development, instead it may actually reinforce experience without re-evaluation, and may be unlikely to result in critical reappraisal or change. In a similar vein, Eraut (1994: 126) states that “most expert performance is ongoing and non-reflective”. Richards (1998) conducted a study to investigate the nature of reflective thinking with in-service TESOL teachers and to determine whether journal writing could activate reflective thinking. He had disappointing and inconclusive results. There was little significant change in the extent to which the teachers developed a greater degree of reflectivity over time (*ibid.* 167).

Essentially, however, the very meanings of reflections are not easy to explain, as the contributions so far show. Reflection gains in significance as attempts are made to understand and to widen its scope or its purpose. Without denying the value of reflective acts for teachers, some researchers have addressed the insufficiency of the construct of reflection. Grenfell (1998) for example, although recognising that reflection and the reflective practitioner are indeed “powerful metaphors”, he nevertheless questions their validity:

But do they exist in reality? Is reflection anything more than a romantic notion? We all reflect in a manner. [...] In other words, human beings are by nature reflective creatures. Is the ‘reflective practitioner’ therefore anything more than a truism [...]? (Grenfell 1998: 15).

The considerations he makes suggest that reflection is a developmental construct: first he points to personal and biographical experiences that can have an impact on the “reflective practitioner” (*ibid.* 12; 15) and further to the fact that, as teachers progress over time in their experience, there is much more to reflect upon besides the immediate teaching situation: “What there is to reflect upon grows in line with experience as this too grows” (*ibid.* 15). Also Lawes (2003: 25) sounds very critical about reflective practice as the “guiding principle” of most of professional development. She has doubts about what many proponents of reflective practice seem to accept, namely, “that insights and personal beliefs constitute all the theory that is needed”, her argument being that reflection is insufficient for a teacher to progress toward professional competence. If reflective practice does not provide a sufficient basis for the development of theoretical knowledge in foreign language teaching, then what does? Analogous to Greenfell, Lawes’ (2003: 26) answer is an attempt to broaden the scope of reflection, by arguing that teachers need to engage in systematic study of the foundation disciplines of education, otherwise they would only hold “faulty interpretation and simply false beliefs about theories”.

The necessity to address the purpose of reflection is manifest in Williams’ (1999: 18) questions:

“For example, is the outcome of the reflection to be an engagement with and reformulation of personal theory? Is it to be an increased self-awareness, a deeper understanding of classroom processes or a mapping of public theory onto personal theory?”.

These questions are, according to Williams (*ibid.* 18), closely related to the teachers’ way of regarding teaching.

Other attempts to broaden the concept of reflection are evident in Jung’s (2010: 46) view that each reflective action leads to the development of competence “when ‘the new’ is linked to its realisation, implementation, exploration”. From this perspective reflection will translate into competence only when it is related to action. This involves an active role on the part of the

learners, who are able to connect the inside with the outside, and setting a dynamic cycle in motion. Jung (2010: 47) offers an interesting view of reflection because it is linked to both competence and competence acquisition (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). In his view reflection is one of the components among the innovative processes by which professionals develop competence:

Jedes Nachdenken über eine verbesserungswürdige Lebenssituation, die Optimierung eines Tätigkeitsvollzug – und sei dieser noch so trivial – wird dann zur Kompetenzentwicklung, wenn das „Neue und Bessere“ nicht nur gedacht wird, sondern Wege der Verbesserung realisiert (erprobt, vollzogen, optimiert, reflektiert) werden.

A similar perspective is adopted by Vieira & Marques (2002: 4-5), who emphasise the emancipatory function of reflective practice for teachers:

Professional reflection is empowering in some important ways: it entails a continuous mediation between pedagogical goals and situational constraints, thus promoting not only teachers' awareness of how their action is historically determined, but also their sense of agency in transforming the conditions of teaching and learning.

Their understanding of critical reflection comprises self-reflection (intended as reflection on one's own projects) and includes 'meta-competence'. In these terms Vieira & Marques' view of teachers' reflective ability accords well with Jung's (2010) and Eraut's (1994) accounts of competence:

Reflection is best seen as a metacognitive process in which the practitioner is alerted to a problem (Eraut 1994: 145).

It also accords with what Scarino (2005: 50) terms "awareness", intended as "an ongoing active and critical process of interpreting and interrogating their [student teachers'] own beliefs, theories, practices, research and those of others".

To summarise: relevant insights gained from the studies on reflection reviewed above indicated that teachers seem to benefit from self-reflection and that they should be supported in this effort. One of the functions that reflection has acquired is related to the teachers' ability to become increasingly aware of their own teaching practices and their underlying beliefs. Reflection seems to be related to self-cognition, and some scholars, Jung (2010) and Vieira & Marques (2002) for example, have highlighted its manifestation in action. Overall, from the above I conclude that reflection is a process of appropriation: of self (self-awareness) and of tools (knowledge, theories and experiences). The fragility and the limits of reflection have also been emphasised in the above discussion. These findings should not suggest that the value of reflective approaches is flawed. Although insufficient in themselves, they remain one of the most promising proposals for boosting professional development. Another element mentioned above which is considered important in increasing teachers' awareness as learning

professionals is theoretical knowledge, to which I turn in the next section.

2.4.5 The role of theoretical knowledge in professional growth

This section focuses on the role of theoretical knowledge in professional growth, because it is another important factor considered beneficial for teachers' professional development. Before looking at the role of theory in professional development and the different positions in this regard, it is legitimate to ask: what is meant by 'theory'? Newby (2003: 34) specifies that theories for foreign language teaching result from many sources: theories of language provided by linguistics, theories of second language acquisition derived from applied linguistics, as well as cognitive psychology, and theories of instruction derived from methodology (cf. also Lawes 2003; Eraut 1994).

Eraut (1994: 59-60) maintains that the term can be understood in a public and in a private sense. He explains that public theories are systems of ideas published in books and discussed in critical literature, whereas private theories are the ideas in people's minds which are used to interpret or explain their experience. His definition of theory therefore includes both. This has important implications, because it excludes

“the use of theory to mean something opposed to, or apart from, practice; because this leads all too easily to the absurd conclusion that an idea is only ‘theoretical’ if it never gets used” (*ibid.*60).

The distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge according to Eraut is not only unhelpful but misleading.

Some of the knowledge we possess is acquired in a formal manner (through training, conferences, readings etc), most of it has been acquired through experience. Some of this experiential knowledge has been reflected upon and organized sufficiently to be talked about or written down. Much of it has hardly been reflected upon or organized at all. Such unorganized experiential knowledge gets drawn upon without people even realizing that they are using it. It is built into people's habits, procedures, decision-making and ways of thinking, without ever being scrutinized and brought under critical control. Thus, people are partly controlled by their own ‘unknown’ knowledge (*ibid.* 75).

“Theory” has very often developed a negative connotation among teachers, for a variety of reasons. Williams (1999: 4-5) argues that theory gives rise to practice when it is personalised: “When a course is labelled as too theoretical, this probably means that there is too much public theory without the opportunity to reconstruct or process it”.

Newby (2003: 33) explains that part of the

“anti-theory reaction to be found among teachers lies in the notion of the word theory, which tends to be put on a pedestal and to be seen as the handed-down wisdom of ivory-tower academics”.

Another possible reason for teachers' resistance to theory is mentioned by Brumfit (1995: 36).

He wonders if the suggestions that come about as a result of research and within theoretical frameworks could be too “clean” for teachers, who

“operate with untidiness [...] Their experience of this gives them insight into classrooms, but also makes them resistant to solutions that try to make them tidy”.

Lawes (2003: 22) also addressed this issue and lamented the marginality of theory in teacher education and attributed this undesirable situation to “the new orthodoxy of reflective practice”, so that today “*practice* has become theory” (italics in original). In this sense what research offers to teachers would seem useless from the practical perspective of the teachers as practitioners⁴⁴. According to Wallace (1991: 11), the notorious dichotomy between theory and practice is a consequence of the applied science model and of the fact that empirical science and “the most ‘scientific’ method” for foreign language teaching, namely, (the audio-lingual method) have failed to account for basic learning problems: despite vast amount of research, “the most intractable professional problems remain”.

Why do theory and practice not go hand in hand? People have their own theories that affect their behaviour, even if they are only partly aware of them. This suggests that theories are linked to our meaning systems and our world views. Eraut (1994: 76) observes that theory is the term we use when we distance ourselves from ideas that we for some reason do not appropriate as our own:

“It is only when ideas have not yet been integrated into people’s thinking and conversation that they get labelled as ‘theoretical’. For practitioners, theoretical ideas are the ideas they do not use or think they do not use”.

If we follow his reasoning, every time that we as teachers interpret or explain actions and experiences, and give a meaning in context, we theorise, we construct a theory. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that every teacher has one implicit or explicit theory. Our own previous school experiences, readings or ideas circulating in the press or in everyday conversations, all influence teachers’ theories. This seems an interesting view of the term “theory”, because it recognises the psychological dimension of teachers’ rejection of theory and also lead us to suppose that when teachers reject theories it is not because they are anti-theory, but because they may already have one, namely, their own personal theory about language learning and teaching.

From the positions on theory examined so far it is not clear what role theory can play in the development of teachers. There is disagreement as to how theory can be useful for teachers’ professional development. Some skepticism (Stern 1983: 23-4) has been expressed about its effects on teacher professional development. Kagan (1992: 163) doubts that theory can mean

⁴⁴ With regard to this cf. Lawes 2003 and Kagan 1992 later in this section.

anything to teachers:

One might begin to question whether formal theory is relevant to teachers at any point in their professional development. A growing body of literature suggests that even the most seasoned and expert teachers build informal, contextual, highly personal theories from their own experiences.

Her scepticism about the significance of theory for the professional growth of teachers is due to the fact that teachers seem to draw on their own informal personal theories derived from experience and not from scientific accounts, so that “classroom teaching appears to be a peculiar form of self-expression” (*ibid.* 164). Appel (2000: 291) found that those teachers who consistently followed a didactic theory, could verbalise their decisions, principles and concepts; where these terms were missing, the strategies were episodic. However, he warns us about the limits of theory for practice. In his account of how language teachers cope with the dilemmas of teaching, he analysed which aspects of theoretical knowledge about language teaching carry over into teachers’ “Erfahrungswissen” (the construct that he coins to refer to the practical knowledge of teachers) and found that it depended on how the concepts make sense to the teachers in the context of concrete teaching situations and of personal prior experiences and values. The consequence was that the teachers in his study seemed to have an understanding of theoretical concepts different from the academic setting in which they appeared, as in the case of communicative language teaching. This would be fine, he argues (*ibid.* 290-291), because ultimately the role of the language teacher has often been seen as that of an “applier” of scientific theories, but the teachers misunderstood concepts or rejected exercises belonging to the communicative teaching repertoire. Interestingly, this also happened when the teaching conception of the teachers corresponded to the communicative approach, which means that teachers partially and arbitrarily take over, apply and adopt theoretical concepts and pedagogical theories. Appel (*ibid.* 274) states that the contribution of theory to teachers is meant to be orientational but discloses that it has a subordinate role for teachers.

The random nature of teachers' relationship with theory is also reported in Smith (1996: 207-8) who investigated whether teachers’ decisions were consistent with theoretical ideas about planning and instruction. She found that teachers select from theoretical ideas those aspects which correlate with their personal beliefs, and modify them in ways that are consistent with their beliefs about teaching/learning (*ibid.* 214). This resonates with Lawes (2003: 24) who reports that theory is useless to trainees who have often criticised their training courses for being “too theoretical” (cf. also Kagan 1992: 141; 144).

What stands out here is the notorious gap between theory and practice. It surfaced, for example, in communicative language teaching as a “research-development-and-diffusion

approach” (Clark 1987 quoted in Appel 2000: 18) which spread from a centre towards the periphery (*ibid.* 18) and was faced with the problem that the necessary conditions to implement this innovation were not optimal. The same gap between certain innovative theoretical approaches and classroom practice is observed by Newby (2003: 40). Although he recognises the role of theory as important, teacher education fails in his opinion to provide the necessary theoretical basis, which is essential if teachers are to carry out a critical dialogue with principles.

The scepticism about the effects of theory on language teachers is somewhat of a surprise if we take a look at relevant models of teachers’ professional development. In many accounts of professional competence, theoretical knowledge plays an important role. In his reflective model, Wallace (1991) includes theoretical knowledge (which he calls ‘received knowledge’) as one of the crucial elements that contribute to professional competence. Shulman (1986: 10), too, recognises the importance of research-based knowledge for teaching. He conceptualises theory as an important component of pedagogical content knowledge, one of the three categories that he proposed in order to illustrate what is meant by “teacher’s content knowledge”:

Such research-based knowledge, an important component of the pedagogical understanding of subject matter, should be included at the heart of our definition of needed pedagogical knowledge.

One possible procedure that helps overcome the dichotomy between theory and practice is offered by those who approach this issue as a matter of development and of gradual appropriation on the part of the teachers. As Calderhead & Gates (1993: 9) suggest, theory becomes part of the process of learning to teach and “the use of public knowledge such as research evidence and academic theories” indicates advanced stages of development. In this sense, the exposure to theory maintains its importance for professional growth. It is exactly this act of engaging with theory that Klippel (2006: 276) has emphasised as inherent to language teaching:

Der intensive Dialog zwischen Praxis und Theorie, zwischen tatsächlichen Lehr/Lernprozessen und deren Erforschung, zwischen praktischer Gestaltung von Unterricht und Unterrichtsmaterialien und deren wissenschaftlicher Fundierung ist für die Fremdsprachendidaktik konstitutiv.

Similarly, Newby (2003: 33) puts forward theory as critical for teacher development:

It is not the new theories themselves but the dialogue with them which moves us forward.

This accords with Stern’s (1983: 35) claim of the necessity for language teachers to have a sound theoretical framework and to engage in theoretical reflections, “if language teaching is to be a truly professional enterprise”.

That the move to higher professional developmental stages is bound to theoretical knowledge is a significant result that emerged in Tsui's (2003) study. Examining the differences between novice and expert teachers, she found that a critical indicator of expertise was not teaching experience, but the way knowledge is developed by the teachers. As Tsui (2003: 247) argues, theoretical knowledge is not a separate domain for the expert teachers, who are "able to theorize the knowledge generated by their practical experience as a teacher and to "practicalize" theoretical knowledge". In a similar vein, Borko & Putnam (1995: 58) claim that change in teaching may require growth in teachers' conceptions of knowledge. It is teachers' interest in theory that is one of the features which distinguishes *restricted professionalism* from *extended professionalism*⁴⁵ (Hoyle 1980: 49-50). If we, as does Day (1999: 22), interpret extended professionalism as "the ability and the willingness to problematise the consolidated practices" through the incorporation of theory in practice, then this ability is a matter of development.

The developmental aspect of theory appropriation on the part of the teachers is particularly emphasised in Johnson (2009: 64). She takes over Vygotsky's (1962) distinction between *everyday-concepts* and *scientific-concepts* and applies it to L2 teacher professional development. The *everyday-concepts* are explained as the beliefs grounded in our instructional histories as learners and the *scientific-concepts* as those formulated in our professional discourse community and defined in formal theories. As Johnson clarifies (*ibid.* 64), the professional development of L2 teachers becomes a gradual acquisition process of building upon teachers' everyday concepts up to understanding scientific concepts, in a dialectic relationship between the two⁴⁶: each is acquired in relation to the other. The scientific concepts serve to mediate for teachers in the advancement of their cognitive abilities and in the creation of the „zone of proximal development“ which enables learners to progress (Johnson 2009: 20).

In summary, theory seems to be an important element that can foster teacher professional development. Many argue that if teachers are to make changes, they must acquire richer theoretical knowledge of their subject matter and of pedagogy (Johnson 2009; Tsui 2003; Lawes 2003 to quote a few), although this is not always supported in practice (Appel 2000,

⁴⁵ In the former, the professionalism of the teachers is intuitive and based on experience rather than theory, whereas in the latter, the teachers are concerned with locating their teaching in a broader context, evaluating their work systematically, and are interested in theory and involved in various professional activities (Hoyle 1980: 49).

⁴⁶ Also Kumaravadivelu (1999: 3-4) speaks of the relation between theory and practice as "mutually informing".

for example). It may be too simplistic, however, to view theory as *the* central factor, but it certainly is of considerable importance in the growth of professional competence.

From the perspective of teachers as learners, theoretical knowledge can be a hindrance but it appears to be a prerequisite for moving towards higher development stages. What all the considerations above also indicate is, in my view, that first, – in analogy to learners' learning – the basic relationship between teachers and theoretical knowledge has dramatically changed and second, theory is a matter of progressive appropriation, adaption to demands and transformation on the part of teachers. Theory requires the teachers to make their own conceptualisation of language learning and teaching, of themselves, and of their roles. This brings the discussion to the last issue under review, namely the studies that specifically have a focused perspective on teachers as learners and on teachers' learning.

2.5 New focused perspectives on teachers as learners

The way we look at teachers and teacher development has changed profoundly over the last few decades. New approaches in research on teacher development indicate a shift from teachers as externally “taught” towards the new and more complex figure of teachers as agents of their own development. In this sense, ‘teachers as learners’ is a recent perspective for looking at teachers. The last two decades have made this angle more prominent in the debate on teacher professionalism. Richards (1998: vii) characterises the shift in focusing on the teachers in second language teacher education from being concerned with “what content to deliver” and “how to deliver it” to how teachers themselves learn. A characteristic of this shift is the recognition (Bransford et al. 2000: 190) that teachers must now face challenging and complex situations and be able to develop new knowledge about teaching and learning. Many of those involved in teacher education would now agree with Tickle (1994: 4) that “the new professionalisation debate centres around the view of teachers as learners”.

Stenhouse, as early as 1975, argued that the “critical characteristics of professionals’ lives consist in demonstrating “a capacity for autonomous professional development through systematic self-study” (quoted in Day 1999: 5). Therefore, serious concern is often expressed when teachers do not seem to recognise the value of professional development activities:

Teachers today are facing challenges that affect their organizations and professional roles as never before ... Professional development activities [...] are often greeted with a less than enthusiastic response because their value and usefulness to practice are not always recognized. Discovering how to change that perception [...] is crucial today. (King & Lawler 2003: 1).

Loewenberg Ball & Cohen (1999: 4) lament that teaching is usually considered a common sense activity and “many people [...] perceive little need for professional learning”. One merit

of Loewenberg Ball & Cohen (*ibid.* 4) is that they uncover some of the misconceptions that in the past did not support teachers' learning. One of the most important is that teacher professional development is "rarely seen as a continuing enterprise". Loewenberg Ball & Cohen express regret that professional development has been characterised by a lack of coherence and consistency and that teacher learning has usually been seen instead as "either something that just happens as a matter of course from experience or as the product of training, in particular methods or curricula". Another merit of Loewenberg Ball & Cohen's (*ibid.* 4) analysis is that it makes very clear that no one really feels responsible for teacher professional development, it not being "the responsibility of any easily identifiable group or agency". This recalls what Balboni (2007: 105) had described as "Far West"-like, when professional development is a solitary, rather self-referential and uncoordinated enterprise⁴⁷, because of the lack of connected initiatives. A third merit of Loewenberg Ball & Cohen's study is that it makes clear what the consequences of a lack of coordination, consistency and validated theories of teacher learning are:

In the absence of these key resources the system limps along, teachers collect materials from different sources, their teaching experience is the principal site for their individual and idiosyncratic development (*ibid.* 5).

Therefore, recent reforms challenge this understanding of teacher professional development as taken-for-granted (cf. also chapter 2.4.1 on the role of practical teaching experience) and place the stress on teachers' learning. According to Loewenberg Ball & Cohen (*ibid.*4):

a great deal of learning would be required for most teachers to be able to do the kind of teaching and produce the kind of student learning that reformers envision, for none of it is simple. This kind of teaching and learning would require that **teachers become serious learners** in and around their practice [...] (emphasis in bold added).

Studies that specifically focus on teachers' learning have illustrated some relevant aspects. In the following, those studies which explicitly discuss this topic are selected and specific aspects of teachers as learners are highlighted.

Singh & Shifflette (1996), for example, claim that two major factors supporting teachers in their professional development are self-awareness and peers. In line with Day's (1999: 2) assertion that teachers "cannot be developed, they develop", Singh & Shifflette (1996: 157) demonstrated that an awareness of the need for change is one of the factors that creates the necessary background for professional growth to occur. But they also point to other factors that promote professional development, and by which teachers learn:

⁴⁷ Author's translation.

Against this backdrop of readiness, external factors, such as interaction with peers and efforts of administrators and staff-development specialists, are taken as opportunities by the teacher to learn and try new ideas. In other words, professional development is a dynamic process triggered by the need to improve and self-awareness and efficacy but continued and sustained by the efforts of others (*ibid.* 157).

A similar focus on teachers' awareness characterises Pennington's (1996) study⁴⁸. Within the implementation of a collaborative model of school-based action research in an attempt to promote a process-oriented approach to English composition, Pennington investigated the impact of different types of input on the language teachers and on their increase in awareness. The input ranged from various forms of training – involving informal presentations and handouts, lesson materials, discussions and sessions for collegial sharing – to individual activities, such as individual meetings with the project head and questionnaires. Pennington's research was based on a parallel between language teachers and language learners and on Corder's (1967) and Krashen's (1981) well-known distinction between input and intake. One assumption of her study was that a change in teachers' awareness and their attitudes is at the base of any other type of teachers' changes. In analogy to Corder's claim, she found that "input does not equal intake" and pointed out some features of teacher learning. Her major results were that 1) teachers can take in only what is *accessible* to them in the available input, i.e. when some aspects of the input are proximal to the teachers in terms of relevance, familiarity and interpretability, 2) teachers' positive attitudes were equally crucial for changes in the teachers to take place. Pennington (1996: 340-3) concluded that accessibility appears to be a necessary condition for input to become intake, while reflection and teachers' favourable attitudes, such as pre-existing interest, may be "the precondition for intake to enter the *teacher change cycle* and to become uptake" (italics in the original).

In the attempt to know more about teacher learning, Wilson & Berne (1999) reviewed a selection of studies about professional development based on criteria which basically emphasise teachers' involvement, and placed special attention on the curriculum and the pedagogy used in teaching teachers. Across all the projects under review they found essential qualitative differences about how teachers were able to change and to learn. The major differences concerned the teachers' participation and their attitudes⁴⁹. As regards the former, some teachers became more focused, engaged in sustained conversations, (going beyond mere

⁴⁸ Her study is part of an entire collection "Teacher Learning in Language Teaching" edited by Freeman & Richards (1996) and dedicated exclusively to teacher learning. Pennington's study has been selected as emblematic for this section on focused perspectives on teachers as learners.

⁴⁹ Wilson & Berne (1999: 184) also found significant differences in the teachers as reflected in their learners' achievements. However, this finding is only mentioned here but not elaborated on because the focus of the present research project is explicitly on teachers' learning processes).

knowledge-exchange), shared more and developed a culture of “disagreement”, whereby the “professional discourse [...] includes and does not avoid critique” (*ibid* 195). In regard to the attitudes, some teachers developed a way of seeing their teaching practice as a site for their continual professional development. Interestingly, all the teachers talked about the need of having a community, but only those pursuing ongoing learning also engaged in their community as a resource to sustain them and as a site for discussing all the ideas and problems encountered in practice. Professional networks proved to be an essential opportunity for the teachers to successfully negotiate tensions and thus proved to be learning opportunities. An important conclusion in Wilson & Berne’s (*ibid.* 194) examination is that teacher learning should be activated, not delivered, engaging teachers as learners. However, they underline relevant aspects involved in teacher learning, such as that teachers as learners are faced with the problem of being “unsettled” (Ball & Cohen 1999 quoted in Wilson & Berne 1999: 200): when learning, teachers may discover or admit to themselves that they have done something wrong in the past, but this may be unexpected for them. Not all of the teachers can then cope with the “disequilibrium” and challenges, which seem to be required to promote teacher learning. My view is that this consideration points to the heavy emotional load implied when teachers are involved in reflective work for their own professional development.

The challenges Wilson & Berne presented us with still puzzle those who are engaged in teacher education. The first challenge considers the forms of professional development on offer to teachers and the poor reputation of workshops. Both teachers and researchers are critical in this respect, which leads Wilson & Berne (*ibid.* 197) to a question with far-reaching consequences for the latter: “Why study something that so many teachers dismiss as less than helpful?”. The second challenge concerns the attitudes of the teachers in engaging in them:

Seldom do teachers come to a professional development program assuming that their views of knowledge or subject matter or students need to change (*ibid.* 198-9).

In my view, this points to one of the most difficult core challenges in teacher education, namely, that often teachers may not perceive the need for change, even when they attend workshops or other development activities. Attending teacher programmes, even if on a voluntary basis, does not presage change in the teachers⁵⁰. Teachers long for technical or methodological help, but this seems to be far from Wilson & Berne’s (*ibid.* 199) deeper understanding of teacher development, as they report:

⁵⁰ This aspect will be further addressed in the Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

teachers' call for new tools and techniques is a legitimate one; all of us who teach are always in need of additional "tricks of the trade". But most professional development that aims at the acquisition of professional knowledge assumes that teachers must engage in learning that goes beyond picking up new techniques.

Wilson & Berne's (*ibid.* 203) suggestion for further research on meeting teachers' needs and research aims still poses a challenge in teacher education.

In an empirical study, Hahn (2007) focused on non-native speaker teachers of English and on the "mutual relationship" of their teaching behaviour (their teaching strategies), their psychosocial variables and their learning behaviour as evidenced in an online hypertext learning environment (CING), designed "as a contrastive and interactive internet grammar of English for students and teachers of English" (*ibid.* 65). In particular, she compared the learning strategies which teachers preferred as learners with their teaching strategies⁵¹.

When claiming that teachers are a special type of language learners, Hahn (*ibid.* 24) lists their main characteristics as being: "very advanced, grammar trained, terminology trained, aware of rules (as a teacher) and focused on rules (as a teacher)". This study discloses another characteristic of teachers as learners. Although it was based on the assumption that successful teachers are autonomous teachers who take their personality as a starting point for teaching, she found that this is not necessarily the case. There was not always a match between their learning preferences and their teaching style (*ibid.* 202-4). When there was such a match, the teaching behaviour was not always successful. Therefore, this was not an indicator of success. In the case of two teachers she found a divergence, in the sense of there being no match between learning and teaching style, but they were nonetheless successful and sensitive teachers. Essential factors that explained teachers' success better than the learning style/teaching style match were the teachers' ability to go beyond their own learning style, emotional involvement and sensitivity in considering learners' needs and in catering for the learners' self-confidence.

The increased concern for teachers' learning is manifest also in Johnson (2009). Drawing on the work of Vygotsky (1962; 1978) and other exponents of the sociocultural perspective of learning, Johnson (2009:2; 17) explicitly looks at teachers as "learners of teaching". By applying the sociocultural perspective to teacher learning, she aims at discovering how teachers develop and how this internal activity transforms teachers' understanding of themselves as teachers. Human agency and the relation between knowledge and learning are fundamental concepts in this perspective. This implies looking at knowledge as socially

⁵¹ Some elements of the CING were designed to heighten the users' awareness of the underlying concepts and of the contrastive differences between German and English grammar, thus supporting them in the task of entering "a meta-level" assumed to be necessary (*ibid.* 69).

constructed and emerging from social practices, and at learning as a dynamic process acquiring and manipulating cultural tools and knowledge. According to Johnson (*ibid.* 2), this perspective is more aligned with the current epistemological changes and thus more appropriate for looking at teacher development because it emphasises the role of human agency in the development process by specifying that “learning is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity”.

Johnson (*ibid.* 20-21) assumes one of the major tensions addressed by Vygotsky, i.e. the dialectic relationship between scientific and spontaneous concepts, to explain the tensions experienced by teachers between theory and practice. The everyday concepts are represented by spontaneous and non-spontaneous ideas, derived either from past experiences or learned by participating in activities, and more or less not accessible to conscious inspection, whereas scientific concepts are those resulting from theoretical investigations and formal theories or acquired through formal instruction. The „zone of proximal development“⁵², Vygotsky’s well-known metaphor for learning, defines for Johnson an “arena of potentiality” for teachers, one in which teachers learn to make connections between scientific and everyday concepts. Johnson (*ibid.* 64) thus recognises the problem of teachers’ difficulties with theoretical issues, and her suggestion is to confront teachers with theory:

One goal of teacher education, [...] is to move teachers beyond these everyday concepts by introducing them to scientific concepts.

Higher cognitive development in her view is bound to theoretical concepts in a dialogic process of transformation. The goal of teacher education, according to Johnson (*ibid.* 65), is to expose teachers to relevant scientific concepts while at the same time assisting them in “making their everyday concepts explicit”, using the latter as a means of internalising scientific concepts. To show how teacher development activities can support this complex kind of professional learning Johnson explains the beneficial effects of inquiry-based initiatives which provide the teachers with the necessary form of meditation they need to grow.

Beyond the common aspects of teacher learning embedded in communities and of teacher involvement, and despite the differences in the contexts and the forms Johnson discusses, all of the initiatives that she describes seem to have two fundamental features in common. Firstly

⁵² Explained as the “the difference between what the child, or novice, is capable of when acting alone and what he or she is capable of when acting under the guidance of a more experienced other” Lantolf & Appel (1994: 10; cf. also Chapter 1.2).

they sustain the teachers in taking the risks implied in the attempt to innovate, and secondly, they are effective means for enhancing teachers' awareness of themselves and of their teaching. Nevertheless, Johnson sounds a note of caution for drawing a causal relationship between teachers' development programmes and teachers' learning, explaining that development hinges on human agency, which unavoidably involves differences in how different people act in response to the same situations. By indicating that nothing is further from reality than the assumptions that "teaching caused learning or professional development *caused* good teaching" (*ibid.* 116; italics in original), she leaves us with the fundamental challenge of investigating "how teachers' professional learning influences their teaching and, in turn, how that teaching influences their students' learning".

In a recent publication, Kwo (2010) edited an entire collection of papers about "teachers as learners", addressing the many ways teachers create their professional identities in different contexts. Two of these papers, Emmett's and Cochran-Smith & Demers's, have been selected here to illustrate some relevant common features. Reporting on the effect of a governmental policy in the Australian context (Victoria), Emmett (2010: 288) describes the positive introduction of standards of professional practice in improving the quality of teaching and student learning. Against the criticism that standards may "stifle diversity" and "constrain pedagogical practice", Emmett (*ibid.* 270) argues in favour of the necessity for education of "defining valued knowledge" in order to avoid epistemic "solipsism" and to reinforce the importance of discipline-specific knowledge and of its related pedagogy. According to Emmett (*ibid.* 288), the outcomes substantiate that the implementation project resulted in the improvement of "teacher quality and student learning". He could demonstrate that what teachers mostly appreciated were the social aspects of the programme, consisting of creating a collaborative supportive environment for all the participants.

Cochran-Smith & Demers (2010), also included in Kwo's collection, advocate the necessity of addressing teacher development from an "inquiry stance". As above, in both Johnson and Emmett, also according to Cochran-Smith & Demers (*ibid.* 21-22), an essential point in teacher development is the relation of the teachers to professional knowledge. "Stance" in fact explicitly stands for the "positions teachers and others who work together in inquiry communities take towards knowledge and its relationship to practice", and an "inquiry stance" connotes a lifelong pursuit on the part of the teachers. This is based on the assumption that teachers consider their teaching practice as a site of investigation, which "involves posing questions, conducting small-scale investigations". The cases they report exemplify the way teachers make sense of uncertainties, and they point out the manifold unsettling difficulties which teachers encounter along the way. Furthermore, they ascribe an essential role to teacher

learning communities in the development enterprise, affirming that it is precisely in these sites that teachers' ongoing learning becomes "visible" (*ibid.*: 40). Overall, Kwo's (2010) collection seems to confirm the results evidenced in Johnson (2009), emphasising in my view the pertinence of social aspects in teacher professional development and on the other hand, the importance of the individual capacity for learning.

To summarise the findings of this section about studies with a specific focus on teachers as learners from the perspective of the present research project, some points can be understood as central. First, as a result of the shift in the way to look at teachers as agents of their own development, some demands placed on teachers seem to stand out: the capacity for autonomous professional development is generally assumed to be an indispensable requirement for teachers' growth. Second, parallel to this request, some deficits have been highlighted, such as the weight of past misconceptions, that often lead us to view teacher development as resulting as a natural matter of course from the teaching experience or from teacher training alone. Third, internal and external factors supporting teachers' learning have been put forward in the discussion: with relation to the former, special characteristics of teachers (Hahn 2007), attitudes related to one's own learning (Pennington 1996; Wilson & Berne 1999) and enhanced awareness of the need for change (Singh & Shiflette 1996) seem to support the teachers' capacity for professional learning. As for the external factors that affect teacher development, peers (Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999, Kwo 2010) and theory (Johnson 2009), stand out as mediating tools that seem to facilitate the complex learning processes of the teachers, i.e. (in Vygotskian terms) the movement towards an increasing internal control by the teachers. Finally, more or less implicitly almost all of them point to the heavy emotional load involved in teacher professional learning.

2.6 Summing up

Taken as a whole, the previous survey has provided valuable information about many aspects of how teachers learn, such as the developmental character of the process of learning to teach or what the promoting and hindering factors are. Notably, overall the studies describe some essential characteristics of teacher development, how teachers have to face external and internal difficulties – the former are represented, for instance, by the "moving target" (Wallace 1991) they pursue, by the enormously extended knowledge-base and by the increasing competence demands in – more often than not – unrewarding working conditions (Egetenmeyer 2010: 40). The internal difficulties comprise instead the continuous reflective work necessary to gain self-awareness and to act upon beliefs and attitudes (Richards 1998; Vieira & Marques 2002).

The studies in the review also indicate other critical difficulties, such as teacher development being undersupported (Hawley & Valli 1999: 137; Balboni 2007; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999).

From the perspective of teachers as learners, besides the obvious cognitive aspects involved in the learning process, the studies so far also point to social and individual aspects. Regarding the former, colleagues and school communities play a significant role, indicating the collaborative nature of teachers' professional learning as a facilitating factor in teacher development (Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999, Kwo 2010 to quote a few). As for the individual factors, special characteristics of teachers, comprising teachers' attitudes towards their own learning and their awareness of the need for change (Hahn 2007; Pennington 1996; Wilson & Berne 1999; Bailey et al. 2001), together with the way they relate to their own professional knowledge (Johnson 2009) stand out as crucial to the development of the teachers. However, the studies do not give conclusive results about many aspects of teacher learning. Firstly, what all the aspects discussed so far really mean for the teachers and how they fit in the development process has not yet been clarified, as well as what teachers ultimately must learn to develop professional competence. Secondly, and more significantly, how teachers concretely proceed, what are their goals, what strategies do they employ, or what procedures they choose is not mentioned and not even explored in the studies. Individual factors have recently been assumed in the discussion as critical to the impact of professional development initiatives, such as goals and teachers' perceptions of relevance (Lipowsky 2010). We can agree with this hypothesis but its value rests on an assumption. Thirdly, also the review about teachers' competences does not clearly conclude what exactly teachers must learn to become "competent professionals". The question of teachers' knowledge base has been debated as well, and further aspects have emerged, such as self-regulative elements (Lipowsky 2010; Stern & Streissler 2007). However, self-regulation aspects have usually been investigated for learners, but not sufficiently for teachers. When they have been addressed in relation to teachers, they are associated with burn-out problems (Baumert & Kunter 2006). Besides, the relationship between all the new components of teacher professional competence is not clear and the fundamental question of what these recent insights now mean for teachers' professional competence has not been addressed.

The present study aims to complement the information available so far, by first pointing to some divergences with respect to the subjects under investigation, the focus, and the aims. Secondly, by indicating relevant gaps in research (cf. Chapter 2.7) and thirdly, by proposing for the discussion a new perspective and empirical results.

The subjects – In the review, studies which investigate the professional development process often involve either (primary or secondary) school teachers (Appel 2000, Stern & Streissler 2007) or specific subject matter teachers (typically mathematics or science; some exceptions: Woods 1996; Hahn 2007; Appel 2000; Tsui 2003). Furthermore, some studies employ student-teachers enrolled in teacher courses (for example, Bailey et al. 2001; Scarino 2005; Tsui 2003) or teachers engaged in action research projects, (Pennington 1996, Johnson 2009). The present study, on the other hand, addresses teachers of different foreign languages in a university context, mostly working on a freelance basis (cf Chapter 3.4 for more information about the participants).

The focus – In the studies conducted so far, teacher development, teacher autonomy and teacher professional competences have been treated separately. Metacognition and learning strategies have been investigated especially for language learners (exception Hahn 2007, however she investigated teachers' strategies related to teaching, not specific to teacher professional learning). This study brings together these areas of research with the aim of providing new insights into the development process of foreign language teachers.

In addition, research so far has focused mainly on what teachers learn, whether they learn and under which conditions teachers learn. How they learn will be a focus of the present study. Furthermore, in these studies teachers' professional learning is largely regarded as “provided for” the teachers, whereas in the present study the learning will be considered essentially as “constructed by” the teachers.

The aim – Some studies in the review aim at linking the development process of the teachers with the quality of a teacher programme (Almarza 1996; Zeichner & Tabachnick 1981; Vieira & Marques 2002) or with the outcomes of their learners (Andreasen et al. 2007; Garet et al 2001; Wilson & Berne 1999) or both (Emmett 2010). In contrast, this study has the aim of exploring what forms self-determined professional development *per se* can take, independently of learners' outcomes or of evaluations related to participation in teacher development programmes.

2.7 Teachers as learning professionals - Framing the research questions

Building on the insights gained from the survey, this section first points to hidden assumptions in the domain of teacher development, secondly it establishes the framework of the research study and the overarching research questions. It begins by indicating the perspective that could be taken when looking at teacher professional development,

emphasising professional development as an autonomous enterprise. After a section devoted to the clarification of some demands placed on teachers and of some relevant terms, the discussion focuses more closely on the concepts of autonomy and meta-cognition. An examination of meta-cognitive strategies and meta-cognitive knowledge concludes the chapter.

2.7.1 Professional development as autonomous enterprise

Despite the increased attention accorded teachers in the learning mode (cf. Chapter 2.5), much is still unknown about their learning processes. Thus far, language teachers have been subject to investigations regarding what they know, what they think and how they learn to teach⁵³, but how they learn to learn for their own development has remained unstudied. Many scholars have continued to alert us to how much is still unclear or not addressed regarding the development of teachers. This is evident in some of the prominent terms that have been used in this regard, such as “The ‘unstudied’ problem” and “uncharted terrain” (Freeman 1996). These terms refer to untackled issues about teacher knowledge and teacher learning. Freeman (2002: 1) has pointed out the necessity of deepening our knowledge about teacher learning as a “core activity of teacher education”, and he included in his model of teaching (Freeman 1989: 33-6) two elements: the attitude and the awareness⁵⁴ of the teachers (cf. Figure 2.11). A teacher’s attitude refers to the stance towards oneself and the activity of teaching, while awareness is defined as “the capacity to recognize and monitor the attention one is giving or has given to something”.

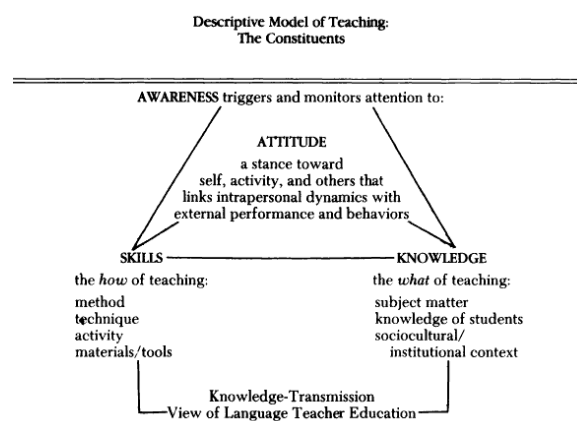


Figure 2.11 - Freeman’s descriptive model of teaching (Source: Freeman 1989: 36)

Freeman (*ibid.*33) attributes to awareness a superordinate function which can “account for the

⁵³ A general limitation of these studies is that, due to the varieties of ways through which teachers learn about teaching and learning, it is difficult to generalise about the quality of the learning experiences of the teachers (cf. Bransford et al. 2000: 190).

⁵⁴ Awareness is a complex and much debated issue. For an extensive account of awareness please refer to Polanyi (1958); to Schmidt (1995) for attention and awareness in language learning.

appropriate mobilization, interaction and integration of these constituents”. Through the core components of awareness, attitude, skills and knowledge, Freeman addresses important aspects of teaching as critical variables in teacher development, such as the teachers’ personal factors, (here, attitudes and awareness) and the necessity for the teachers of having more control over themselves. The internal monitoring work of the teachers thus becomes an integral part of the development process. However, some observations are necessary here. To begin with, this aspect of teacher learning has been neglected in subsequent accounts of teacher development and I agree with Freeman in assuming it to be as fundamental an aspect of teacher professional development as the self-construction process itself. However, only scarce attention has been paid to “understanding how the processes of teacher learning actually unfold” (Freeman 1996: 351), and interestingly enough, Freeman’s observation still appears to be true. Furthermore, despite Freeman’s effort, some aspects are still not clear in Freeman’s account, such as what do attitudes mean exactly and what should awareness be directed at. Therefore, leaning on Kohonen’s (2000) plea about the necessity of making the learning process more ‘visible’⁵⁵, it is time to heed his call and apply it to teachers’ learning. What is puzzling about teacher development is the growing inventory of demands and expectations placed on the teachers – all are based on taken-for-granted and interrelated assumptions, as is demonstrated in the following:

1. Lifelong learning – Lifelong learning results in the implicit demand for teachers to be up-to-date with respect to recent developments in their field. Teachers are expected to engage in the pursuit of professional development throughout their career (Hill 1971; Camilleri Grima & Anthony Fitzpatrick 2003; Day 1999: 4). They are also expected to be able to change their attitudes (Kelly 2011: 31).
2. Reflective abilities – Teachers are expected to engage in a process of reflection on their professional activity in order to improve their practice (cf. Chapter 2.4.4).
3. Teachers as agents – Teacher agency refers to the teachers as active constructors of their own professional development (Johnson 2009; Valli 1993: 18; Calderhead 1993; Tickle 1994: 2; 203; Richards 1998: 65). This shift is associated with the insight that learning is a cognitive process which hinges on individual learning factors and presupposes an active role of the learner (Wenden 2002; Lantolf & Thorne 2006: 209; 214).
4. Autonomy – Implied in the new role of the learners as active participants in and constructors of their own learning, is a new learning competence based on the concept of

⁵⁵ I am adapting the title of one of Kohonen’s (2000) articles: “Student reflection in portfolio assessment: making language learning more visible”.

autonomy, regarded as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec 1981: 3). The core competences of autonomy involve being capable of defining objectives, content and methods, and of monitoring and evaluating the process. The concept of autonomy further involves developing a critical stance toward oneself, with a strong accent on the importance of controlling one’s own learning process and on meta-cognition. However, this competence can not be taken for granted (Holec 1981: 22), just as learners’ ability to learn autonomously cannot be.

All of the assumptions listed above can be very clearly perceived in the many educational efforts and policies of the Council of Europe, or, as an example, in the report about teachers’ professional development from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

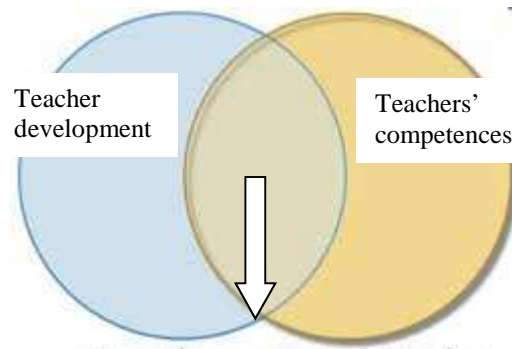
The education and professional development of every teacher needs to be seen as a lifelong task.... (OECD 2010: 12)
... encouraging all teachers to be reflective practitioners, **to be autonomous learners in their own career-long professional development**, to engage in research, to develop new knowledge and be innovative (*ibid.* 13; bold emphasis added).

Under the characteristics of “high-quality teacher education and continuing professional development”(*ibid.* 14), the authors of the TALIS report mention “transversal competences” as necessary for teachers. What these consist of is not specified.

All the demands based on the assumptions outlined above have in common the concept of teachers as autonomous learners. However, some questions remain unanswered. Firstly, Loewenberg Ball & Cohen (1999: 4), point out what can be considered a historical intrinsic bias, namely, that in the common sense view of teaching, “sustained learning was not required for adequate performance”. If this corresponds to reality, then how should teachers be able to accomplish everything that is implied in the demands listed above and be in charge of their professional development in an autonomous way? The author argues therefore that both concepts “autonomous” + “learners” are not self-evident when they are applied to the teachers. In addition, regrettably enough, despite the increase in interest regarding autonomy, most of the work is focused on learners’ autonomy, leaving its implications for teachers and teachers’ experiences of autonomy underdeveloped (Lamb 2008: 6). Furthermore, the concepts of agency or of ownership concerning one’s own professional development do not explain why certain teachers do progress, develop and are able to change their practice while some others do not. Finally, the insights gained from reviewing the two bodies of research on Teachers’ Competences and Teacher Development (cf. Chapter 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5) show fundamental points of overlap in the domain of meta-cognition, as suggested by the inclusion

of self-regulatory⁵⁶ abilities as a prerequisite of professional competence (Weinert 2001; Jung 2010), as well as a prerequisite of teachers' readiness to perceive the need for change (Lipowsky 2010). Nevertheless, what are the implications for teachers?

The questions left open by the review of literature on teacher development and teachers' competences are graphically summarised here:



Hidden assumptions:

- Teachers as autonomous learners
- Self-regulation and metacognition

Figure 2.12 - Hidden assumptions in teacher professional development

The perspective of self-regulation has not yet been exploited nor fully integrated into theories of teacher professional development. It is however the perspective which it is suggested in this study for gaining some more specific insights in order to investigate the contribution of the teachers to the development task. I hypothesise that what is expected of the teachers rests on many invisible demands and possibly on one specific competence (beyond the other teachers' competences addressed in Chapter 2.2), basically on a meta-competence in its own right: **Professional Development Competence**⁵⁷.

From this hypothesis the fundamental question arises: What are the essential features of this competence? When viewing the task of teacher development from this perspective, how do language teachers approach their own professional development? Given that the underlying processes involved are not directly observable, what would be an appropriate operationalisation of the construct? As a meta-competence responsible for self-regulation,

⁵⁶ Self-regulation is used as synonym of autonomy. For the use of these terms, cf. the following section in this chapter.

⁵⁷ As Weinert (2001: 53; 56) captures in his extensive discussion of the concept of competence, the more general a competence, the smaller its contribution and the lower its effectiveness in guiding concrete learning and thinking processes. Because of this consideration and because the processes behind the professional learning of language teachers have not been studied sufficiently, I argue that it is necessary to advance our understanding from the more general available insights to a more specific 'teacher professional development competence'.

there is a strong accent on meta-cognition, which is intended as the conscious control over learning (Brown 1987; Kluwe 1987): as such it governs cognitive functioning (Bokaerts 1999; Wenden 2001; Flavell et al. 2002; Zimmerman 2000; Schmitz 2001). The way this meta-competence involved in the task of teachers' development is conceptualised in the present study relies mainly on what studies about meta-cognition have suggested, and on Holec's (1981) concept of autonomous learning. Two central concepts will be introduced for this purpose: autonomy and meta-cognition. They will be addressed in the next section, following the necessary clarification of the terms used.

Clarification of the terms

One fundamental distinction regards the use of the terms: 'autonomy', 'self-regulation' and 'self-direction' are some of the most commonly used terms⁵⁸. 'Self-regulation' and 'autonomy' are used in the cognitive literature, whereas 'self-direction' is preferred in the literature on second language learning, as Wenden (2001: 50) helps to explain. Wenden (2001: 50) also shows how they refer to the same processes, such as those "by which learners plan how they will approach a task, their task analysis and how they actually monitor its implementation". In Holec's (1981: 3) seminal definition, autonomy is viewed as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", while 'self-direction' refers to the kind of learning that results from having acquired autonomy, basically the way in which learning is accomplished (Pemberton et al. 1996: 3). Despite the overlap of meaning, with the accent in the concept of 'autonomy' being more on the *ability* (since Holec's classical definition), and both terms 'self-direction' and 'autonomy' being used in adult education, these two terms seem better suited for application to teacher learning for the purpose of this study.

Another preliminary consideration regards the relationship between metacognition and autonomy. Although they sometimes recur as synonyms (Gourgey 2001: 18), they are not equal. As Wenden explains (2001: 50), in cognitive research, metacognition is thought to be critical in the self-regulation of learning (cf. also Mayer 2001: 89). Self-regulation can thus be seen as the superordinate term.

The following section will briefly define the central concepts of autonomy, and then proceed to examine the essential aspects of meta-cognition.

2.7.2 Autonomy and self-regulation

The construct of autonomy, as well as of self-regulation, is – as Bokaerts et al. (2000: 4)

⁵⁸ Other terms used are 'independent learning', 'learner control', 'independent study' (Götz 2006: 6) or 'self-access' (Little 1997).

admit – very difficult to define. Holec's (Holec 1981: 22) definition provided above emphasises, for example, the aspect of autonomy as an *ability*, which has to be acquired, as adults are rarely capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning. From this perspective, self-responsible adult learners are operationalised as those who are capable of taking charge of all the decisions regarding their learning, such as: planning (determining the objectives and defining contents and methods), monitoring and evaluating the learning process. It should be noted that all these decisions begin with establishing the goals, involving an awareness of the final outcomes the learners aim at, before the learners can go on to select contents and procedures (Holec 1981: 29). The evaluation of the process is crucially included as an integral part of the learning process, and considered as an indicator that the learners are assuming responsibility for self-regulated learning (Holec 1981; Zimmerman 2000; Huttunen 2001).

Others consider self-regulation as the key to successful learning (Dickinson 1997: 94; Bokaerts 1999: 446; Bokaerts & Niemirvita 2000; Zimmerman 2000) and as an essential component in every kind of learning, both internally and externally regulated (Schiefele & Pekrun 1996). The importance of meta-cognitive approaches to autonomous learning has been emphasised by O'Malley et al. (1983 quoted in Rubin 1987: 23) who claim that "learners without meta-cognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or the ability to review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions".

In addition, self-regulation and autonomy do not mean isolation. According to Holec (1981: 22), autonomy, as the process of increasing the ability to take charge of one's own learning, does not exclude others, such as the teachers, who have the essential role of encouraging or preparing for the development of this ability. Autonomy being a possibility, the contribution of the context is to promote and support this tendency (*ibid.* 34).

Lastly, what is central to the understanding of autonomy is the concept of 'participation', which defines the relationship between the learners and knowledge as one of responsibility, implying that the learners are expected to build up their knowledge independently of the teachers. Thus autonomy can be seen as the process of developing a sense of the consequences of one's own contribution to learning:

"participation in education (...) must be learnt, does not occur automatically and is not a response to a spontaneous aspiration" (Holec 1981: 22).

The autonomous perspective is not without critical aspects. The overstress on the promotion of autonomy, self-direction and self-management has been criticised (Usher et al. 1997 quoted in Illeris 2009: 149) as too restrictive, because the pedagogies relying on these concepts have been thought to ignore that the self and the learner are socially constituted. The present study

acknowledges this criticism and concurs with those views of adult learning which claim that any situated activity is not only a matter of “cognitive acquisition (of facts, knowledge, strategies or skills)” (Lave 2009: 202), but rather also has collective, cultural and historical features. Focusing on teachers as agents and emphasising the “learner as manager of their learning” (Holec 1987: 147), is not intended here to ignore the social aspects or to simplify complexities, it is actually an analytical and operational decision. The concepts of self-regulated and autonomous learning behaviour ultimately rest on the ability to become aware of and take control of one’s own learning, which is the essence of meta-cognition, the concept that the next section intends to examine because of the essential implication for the present study.

2.7.3 Meta-cognition

After a short description of some relevant aspects, I will highlight the role of meta-cognition as one important component of teachers’ development.

Meta-cognition has become one of the major fields of cognitive research during the last 40 years. The term refers to the way learners direct their cognitive activity in learning situations and is commonly associated with active control over and awareness of one’s own learning process. The term is not always used in a clear way. As Gourgey (2001: 18) points out, the concepts used as synonyms to metacognition range from thinking skills, or metacognitive awareness up to considering metacognition as the equivalent of self-regulation. Meta-cognition has been considered as an indication of competence to learn (Götz 2006: 7), and as one of the key aspects of self-regulation (Bokaerts 1999: 449; Wenden 2001: 45). As such, meta-cognition constitutes an essential component in all self-regulation models (Götz 2006: 12).

One of the major initiators and exponents in the field of meta-cognition is Flavell (1987: 22), who explains that meta-cognition refers to the mental activities which govern our cognitive functioning and which is called ‘meta’ because its core meaning refers to cognition about cognition. Although “cognizing about cognition” is as old as Plato and Aristotle⁵⁹ (Brown 1987: 70), the term has recently gained increased relevance. Weinert (1987: 7) testifies to the tremendous attractiveness of the term by acknowledging that a veritable ‘meta’ flood⁶⁰ has washed over psychology and developmental psychology since Flavell initiated research in this

⁵⁹ A. Brown traces a short history from Plato to Spinoza and Locke (Brown 1987: 70).

⁶⁰ Kluwe (1987: 31) helps to disentangle the intricate developments in research on meta-cognition explaining that meta-cognition refers mainly to meta-memory, i.e. the knowledge about how memory functions, however “the immense body of research, especially in developmental psychology, published under the heading of meta-cognition, relates mainly to ‘meta-cognitive knowledge’”.

area.

Flavell (2002: 164) explains that the “meta-cognitive territory includes both what you know about cognition and how you manage your own cognition”. In this way he distinguishes between two relevant concepts: meta-cognitive processes or strategies⁶¹ and meta-cognitive knowledge, both of which are central in the construct of meta-cognition. According to Wenden (2001: 44), the former can be defined as the deliberate operations that learners deploy to approach and manage a task, whereas the latter refers to what learners know about their cognition and is also termed ‘meta-cognitive awareness’ or ‘meta-knowledge’. In the following, a short overview will provide a summary of the relevant information derived from Wenden (2001) to illustrate the two constructs.

2.7.4 Meta-cognitive strategies and meta-cognitive knowledge

The meta-cognitive strategies are planning, monitoring and evaluation. Wenden (2001: 45-47) explains that planning (or task analysis prior to task engagement) is the strategy by which learners plan what to do. This process implies considerations about the purpose of the task (whether they are aware of what they expect from the task and whether it is relevant to their needs and goals), and about the type of task and the demands that the task places on the learners.

The strategy of monitoring is divided into sub-processes, such as self-observation, and assessment. Self-observation refers to the ongoing attention learners must pay to various aspects of the task, their progress and the factors that may facilitate or impede this progress (here monitoring seems to be similar to volition or to alertness). Assessment refers to learners’ evaluation about what they understand, the effectiveness of the method, meeting the goals. Depending on the result of the monitoring process, the learners decide whether or not to take remedial action or change the goals.

Meta-cognitive knowledge, the “specialized portion of learners’ acquired knowledge base” (Flavell 1979 quoted in Wenden 2001: 45), refers to what learners know about themselves, their cognition and the learning task. Its characteristics are that it develops, can be brought to consciousness, is relatively stable and is stable (Brown 1987: 68). Meta-cognitive knowledge is subdivided into three types of knowledge: person knowledge, task knowledge and strategic knowledge.

Person knowledge relates to the knowledge about how cognitive and affective factors (such as

⁶¹ Wenden (2001: 50) refers to planning, monitoring and evaluation as “meta-cognitive strategies” and also as “meta-cognitive processes”. Hereafter I prefer the term “meta-cognitive strategies” because it seems to be used more, and also because switching between the two terms can be confusing.

age, aptitude, personality or motivation) may influence learning. Flavell (2002: 164) elaborates on this type of knowledge, specifying that it also includes what we tacitly come to know about how the mind functions and “universal properties of human cognition”.

Task knowledge refers to learners’ awareness of how to approach the task and to their awareness of the purpose, type, and demands of the learning task. According to Wenden (2001: 45-6), this appears to be the most complex type of meta-cognitive knowledge and includes expectations of how the task will serve their needs, or knowing what knowledge and skills are required, how to go about it and being able to anticipate the level of difficulty.

Strategic knowledge is represented as general knowledge about strategies, about how best to approach the task; basically it refers to what learners learn about the means by which they are “likely to succeed in achieving cognitive goals” (Flavell 2002: 165; Flavell 1987: 23).

Meta-cognitive strategies develop hand in hand with meta-cognitive knowledge (Flavell 2002: 166). Wenden (2001: 63) elucidates the relationship between the basic components of meta-cognition and provides evidence that meta-cognitive knowledge is a “prerequisite to the deployment of these self-regulatory processes”. In her account, the meta-cognitive strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluation depend on the types of meta-cognitive knowledge learners bring to the task and on their reflective attitude. Moreover, she claims that although meta-cognitive strategies are believed to be fundamental to self-regulation, if they “fail to make contact with a rich knowledge base, they are weak” (Wenden 2001: 50; cf. Kluwe 1987: 34). Meta-cognitive knowledge is therefore considered vital for the regulation of learning and it is essential to the effective use of strategies (Wenden 2001: 45). As a consequence, if the learners **are not aware of the nature, purpose, and demands of the task** the processes of planning and subsequently monitoring and evaluating cannot be implemented.

Wenden’s results are compatible with the model of self-regulation suggested by Schiefele & Pekrun (1996: 271). The model shows the factors which influence the learning process. Irrespective of who is in control (internal = self-regulated, or external = regulated by the teacher, the context, the method etc.) Schiefele & Pekrun demonstrate that the learning process must always be planned, executed and evaluated. The model highlights clearly that in the internal control mode of self-regulation, the meta-cognitive activation of the learners is utmost and includes motivation as an important factor of the process.

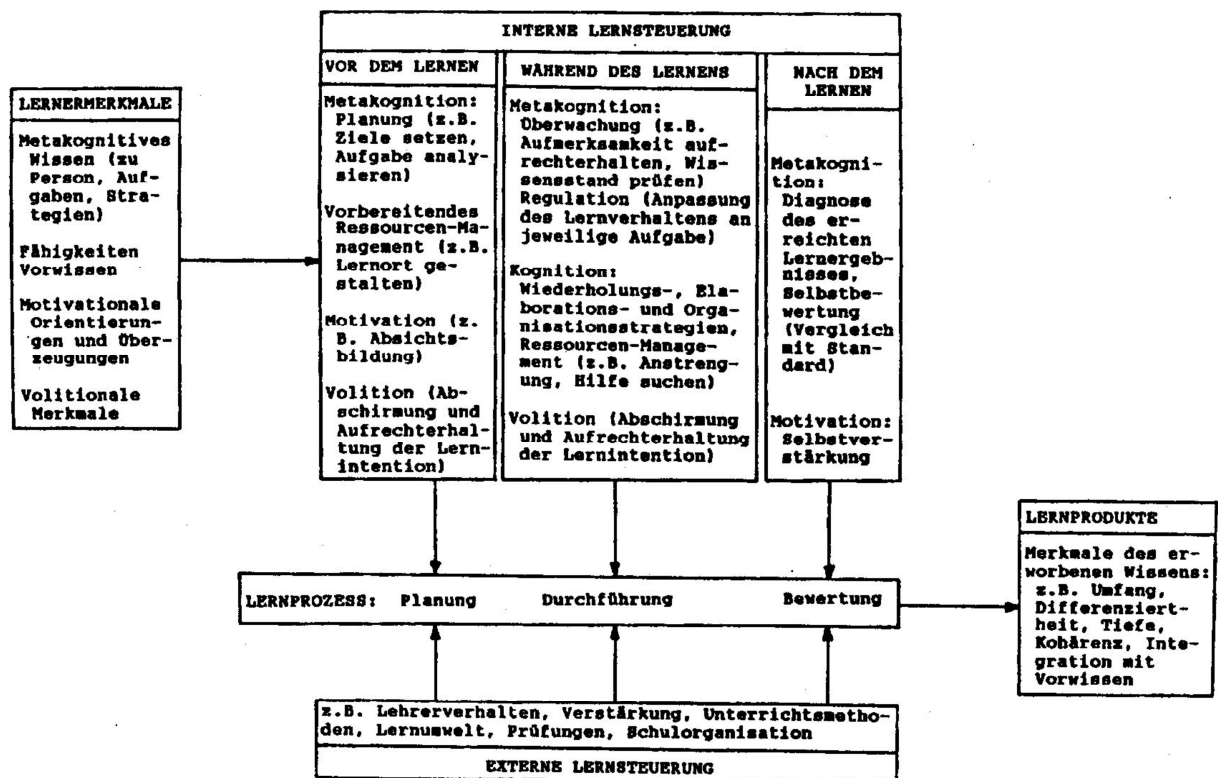


Figure 2.13 - Self-regulation Model – Source: Schiefele & Pekrun (1996: 271)

As in Wenden, meta-cognitive knowledge influences the meta-cognitive control strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluation in the model of Schiefele & Pekrun as well. One difference is related to prior subject knowledge: according to Wenden it is included under person knowledge, whereas in the Schiefele & Pekrun's model it is separated but still comes under the learner characteristics which influence the deployment of meta-cognitive processes. Another difference regards volition⁶², which is separate from monitoring in Schiefele & Pekrun, but is a sub-process of monitoring in Wenden. Lastly, Schiefele & Pekrun add the motivational orientations and convictions of the learners to the factors that influence meta-cognitive processes.

In essence, Wenden and Schiefele & Pekrun claim that learner characteristics ('meta-cognitive knowledge' in Wenden) influence the learning process. In the present study, however, the term "awareness"⁶³ of self" seems to be better suited than "learner characteristics", because the process of becoming aware of the 'professional self' is a central aspect of professional development.

Another model suggested by Götz (2006: 17-22) specifies that each one of the central meta-

⁶² Volition refers to all the processes devoted to attention, motivation and emotional control (Corno 1993), relevant to translate intentions into an effective plan of action and to protect the learning intentions (Schiefele & Pekrun 1996; Götz 2006: 23)

⁶³ Awareness is a complex and much debated issue. For an extensive account of awareness cf. Polanyi (1958); to Schmidt (1995) for attention and awareness in language learning.

cognitive processes (planning, monitoring and evaluation) can be planned, monitored and evaluated. The mutual relations among meta-cognition, goals, resources, volition and strategies are made more explicit in this model (Figure 3.4a and Figure 3.4b).

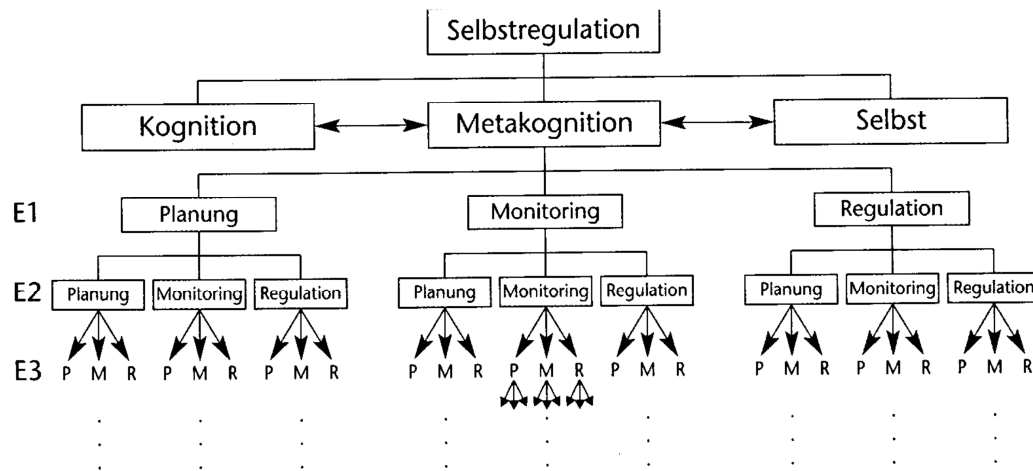


Figure 2.14a - Multilevel model to promote meta-cognitive competences. (Source: Götz 2006: 17)

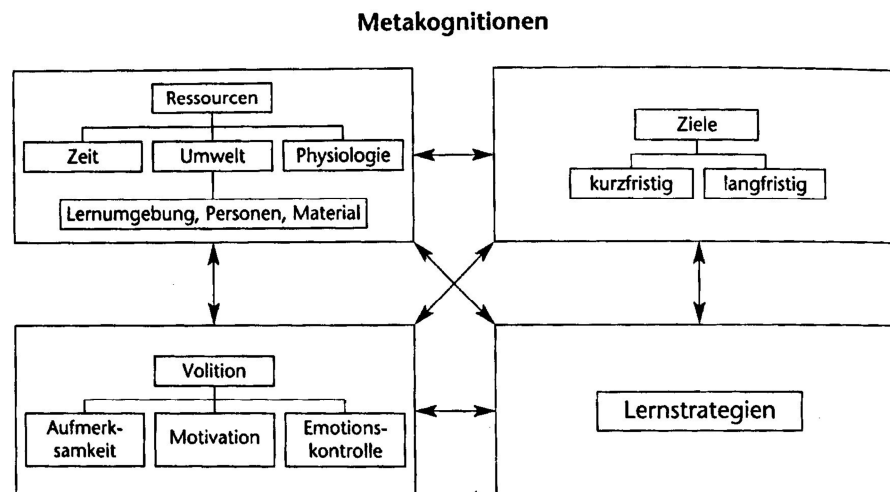


Figure 2.14b - Aspects of planning, monitoring and regulation – (Source: Götz 2006: 20)

The model emphasises the central role of goals (2006: 22), which must be realistic, but also demanding in order to be motivating. Furthermore, goals must be set by the individuals themselves. Götz explains that strategic planning has a pragmatic function, because it enhances feasibility, and has an affective function as well, because when the partial successes of learning become more tangible, motivation increases. Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, both can lead to success, the difference seems to be in the depth of elaboration and assimilation.

What is the significance of meta-cognition for this study? Recurring to what Rubin (1987: 25) explains, the function of meta-cognition is for learners to “oversee“ one’s learning and some consider meta-cognitive awareness as the cornerstone of development (Huttunen 1986; Wenden 2002). Its relevance has recently increased to such an extent, that nowadays meta-

cognitive competence is expected and even taken for granted (Schmitz 2001: 151). Applied to the perspective of ‘teachers as learners’, the concept of meta-cognition is relevant in many ways for the present study.

1. First, as the result of the introduction in cognitive science of meta-cognition as an **executive function** which regulates mental processes (Wenden 2002: 34), investigations in the field of second language research about ‘the good language learner’ in the 1970s indicated that the influence of learning strategies was considerable. Learners were then thought to excel not just as a matter of motivation and language aptitude, but also thanks to their active contribution to the learning task through the application of a rich repertoire of learning strategies (Schmitt 2002: 178). As Flavell (2002: 164) points out, meta-cognitive skills play an important role in self-regulation and self-control. Research on learning strategies showed that students who demonstrate a wide range of meta-cognitive skills perform better and more efficiently (Wenden 2002; Palincsar et al 1993; Rosenshine & Meister 1994). Schmitz (2001) has further emphasised the role of self-monitoring and of the significance of self-regulatory competence for successful learning.

2. Some key concepts in meta-cognition have been recognized as particularly essential in learning: goal setting and access to self. In terms of goals, Bokaerts (1999: 451), for example, points out that “the way learners construe themselves as learners, particularly the goals they set for themselves” defines their meta-cognitive awareness (cf. also Wenden 1998: 21). Simons (1992: 257) highlights lack of goals as a factor that hinders successful learning. Finally, the importance of self-set goals has also been emphasised (Huttunen 1986; Lemos 1999). With respect to the other key concept of self-awareness, work on meta-cognition has made the interconnections with the different dimensions of the self more evident. Both Bokaerts (1999) and Götz (2006) include the self in their models, with wishes, expectations, and motivation as important prerequisites for learning. Meta-cognitive approaches seek to develop in the learners an awareness of what, why and how they are succeeding with the goal of developing the abilities of self-managing the cognitive processes that render lifelong learning possible. Applied to teacher development, this would imply an awareness of oneself as a learning professional. The role that the key concepts and especially goal setting, as described above, play has been investigated for learners but its role in teacher professional development has been neglected.

3. Meta-cognition has also made the learning process more ‘visible’: Kohonen (2000) insists on the importance of making the learning process more apparent to the learners, by making them aware of their goals and their learning outcomes. Studies in cognitive psychology indicate that we are often not aware of our thinking processes, of our strategies and learning

styles (Bokaerts 1999: 448; Flavell 2002: 168; Götz 2006: 14), therefore it is claimed that it is useful for the learners to develop meta-cognitive sensitivity. One logical extension of self-regulation and meta-cognition to teacher professional development would be that teachers as learners need to **become aware** of and to take control of their own learning. As Little (1997: 36) claims, “access to self” (i.e. awareness) is “a prerequisite of learner autonomy” and this is argued here also for teachers in the learning mode. However, the meta-cognitive aspect of learning has been intensively researched mostly for learners, but not for teachers. Similarly, although the role of strategy use and especially of meta-cognitive awareness has been highlighted in studies on successful learning, it has been neglected in studies on teacher professional development. It is therefore argued in this study that as long as teachers’ learning remains tacit, it will not be present in teachers’ minds. What is tacit or not articulated cannot be tackled or acted upon, and from this it follows that making these implicit assumptions about teachers as learners explicit for teachers’ own scrutiny is crucial for professional development. This aim is pursued in the present study.

When holding the hypothesis that autonomy and meta-cognition are essential components also for teachers’ learning and seeing the task of teacher development from this perspective, the overarching research question⁶⁴ becomes:

How do language teachers approach their own professional development?

⁶⁴ Other sub-questions originated in the course of the data analysis and will be presented in Chapter 3.3.

3 Design of the research project

This chapter describes the design of the research project. The first section is concerned with some relevant definitions and with an explanation of the rationale behind the empirical study. The chapter then provides a detailed description of the context of the Teacher Development Programme KommUNikation, the design and the research process. It proceeds with a description of the participants and of the methods of data generation, and illustrates the design of the questionnaires and the interviews. Other relevant issues regarding the role of the researcher and ethical considerations are included in the last sections.

Structure of the chapter:

- 3.1 Qualitative research
- 3.2 The Context: Teacher Development Programme *KommUNikation*
- 3.3 The Research Design
- 3.4 The Participants
- 3.5 Methods of data generation
- 3.6 The role of the researcher
- 3.7 Ethical issues

3.1 Qualitative research

In this first section qualitative research is briefly defined. Along with definitional issues, also the contrast with quantitative research will be highlighted. Subsequently, the underlying principles for choosing this approach will be presented.

3.1.1 Definition, characteristics, contrast to quantitative research

Over the last decades, the field of empirical research has undergone great changes that can be compared to “methodological revolutions” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: ix). The changes relate to the tensions between the two major paradigms of research, commonly known as quantitative and qualitative research. In Nunan & Bailey (2009: 5) the two historically dominant approaches to classroom research are also defined as psychometric and naturalistic inquiry. The former refers to research approaches concerned with “frequencies and distributions of issues, events or practices by collecting standardized data and using numbers and statistics for analyzing them” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 472). The latter is interested in analysing and reconstructing “the subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices” (*ibid.* 472) by seeking access to non-standardised data and attempting to gain analytical depth instead of statistics. While the strengths of quantitative research consist in the identification of patterns or structures through the measurement of a great number of

cases, qualitative approaches⁶⁵ allow us to go beyond the statistical data and to explore and reconstruct relationships, complexities and subjective “systems of relevance⁶⁶”, thus producing a “depth of insight that quantifying approaches can not attain” (Kruse 2009: 12).

The two concepts have long been used contrastively, however it has now become standard to regard them as complementary and equivalent methodological approaches that operate in different ways and with different logical systems. Qualitative approaches have increasingly succeeded in gaining recognition in the field of social sciences, so that their establishment has been called a “qualitative revolution” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: ix). One of the basic differences between the two paradigms relates to the claims that research can advance: quantitative approaches believe in the possibility of accessing truth and objectivity from a “value-free framework” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 10), whereas qualitative approaches challenge this claim, aware of the “value-laden nature of inquiry” (*ibid.* 10) and of the subjectivity of knowing in any research. As a consequence, results and findings are always considered selective and partial approximations of truth. Qualitative approaches thus do not claim statistical significance, but critical awareness (Shank 2006: 89), and a conscious reflectiveness of the researcher (Kruse 2010: 9; 14). They attempt to generate the critical differences in the data, not relying on numbers, but on the meanings that emerge through the analytical process.

3.1.2. Rationale for choosing a qualitative approach for this study

A qualitative approach and an explorative, interpretive stance seemed suitable for this study for the following reasons: firstly, it is a question of appropriateness and secondly, there is a number of distinctive traits. As for the former, **appropriateness** (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 5; Flick et al. 2008: 22; Steinke 2008: 326), the research approach should be apt, adequate and should fit the object of inquiry rather than be a methodological *a-priori* credo: we, as researchers, need not adhere *a-priori* to a research paradigm because of its assumed superiority, as Nunan & Bailey (*ibid.* 5) propose, but should “choose data collection and analysis procedures that are appropriate for answering the research questions we pose” (*ibid.* 5).

Both, quantitative and qualitative research approaches, have demonstrated that they can offer valuable insights – although different in nature – to explain phenomena. Both aim at generalisations and explanations (Oswald 1997: 73). And both, psychometric and naturalistic

⁶⁵ For an overview of the different approaches understood under the term, cf. Denzin & Lincoln 2005: xiv; 2-6.

⁶⁶ The “systems of relevance” are believed to be at the basis of the actions and interactions of individuals (Schutz 1970: 321).

inquiry, fall under the same cover term of “empirical research” as “research based on collection and analysis of data”, as Nunan & Bailey (2009: 9) point out⁶⁷: they only represent “different families, or cultures, of empirical research”. However, **the distinctive traits** that, according to Flick et al (2008: 22-24) and Steinke (2008: 326-331) characterise qualitative research, are additional grounds for choosing the qualitative approach for this study. A selection of them will be discussed in detail in the following⁶⁸, along with the reasons why they seem more appropriate.

Sensitivity towards everyday knowledge of the participants and the specific context - Qualitative research has demonstrated a strong sensitivity towards the everyday knowledge of the participants and the specific contexts in which it naturally emerges. The setting of the present study (cf. Chapter 3.2 The context for more details) is naturalistic, not created for the research purpose. Within the Teacher Development Program *KommUNikation*, as a point of departure, it was pertinent to ask: How do the teachers participate in the professional development programme? How do they behave as learners themselves? Do they perceive any benefit from the workshops for their teaching practice? As “learners of teaching” – (Johnson 2009) – to what extent are the teachers aware of their own learning process? How do they approach their own professional development? In addition, teachers are talkative people, this was another reason why the interview approach (cf. Chapter 3.5.3) was considered appropriate for the current study.

Sensitivity towards the different perspectives of the participants – Another important characteristic of qualitative research is the sensitivity towards the different perspectives and ‘meanings’ of the participants. Qualitative research is “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”, as Shank (2006: 5) defines it. Applied to this study, it led to questions such as: What does professional development mean to the teachers? What do they attribute value to? What are their priorities and goals? And what affects their decisions and actions? Focusing on the subjective interpretations and attitudes of the teachers towards their own professional development was one of the central questions within this study. Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 3) argue that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: trying “to

⁶⁷ In line with Nunan & Bailey (*ibid.* 4-5), I am also “not willing to take sides in what has historically been the quantitative-versus-qualitative debate” and I share with them the belief that “no single approach to Language Classroom Research is superior to others”.

⁶⁸ To make these traits explicit, I refer to some of the quality criteria mentioned by Flick et al (especially Nr.2 to 8, cf. 2008: 22-24), by Steinke (2008: 323-331) and also considered by Ehrenreich (2004: 136-138).

make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. From this perspective the researcher made every effort to guarantee that these meanings came to the surface, and that the teachers expressed what *they* saw or perceived as chance or challenge or any other aspect they felt as relevant to them⁶⁹.

Still, one has to consider that it is not possible to elicit an objective knowledge about these subjective perceptions. Rather, the research process is one of an active co-construction of meaning. In this sense, in qualitative research the participants’ views complement the researcher’s perspective and the participants can be seen as co-researchers. Flick et al. (2008: 17; 23) note that qualitative research integrates the views of the participants as "social constructions" and point out the active co-construction of knowledge (cf. also Kvale & Brinkman 2009: 18) that results from both the contribution of the participants and the researcher’s decisions. Qualitative research is the place where “the process of knowing through conversations is intersubjective and social”, as Kvale & Brinkman note (2009: 18).

Openness and flexibility – Since Glaser & Strauss (1967) conceptualized the Grounded Theory⁷⁰, the aspects of openness and flexibility within the research process have been further strengthened in qualitative research. Glaser & Strauss’s (1967: 40) main concern was to broaden the researchers’ task, from verifying theory - which they saw as restricting - to discovering novelty “that might change the theory”, as qualitative research is primarily data-driven. Also according to others, Steinke (2008: 327) and Reichertz (2008: 281-4), for instance, being prepared for surprises is a major aim of qualitative research, which depends on the stance of the researcher towards the data and their own previous knowledge. The focus in this study was kept open and broad from the beginning and the researcher’s background knowledge was intended not as a limiting lens, but rather – similar to Mason (2002: 17) – as a springboard for launching the research “puzzle”, so that data are connected with current debates (*ibid.* 17). Certainly, openness in qualitative research depends heavily on the way we design the search for newness. For the current study, this is reflected in the way the researcher designed the interviews and in the way the resulting data were analysed, both in the effort to bring to the surface *teachers’* reasons and understand them without imposing external criteria. This is explained more in detail in the section about the research process (cf. Chapter

⁶⁹ The research questions had not yet been fixed when conducting the interviews (cf. Chapter 3.3.1). This contributed enormously to adhering to the criteria listed above, especially when considering the criteria: "Sensitivity towards different perspectives" and "Openness".

⁷⁰ As Shank (2006: 129) notes, Grounded Theory is a “method of building theory from the ground up”, as an attempt to understand complex phenomena “by starting at ground zero” and by “letting the data themselves guide the growth and development of the theory”.

3.3; cf. also Chapter 4).

Contextuality and complexity – As Flick (2009: 15) points out, the openness of qualitative approaches to complex phenomena is best suited for tackling complexities in their contexts and not in artificial situations. Thus, depth and multifaceted research objects are the very domain of qualitative research. Many critical voices have pointed out the limitations of quantitative research approaches, when it comes to exploring new and very complex aspects, and language learning and teaching are excellent examples of complex phenomena. It can easily be argued that the research questions posed in this study are too complex to be explored only through quantitative data collection and analysis. Qualitative research seems here more appropriate for achieving depth in these complex and barely quantifiable aspects. From the perspective of the current study, the researcher's concern of guaranteeing complexity is reflected in the researcher's decisions (for ex. choosing open-ended questions) and in the 'breathing space' conceded to the participants and to their subjective perspectives.

*Understanding the phenomenon*⁷¹ – “Depth, nuance, complexity, rather than surface” (Mason 2002: 65): going beyond the surface and the merely quantifying level is another strength of qualitative research. The epistemological principle behind this approach is understanding the phenomenon under examination. There is some disagreement as to whether qualitative research should describe rather than explain. Flick et al. (2008: 23) advocate “understanding”, whereas others claim that qualitative research should “produce explanations, rather than claiming to offer mere descriptions” (Mason 2002: 7; cf. also Oswald 1997: 73). The attempt *can* be made to explain, but at the same time we must be aware of the limitations of all kinds of actions in research; therefore, any claim must be considered in its context, which does not necessarily mean that the explanatory potential of research is diminished or must be excluded beforehand.

In this sense qualitative research creates a tension that involves all participants, including the researcher. For the present study this relates, on the one hand, to the views of the participating teachers, and to the willingness on the part of the researcher to understand experiences, meanings, expectations and feelings that accompany the teachers' professional development as they are. On the other hand, the criterion of 'understanding' relates to the reflexivity of the researcher (cf. Flick et al. 2008: 20), which ranges from being explicit about her own prior knowledge, expectations and all decisions in selecting and designing the research project, to striving to be open enough to guarantee that the voices of the participating teachers come

⁷¹ For this quality criterion of "Nachvollziehbarkeit" cf. Flick (2009: 384-385).

through. As Steinke (2008: 324-6) cautions, all this influences the results.

To conclude, qualitative research advocated from its beginning the ability to discover “unknown aspects in known worlds” (Oswald 1997: 79⁷²), providing “groundbreaking work” (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 15). Because of its potential to discover new concepts that have epistemological value⁷³, a qualitative approach was believed to be better positioned to help discover in this study “a previously little researched reality domain⁷⁴” (Blumer 1973 quoted in Flick et al. 2008: 25; author’s translation). The relevance of this procedure for this study is reflected in the resulting theory, more specifically in the empirical, data-grounded nature of the theory that inform teachers and researchers about barely investigated aspects of teacher professional development. Specific research desiderata in relation to lack of theory development for teacher learning have been expressed (cf. for example Wilson & Berne 1999: 203-4) and the present study is an attempt to help explain which teachers’ characteristics matter in teacher professional development, why and in what ways.

3.2 The Context: Teacher Development Programme *KommUNikation*

This study originates with the teacher development programme *KommUNikation*. This project, ran from 2005 until 2007, started at the Language Center (at that time: FFP – Fremd- und Fachsprachenprogramm) of the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität Munich (LMU)⁷⁵. It was funded by the Bavarian State Ministry of Sciences, Research and the Arts and by the European Social Fund and was intended to sustain all the teachers of the Language Centers at Bavarian Universities.

In its statement, the project explained its relevance, and pointed to an increasing need: since the significance of foreign language competence has increased remarkably during the last decades, language learners needed to be sustained in their aspirations of availing themselves of job opportunities on the international labour market and, as a consequence, this necessitated adequate academic support.

The practical implications were twofold: on one hand, they were manifest in the language courses on offer at the University Language Centers, which are characterised by a rapid progression and differ in their nature from school language classes and from adult language teaching as well. On the other, it also affected the teachers, who were to be intensively

⁷² Author’s translation.

⁷³ Flick et. (2008: 24) speak of “erkenntnistheoretische Konzepte” and of “entdeckende wissenschaft”.

⁷⁴ “einen bislang wenig erforschten Wirklichkeitsbereich”.

⁷⁵ The author was the coordinator of the Programme.

supported with appropriate continuing education in university teaching, in order to be able to stay abreast of continuous academic changes. This was deemed necessary, as university students at the University Language Centers are no longer primarily concerned with literary texts and with scientific texts as well, but rather are required to cope effectively with authentic intercultural situations, a competence which goes beyond merely linguistic competence. These demands unavoidably impinged on the language teachers at the universities, who needed to align their teaching to the needs of the students and to accommodate the rapid scientific advances in the domain of language teaching.

In recognition that the language teachers had been underserved⁷⁶ up to that time, the project aimed at supporting the professional development of language teachers at the Bavarian University Language Centers. The project offered materials developed specifically for academic purposes for five languages (English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish), together with a series of workshop sessions for university language teachers. Teachers could participate voluntarily, and a certificate was awarded as optional at the end upon completion of various activities and written tasks.

Supporting these language teachers was thought to be especially urgent because there were not enough academic materials for the different languages and also because university language teachers are neglected as far as the provision of training and development opportunities are concerned. The initiative was therefore a sort of local cornerstone for higher quality issues in academic language teaching, in line with the increasing demands posed by the current European policies, the epistemological changes in our society and the process of globalisation (Jarvis 2004; Egetenmeyer & Nuissl 2010).

3.3 The Research Design

In designing the programme it seemed fundamental to assume a constructivist perspective. Constructivism sees people as active agents and focuses on the active role of the learners in the process of learning (Vygotsky 1978; Lantolf & Appel 1994; Lantolf 2003). From this perspective, learning is the very personal accomplishment of constructing one's own understanding and one's own knowledge from experience in the social context and relies thus on the individual's responsibility. Constructivist approaches to learning accentuate the ways in which learners create their knowledge and their understandings (Williams 1999: 12) and consider it to be central to learning that learners become aware of their existing knowledge

⁷⁶As some researchers note, professional development is mostly pursued as a private matter or as private concern: "The majority of professional development opportunities are attended on a voluntary basis" (Lawless & Pellegrino 2007, quoted in Stamouli *et al.* 2010: 120; cf also Balboni 2007: 105)

and schemata (*ibid.* 13). These fundamental tenets at the basis of the constructivist perspective on learning were thought to best suit the research aims of this study.

Two characteristics define the main features of the programme: reflective and nonevaluative, which are explained in the following. As for the former, embracing a constructivist approach to teacher development suggested adopting a methodology that takes into account the professional role of the teachers and calls for a reflective approach for all participants, including the researcher. Reflection is constitutive of in the professionalisation process (Richards 1998; Richards & Lockhart 1994, Calderhead & Gates 1993, Zeichner & Liston 1987; cf. Chapter 2.4.4). In turn, the overall approach of the programme was reflective, encouraging teachers to engage in reflection and examine the assumptions that underlie their practice and their thinking about their development. Similar to Richards (1998: 3; 75), also Almarza (1996: 75) advocates a reflective approach to professional development: “preservice Teacher Education should help teachers to be more in control of their professional development and provide opportunities to approach the profession from a much broader perspective than merely a method”.

As Maslow cogently explains (1970: xiii), learning can notoriously imply chaos, disorientation and change in people; old assumptions are tested or adapted, and it can be a difficult or painful process that may, for this reason, be avoided. It was not expected that teachers would embrace every idea, theory or input, but rather that they have the opportunity to reflect on themselves as learners and become aware of their own stance in their field. As Sendan & Roberts (1998) argue, the process of professional development involves the teachers in reflecting upon and restructuring their ideas, finding their own ways to achieve a clearer organisation of their personal theories (cited in Borg 2003: 89). The importance of giving them the opportunity to reflect, detect and express any conflictual issues was seen as the most valuable goal of the KommUNikation programme.

Accordingly, independently of the trainers and the topics of the workshops, a ‘reflective framework’ for the workshop sessions was developed, consisting of distributing questionnaires before and after the workshops. The framework supported teachers’ construction of meaning and knowledge through a tripartite structure:

PHASE 1:	> workshops>	PHASE 2:
reflection before the workshops		reflection after the workshops

The first phase was a ‘motivation and orientation phase’ in which it was considered important to let the teachers step back in a reflective stance and become aware of their expectations, motives and prior knowledge before the workshops began. The second was a ‘monitoring and synthesising phase’, in which the participants could reflect on themselves, on their

experiences, on the learning gains (or on possible conflicts) and so systematise their experiences and their knowledge.

The second main feature of the programme was nonevaluative: the focus was on supporting the learning process rather than looking at learning products. Observations of the teachers in their practice in the classroom⁷⁷ or other methods of validating data that might have sounded “evaluative” to them were intentionally omitted, to avoid teacher “anxiety”, as testified in Hahn (2007: 24).

3.3.1 The Research Process

It is important for qualitative research to document how the theory emerged (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 27; Steinke 2008: 324). My interest in this topic originated from personal and professional interests and from my own experiences as a language learner and as a teacher. I had always been fascinated by teachers who were able to motivate their students and had always looked at teachers and wondered what makes them be competent and professional. As I began to read about research on teachers and teacher development, what became strikingly clear in the literature was how diverse teachers can be. When I began my job as the coordinator of the Programme *KommUNikation*, I had already read some publications about teacher development. It was obvious, if not mandatory, for me as a coordinator to reflect on what the programme would mean to the teachers and how it could benefit them. In this way, many questions arose when designing the programme. I assumed that workshops might be seen as a symbolic place of change and that if individual beliefs existed, they would probably be influential when teachers encountered new input during professional training.

At that time there was no intention on the part of the researcher of beginning a PhD project, but it was deemed very interesting to explore in a small scale study what the impact of teachers’ beliefs was. A *pre-post* questionnaire was considered an appropriate method. In this sense, the design of the questionnaires was independent of a PhD project, and would probably fall under “Action Research”⁷⁸.

An important factor that influenced the researcher in the design of the questionnaire was the time restriction: the participants had to fill in some mandatory forms (due to project funding) at the beginning of the workshops, which would take between 5-10 minutes to complete. Consequently, the issue of appropriateness with respect to the length arose: adding another

⁷⁷ Even then, serious doubts are cast on observing teachers in the classrooms as an objective measure, because the observer is not free from personal theories, beliefs or more or less implicit expectations that may filter, and thus influence, the observation.

⁷⁸ Cf. Chapter 2.5.

form would increase and surpass the expected load on the participants in an undue manner. For this reason, a very slim questionnaire was designed, with a minimal amount of questions, for which filling in the time would not exceed 5 to 10 minutes. Nevertheless, time still constrained the scope of the data that could be generated.

Over time my research interest remained focused on teachers as learners, but shifted from the role of teachers' beliefs to the ways the teachers approach their own professional development. When I began the PhD, I decided to build upon the small scale *KommUNikation* project and entered the second phase of this research study (cf. Figure 3.1). Because of the brevity of the answers in the questionnaires, a follow-up measure seemed necessary. In search of an adequate technique to help reconstruct teachers' approaches and their subjective theories (Groeben et al. 1988) about professional development, some considerations were fundamental. It was thought important for the participants to illustrate their answers in free forms that would bring to light their implicit assumptions. It became clear that we had at our disposal only indirect ways of uncovering their "systems of relevances" (Schutz 1970). It was also important to rely on techniques which could easily obtain the consent of the participants, in other words techniques that have the communicative validation of the method (Flick 2009: 156).

In this sense, the familiarity of the participants with the technique was considered an important advantage. Flick (2009: 160) warns against the irritations that methods can produce due to the non-standard nature of the procedure, which might hinder unplanned issues from surfacing. This would be a big loss, for we attempt, as qualitative research approaches strive to do, to arrive at unexpected results (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and attain an abductive stance (Reichert 2008). In light of all the considerations above, and in order not to jeopardize the naturalistic nature of the setting implied in qualitative research, the widely spread "interview" was thought to be an adequate technique for this study. Other reasons why the interview method was chosen were that interviews are not only very flexible and sensitive tools (Kvale 2005: 11), but also because, as time went by and while reading the responses to the questionnaires, my research interest changed, and other questions stood out in relief (specifically the teachers' contribution to their professional learning). Interviews appeared to be adequate instruments to tap into their agency and to investigate the way teachers construct their 'professional self' and shape their own learning process.

Looking generally at the responses to the questionnaires (Research Phase II in Figure 3.1), unrelated categories and properties emerged, that became a guide for the further data 'generation' and development of a loose structure of questions for the interviews. Looking at the data without a specific aim of verifying a theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 40), there was

enough space for “discovering novelty” (*ibid.*40) and unexpected aspects, which Kvale & Brinkmann (2009: 112) consider in line with the purpose of an exploratory study.

It was as a result of the interaction with the first data from the pilot interviews, the subsequent interviews with the teachers, the literature and the continuous reflective process on the data, that basis for the data analysis originated (Research Phase III in Figure 3.1) and the process of data analysis began (cf. Chapter 3.5.4). The whole research process, graphically represented in Figure 3.1, has a qualitative orientation.

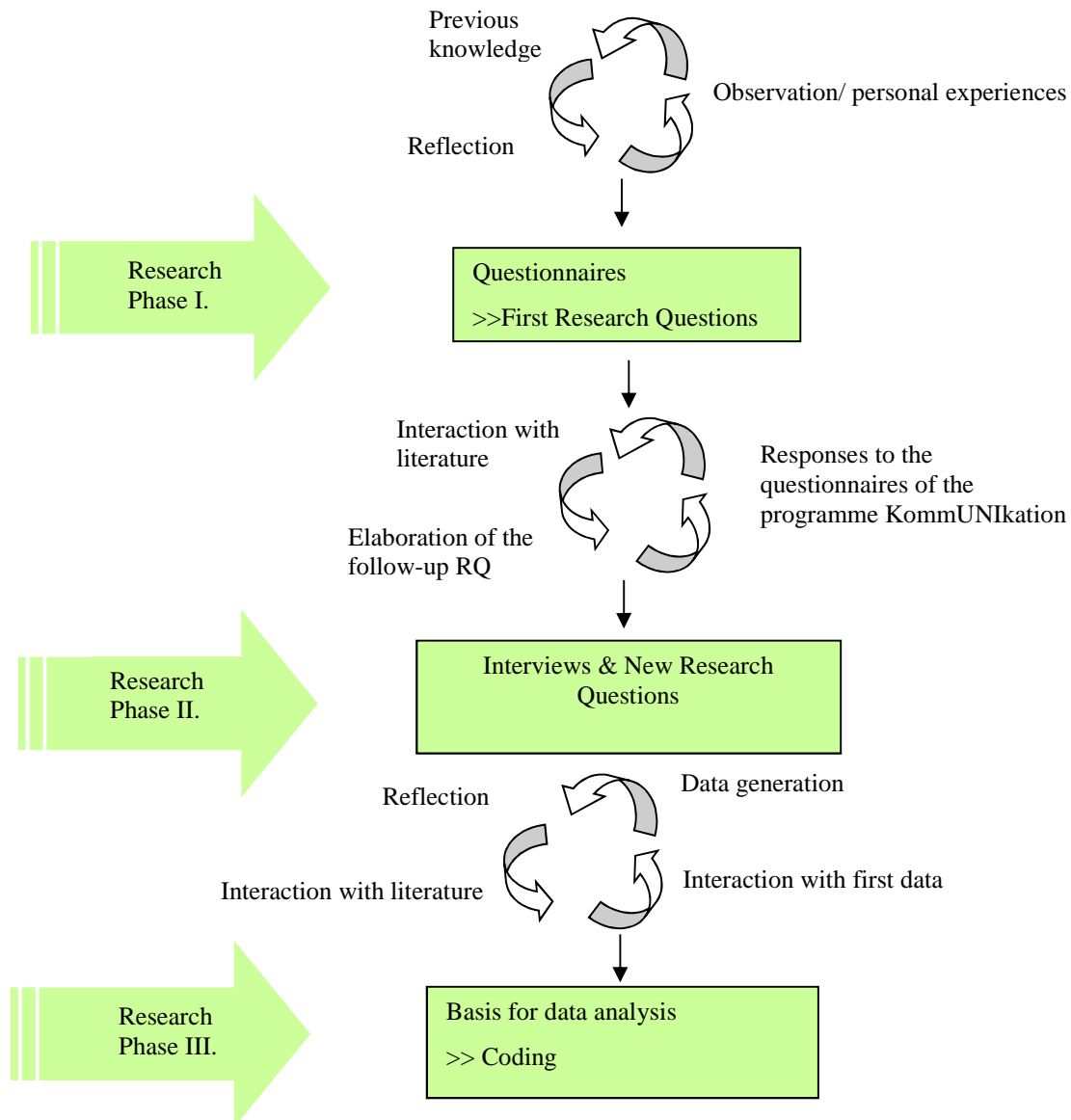


Fig 3.1 - Graphic representation of the research process

3.3.2 Background knowledge of the researcher

Research is in my view a self-generating discourse. Ideas, hypotheses and research questions do not originate in a vacuum. It would be naive to think of the researcher as a neutral “eye”, without any assumptions or hypotheses. Instead, it is more realistic to view researchers as a point of confluence of personal ideas (assumptions, beliefs, etc.) and external views, such as

those expressed in the field at hand, in this special case in the discourse on professional development. Thanks to this self-generating discourse we can advance, as “dwarfs on the shoulders of giants”⁷⁹. For this reason, it is nearly impossible to approach research without any sort of background, indeed we do have some assumptions, or questions, or even intuitions, that emerge and evolve through the interaction of a number of factors and influences. The very fact that we focus on a topic and design questions in a questionnaire or in an interview indicates that we definitely have thoughts guiding us in certain directions, based on ideas (questions or intuitions) that have some relationship with past research achievements or results. As we can read in Mason (2002: 20) “often qualitative research will use existing literature or research as a background or springboard for launching their own research in ways which connect it with current debates”. Meinefeld (1995 quoted in Meinefeld 2008: 269) too, argues in this regard that

“insights about social phenomena do ‘not’ emerge on their own, they are the constructions of researchers from the beginning on. The idealisation of the ‘unprejudiced’ researcher occasionally found in qualitative methodology [is] not epistemologically tenable⁸⁰” (author’s translation).

He explains further that this idealisation is at odds with the core purpose of qualitative research. In addition, the very act of transforming overarching research questions into interview questions is a way for researchers of constructing and negotiating their views with the participants, who can be seen as co-researchers.

Bringing all these voices together is the challenge of this (or any) research project. In a certain sense, the elements of the hypothesised Professional Development Competence (PDC) emerged as a result of these interactions:

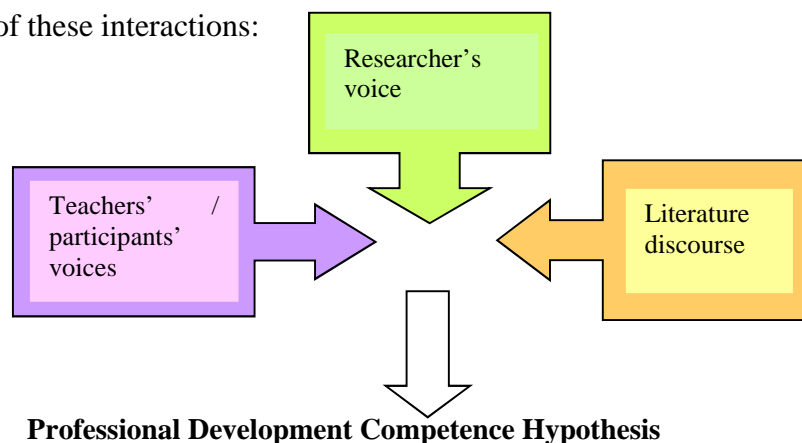


Figure 3.2 – PDC as result of an interaction process

⁷⁹ Famous metaphor attributed to Bernard of Chartres and also used by Isaac Newton.

⁸⁰ „Erkenntnisse über soziale Phänomene «emergieren» nicht aus eigener Kraft, sie sind Konstruktionen des Forschers von Anfang an. Die in der qualitativen Methodologie gelegentlich zu findende Idealisierung der «Unvoreingenommenheit» des Forschers [...ist] erkenntnistheoretisch nicht zu halten“.

3.3.3 Research Questions

The research questions changed over time, in interaction with the data and with the researcher's unavoidably increasing knowledge on the subject. This is in line with the characteristics of qualitative research. Initially, the beginning conceptual framework that was informing and guiding the research questions also led to focus on investigating whether the workshop sessions fostered professional development - observed only in teachers' statements, not in their teaching practice - and investigating the impact of teachers' beliefs. Later, the focus shifted to the personal contribution of the teachers to the development task. As described in Chapter 2.7, it was hypothesised that the expectations placed on teachers imply tacit demands, which might possibly involve one specific competence. It was from this hypothesis that the fundamental question arose: What are the essential features of this competence? This is not directly discernible, of course. As the teachers of the present study shape their own learning process on the basis of full self-responsibility, and since autonomy is hypothesised here as constitutive of this competence, the pivotal concepts of autonomy were tentatively maintained in the following operationalisation:

1. setting one's goals
2. planning methods, materials and procedures to achieve the goals
3. monitoring
4. evaluating the process

As a consequence, the following research sub-questions were posed:

What are the goals of university language teachers in their professional development?

What do they do in order to reach their goals?

During the process of data analysis, further questions emerged, such as:

What strategies do the teachers utilise?

What roles do their goals play in the development process?

Which factors influence their goal-setting and their development?

What teacher profiles can be observed based on their goals?

3.4 The Participants

Of approximately 250 teachers at the Language Centers (Sprachenzentren) at the Bavarian Universities about 120 took part in the program. Some attended more than one workshop session, some only a few or only one. Of the teachers that attended more than one, 10 were chosen (cf. Chapter 3.5.3 for the criteria) and contacted for a follow-up interview.

A preliminary remark should be made regarding the types of positions the teachers hold. Two are the possible positions for university language teachers working at the Bavarian Universities: either they are “employed” or they are “freelance”⁸¹.

‘Lehrbeauftragte’ is the term used to refer to those teachers who work for the university without being employed⁸². They are freelancers and self-employed people, who in a certain sense, could be considered suppliers of a service⁸³. According to the GEW⁸⁴, freelancers take over up to between 25% to 50% of the university courses. This form of self-employment is defined in the Bavarian Higher Education Act⁸⁵, according to which the freelancers are in a public-law employment relation to the institution. One of the conditions of this work relation is the maximum of hours (= 8-9) that have been established as a limit for the free-lancers. This detail in itself does not support the development of a sense of the profession in these teachers.

As regards the requirements, among the language departments there are some differences: some teachers, mainly the English teachers, usually have specific qualification for teaching English as a foreign language to adults (such as a Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults DELTA) or other teaching qualifications (such as Postgraduate Certificate in Education PGCE) when they are hired at the university. For other languages a university degree is mandatory, but a specific qualification in language teaching is not required. As a matter of fact, in these cases these teachers may work and teach according to what Johnson (2009: 41) calls “native speakerness”: in order to teach the language it is enough to be a native speaker, “if you can speak you can teach”. They may therefore lack the necessary competences to carry out the teaching task adequately and, as their experience increases, may feel the need to receive specific support in many respects, such as teaching methodology, information technology, etc. This concise description of the teachers' situation underscores the overriding reason why professional development opportunities are relevant for them, also manifest in the expressed desire of the language teachers in this context to become more professional, and in the gratitude of these teachers when projects, such as *KommUNikation*, are designed to support them.

⁸¹ Egentenmeyer (2010: 39) also lists the alternative as “volunteers” in the field of adult education.

⁸² It corresponds to the American Adjunct Professor.

⁸³ The advantages and disadvantages of being self-employed are detailed in Collrepp (2011: 2-5).

⁸⁴ GEW: Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, a Germantrade union which corresponds to an Education and Science Workers' Union.

⁸⁵ Hochschulpersonalgesetz BayHSchPG Abs.III Art. 31-32 and Lehrauftrags- und Lehrvergütungsvorschriften für die staatlichen Hochschulen LLHV § 2 Abs. 2. 2.

To further characterise freelance university language teachers, some other major differences are listed below, and contrasted with language teachers at schools⁸⁶:

School L2 teachers	Freelance L2 teachers
- Formal training (theoretical and practical) before teaching and on the job required	- No formal teacher training before teaching or on the job required ⁸⁷ (however, some variation in the required teaching qualifications depending on the language departments is possible, as for English)
- Permanent employees, stable position, tenure, assurance, retirement arrangements	- Freelance, no stable position (no insurance, no retirement arrangements ⁸⁸)
- Typically one job	- Many jobs (not necessarily in teaching)
- Teaching pupils	- Teaching adults (undergraduate, graduate students)
- Living in their own culture	- Have left their own culture/country
- Good salary	- “at the bottom of the earning scale“ (citation form one of the participants ⁸⁹) = low pay

Table 3.1 Freelance university language teachers contrasted with language teachers at schools

A short profile of the teachers who participated (= 10) in the interviews showed that they:

- had a different L1
- were mostly freelancers (n= 7)
- all held a university degree
- as the only current, professional support available, they may take part in the events organised by local publishing houses
- participated on a voluntary basis in the workshops and in the interviews
- had left their home country/culture and live in Germany either temporarily or permanently (if they are employed or have created their own family there, then they have become German residents).

⁸⁶ The professional development of language teachers at schools is not the focus of the current study, which can not investigate whether their development unfolds in ways that are similar to that of their university colleagues or whether teaching qualifications, language status (teaching their mother tongue or the L2) or the teaching context make a difference. Likewise, the study will not focus on the difference between university teachers and school teachers. It is possible to assume that there are general aspects, which could apply to many language teachers, independently of the context in which they act, but this is only an assumption at the moment und would deserve further attention in follow-up studies.

⁸⁷ Dissimilarly from other contexts, such as American Universities, there are no beginning training or compulsory methods classes for new instructors or on-the-job training required at the LMU.

⁸⁸ Regarding salaries and social security, the working conditions of adult educators are unsatisfactory in most European countries, as Eggenmeyer points out (2010: 40). Other unfavourable conditions under which teachers work are also mentioned by Pennington (1995: 708).

⁸⁹ This resonates with another account in the literature, such as the feeling of being “the lowest on the ladder” (Johnston et al. 2005: 61).

In terms of teaching experience there was a high degree of variation, ranging from 7 to 30 years of experience.

The following table shows data regarding the participating teachers, listed in alphabetical order according to the codes assigned:

Code	Female/ male	Position F=freelance, P=permanent	Language taught	Years of teaching experience	Interview date
A54	F	F	English	10	Pilot, 13.7.09 and 2.2.10
B282	F	F	English, German	15	11.2.10
D243	F	P	German	19	12.11.09
I312	F	F ⁹⁰	English, German	15	14.11.09
J106	F	F	German	7	16.11.09
M96	F	F	Polish	9	6.12.09
M171	F	F / P	Chinese	10	11.11.09
N51	F	F	Italian	20	19.11.09
N95	F	P	Dutch	30	19.1.10
P73	F	F	Spanish	13	22.12.10

Code information: The first letter was automatically generated from the questionnaires; the number refers to the number of the first questionnaire associated with each teacher

Position refers to the type of position (F=freelance, P=permanent)

Language taught refers to the language (or languages) taught by the teachers

Table 3.2: List of the teachers who participated in the interviews (= 10)

The table indicates a multifaceted profile of the teachers, who differ in age, teaching experience and cultural background⁹¹. With some exceptions, none of the teachers began language teaching with specific teacher training. They all arrived to teach from different paths or “from the back door”, as teacher A54 formulated it, thus lacking the basic teaching competences, and were forced to acquire them on their own. Significantly, one participant

⁹⁰ Teacher I312 is the owner of a language school.

⁹¹ Intercultural issues will not be addressed in this study, although I acknowledge that culture governs our behaviour and “establishes for each person a context of cognitive and affective behaviour” (H.D. Brown 1994: 164). Despite the pervasive character of culture in learning, this aspect goes beyond the focus and the scope of this study.

(teacher A54), labeled herself and her colleagues “housewife teachers”⁹².

3.5 Methods of data generation

One first consideration about the term that was used: I agree with the use of the term ‘data generation’ suggested by Mason (2002: 51-2) instead of data collection. Method is intended here, as Mason illustrates, as more than a practical technique or procedure for gaining data. It implies a process of data generation which involves intellectual, analytical and interpretive activities:

[...] the researcher is seen as actively constructing knowledge about the world according to certain principles derived from the epistemological position. [...] as a researcher you do not simply work out where to find data which already exist in a collectable state. Instead you work out how best you can generate data from your chosen data sources. (*ibid.* 52)

From this point of view the data are not collected, as commonly mentioned in research, but are “generated”:

If you start thinking in terms of this distinction between data sources and methods it does not mean that you are seeing data ‘out there’ as an already existing stock of knowledge, ready to be collected and independent of your interpretations as researchers. (*ibid.* 51)

Concurring with Mason then, the term data ‘generation’ rather than data ‘collection’ is preferred in this study precisely because it is not neutral:

My use of the term is intended to encapsulate the much wider range of relationships between researcher, social world, and data which qualitative research spans. I think it is more accurate to speak of *generating* data than *collecting* data, precisely because most qualitative perspectives would reject the idea that a researcher can be a completely neutral collector of information about the social world”. (*ibid.* 52)

The questionnaire is the first research instrument used in this study; the second was the follow-up interview. Both, as research instruments, are operationalisations of the constructs the study intended to explore. The process of designing them is “notoriously difficult” (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 128) and is documented in Chapter 3.3.1. The period of ‘data generation’ for this study spans five years, from 2005 to 2010.

First phase⁹³ - The present study adopted a survey approach using a questionnaire distributed to the teachers who took part in the workshop sessions of the Teacher Development Program *KommUNikation*. The answers in the questionnaire were transcribed and then analysed

⁹² As she elaborated on later, by this she refers to the fact that she and her female colleagues very often follow their husbands to a foreign country, giving up their own profession and that, despite this, they try to build up a new professional competence as language teachers.

⁹³ Cf. Figure 3.1 The research process.

qualitatively.

Second phase - Some of the teachers who had completed the questionnaire were contacted in the second phase of the research project for a follow-up semi-structured interview that was audio-recorded, then transcribed in full and analysed qualitatively.

In the following, the appropriateness of the instruments will be briefly discussed and then the design of the questionnaires and the interviews.

3.5.1 Appropriateness of the methods

In this section the extent to which the methods chosen (questionnaire and interviews) for this study were considered appropriate will be discussed. The reasons why these methods were appropriate for this study are explained, after the two of them are briefly described. Some potential drawbacks are then also presented.

Both, questionnaire and interviews, are very commonly used in research⁹⁴. Questionnaires are usually employed in the quantitative standardised type of research, mainly based on pre-determined hypotheses and aims and a pre-defined conception of the research object (Flick et al. 17). The order of the questions and the range of answers are primarily pre-specified. What is characteristic and also relevant in the design of the standardised questionnaires is usually the utmost control the issue under investigation, in an attempt to restrict variables (Flick 2009: 474).

The limits of questionnaires exist firstly in their design and in the fact that the questions are based for the most part on the previous knowledge of the researcher, in other words, in line with Meinefeld (2008: 272), they restrict considerably the provision of information which would go beyond what the researcher had anticipated or deemed relevant. Another major limit, secondly, concerns the responses that they prompt. Closed-end questions indeed keep the variables involved in the issue under study constant and controlled and allow quantifications (Gass & Mackey 2007: 152); they restrict, however, the range of answers. To minimise these limits (cf. the criteria for choosing a qualitative approach Chapter 3.1.2), in this study the questions in the questionnaires required open-ended answers, thus allowing the participants to answer in an openly candid way. This resulted in less predictable responses, but at the same time the data benefitted from the wide range of individual thoughts expressed.

⁹⁴ Socrates used dialogues as a method to develop knowledge, and other scientists like Freud, Piaget among others, based the empirical evidence of their studies on their use of interviews, as Kvale & Brinkmann (2009: 9) remind us.

Regarding the interviews, depending on how the interview is carried out and on how the relationship with the participants is established, they can “look like” conversations: Kvale & Brinkmann (2009: 15) speak of “closeness to everyday conversation”. As such they share some common traits with authentic settings. Although Kvale & Brinkmann (*ibid.* 8) remind us that interviews have not always been taken for granted as a popular form of social practice⁹⁵, interviews are now gaining momentum in research as a method of obtaining knowledge from informants to the extent that interviews have become pervasive and “we live in an interview society” (Atkinson & Silverman 1997 quoted in Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 12). As regards this study, according to my general experience and also considering some accounts in the literature, teachers are usually big communicators, and are usually very glad and willing to talk and share. Moreover, teachers are accustomed to reflecting on complex issues verbally.

However, the main reason why using interviews was considered appropriate in this study refers to the opportunity to approach teacher development through the lenses of the participants, through their interpretations and their experiences, in short through their ‘meanings’, assuming, with Shank (2006: 5), that qualitative inquiry is a form of “systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. The rationale is twofold: first, our individual perspective as researchers is incomplete and must be complemented by other meanings, second, we need to complexify our perspective to avoid shallow simplifications: “rather than applying simplifying moves, we are the sort of empirical inquirers who want instead to develop a more complex picture of the phenomenon” (Shank 2006: 5). Thus, focusing on the sense that professional development has for the teachers, on their attitudes and emotions, allowed us to come closer to what participants think.

Another additional reason to adopt a qualitative approach is because of the small number of participants, which would hardly allow for a quantitative conclusion.

It is nevertheless worth pointing out the potential pitfalls of interviews and questionnaires. Both are indirect measures of cognitive operations. When it comes to such complex cognitive processes like, in this case, the articulation of teachers’ learning or teachers’ opinions and beliefs, interviews and questionnaires can only serve to approximate the phenomena under study, and we must be aware of their limitations – caution is thus mandatory.

In addition, the “closeness” of interviews “to everyday conversation” can be seen as illusory (Friebertshäuser 1997: 371; Kvale & Brinkman (2009: 15). Some of the main differences between conversation and research interviews have been pointed out, that, for instance, an

⁹⁵In the early years of journalism, interviews were indeed perceived as a somewhat “dangerous” and immoral practice (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 8).

interview

“comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured [...]. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes [...]. It is usually transcribed” (Kvale & Brinkman 2009: 27).

Thus, Kvale & Brinkman (*ibid.* 33) warn against regarding interviews as a “complete open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners”. The research interview is a “specific professional conversation” that has “a clear power asymmetry”. Although the intention in this study was not to exert power, this asymmetry⁹⁶ could not be eliminated. As this issue was considered, every effort was made to reflect on and to minimize the consequences, for example, by behaving naturally as a colleague of the teachers on all the occasions when we met.

An additional remark should be made regarding the interviews as tools for researchers: it is through the interaction with the interviewees that knowledge is created, in fact we (the researchers) do not discover the meanings (as if they were hidden in the participants), and we come to know some aspects of their professional development together, while engaging in the conversation. From this angle, Kvale & Brinkman (2009: 17-18) interpret interviewing as “social production of knowledge”: “In the interview, knowledge is created “inter” the points of view of the interviewer and the interviewee” (*ibid.* 123). In this sense, we are both, interviewer and interviewee, creating knowledge together and are thus “co-constructors of knowledge”, as Kvale & Brinkman point out (*ibid.* 18).

Keeping these caveats in mind, we can still recognise, with Almarza (1996: 75), the importance of interviews: “Interviews have proven to be invaluable in exploring teachers’ knowledge by providing evidence that teaching is more than observable behaviour”.

3.5.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are “written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react, either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown 2001, cited in Nunan & Bailey 2009: 126). They belong to the psychometric tradition, but in this study there was no intervention, as in experiments, by manipulating variables. The attempt was to design the questionnaire so that it could capture the relevant information and elicit teachers’ ideas and attitudes, without influencing the data.

The sampling occurred on the basis of a “convenience” (cf. Patton 2002 quoted in Flick 2009: 122) procedure. All participants in the workshop sessions were chosen as the “nearest

⁹⁶As researcher and coordinator of the programme KommUNikation.

individuals” (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 128). It was assumed that this population was a representative sample from the teacher population as a whole, at least with regard to the “motivated” teachers who were voluntarily taking part in the workshop sessions. The sample is not representative of “all” language teachers in that the results cannot be generalised and extended to the “unmotivated” teachers who did not participate in the program.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) began with biographical data, asking which foreign languages they have learned, which language they teach and how long they have been teaching it, which kind of courses and how long they have been teaching and what other teacher training they had already attended. Two sections with questions to answer before and after the workshops followed.

Despite the practicality of using closed-items⁹⁷ (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 130), open-ended questions were chosen as more appropriate in order not to influence the participants. Being interested in their ideas, and as their true answers were desired (Neuman 2000 as cited in Hahn 2007: 62), standardized questions were avoided⁹⁸. Whereas the disadvantage of closed-items is that respondents tend to “rush through a questionnaire and simply mark all the positive options without really thinking about their content” (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 135), the disadvantage of open-items is that some respondents could be annoyed by being compelled to reflect.

The questionnaire was distributed among the participants according to a *pre-post mode* (Freeman 1996: 32 speaks of *pre-post* questionnaires) in which the participants filled out the first part before the workshop began. The second part was completed at the end of the workshop sessions and the questionnaire was then collected on the same day.

Although the questionnaire as a survey method usually relies on statistical generalisation (Nunan & Bailey: 174), in the present study it was not used for quantifications or generalisations.

The design of the questionnaires

The questionnaires consisted of twenty questions⁹⁹, which were all open-ended and for which there was no right or wrong answer. The questions 1 to 9 were asked prior to the workshops, whereas the questions 10 to 20 were distributed after the workshops.

⁹⁷ Nunan & Bailey (2009: 130) report quick responses. Further advantages for the researcher are their greater comparability for data analysis, greater uniformity and greater reliability (Mackey & Gass 2005 cited in Nunan & Bailey 2009: 137).

⁹⁸ Through answering open-ended questions people can “express their own thoughts and ideas in their own manner” (Mackey & Gass 2005 cited in Nunan & Bailey 2009: 137)

⁹⁹ All the questions are in the Appendix 1.

The questions pre-workshop were conceived as an advance organizer and as such sought to “tune in” the participants to the task by directing the participants’ attention to some aspects of their own learning, such as teachers’ prior knowledge, relevance of the topics for them or expectations. These basic questions on what the course was going to be about, what their reasons for attending the session were, and what their expectations were, were considered fundamental. There is notable evidence of top-down processing from research on comprehension processes: learners’ goals, knowledge, beliefs, plans and expectations play an important role in determining how to interpret what we perceive (Rumelhart 1977; Woods 1996: 85). The importance of activating prior knowledge is also echoed in Oxford (1996: xi) “Learning strategy investigations within and outside the language field have shown that effective learners actively associate new information with existing information”. For this reason, in the questionnaires the teachers were asked to express what they knew about the topic and to explore their beliefs and reactions, in order to support them in making their personal frames of reference explicit, or externalizing their own personal theory.

The questions post-workshop had the purpose to sensitise the teachers towards ‘scanning oneself’, considering any benefit from the workshops and taking stock of the situation. Some of the questions may sound obvious, as the following one: “Why is the topic relevant to me?”. The questions indeed rely on insights from the literature according to which many learners are not aware of their own learning (Götz 2006: 14). Further, Flavell underlines that adult cognition is very often of “shockingly poor” quality (Flavell 2002: 168). On the whole, the answers to the post-workshop questionnaires were very positive and enthusiastic. The great majority wrote that they had learned and were thankful for the opportunity to attend the workshops.

Overall, all the questions were intended to be ‘sensitisers’, i.e. to render the teachers sensitive to their professional learning and to their active contribution to it. The questions had a meta-cognitive accent in that they were awareness-raising (the focus in the questionnaires promoted self-awareness of the learning process). Despite the assumed usefulness of the questions, it is worth noting that this pause to reflect may not always be welcome by all the teachers. Some of them could feel it tedious to pass oneself in review after a busy day or in the middle of the semester, and some teachers could likely feel uncomfortable with it¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, forethought, planning, and proactive performance are “mentally and physically demanding activities” (Zimmerman 2000: 31).

¹⁰⁰ Tediousness is also reported in the literature as one factor that interferes with the fundamental task of monitoring one’s progress towards one’s goals (Gourgey 2001: 30).

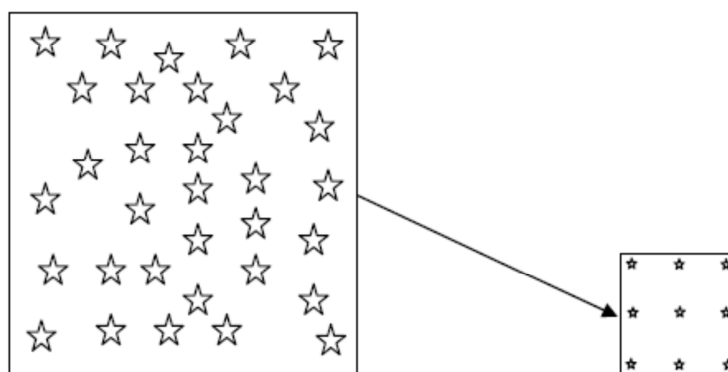
3.5.3 Follow-up interviews

In the case of the interviews, the criteria behind the sampling are presented in turn below and relate to 1. requirements, 2. methodological concerns 3. pragmatic reasons. As for the questionnaires, the author cautions that also for the interviews the sample is not representative of “all” language teachers and in this sense the results cannot be generalised.

1. As for the first criterion, i.e. the requirements for choosing the teachers to be interviewed, is based on two essential aspects, such as having attended a minimum of two workshops and the willingness to participate in the interviews¹⁰¹.

2. The methodological concerns refer firstly to the aim of pursuing "qualitative representation" (Kruse 2010: 82-84) in the sample. For the interviews I proceeded on the basis of a “purposive sampling” (Flick 2009: 122-3) that allows to achieve the "*maximal variation*" (Flick 2009: 122 quoting Patton 2002), choosing "few cases but [...] as different as possible". Leaning on Schütz (1974), Kruse (*ibid.* 83-84) argues that when selecting the participants, we choose from an heterogenous whole (Grundgesamtheit) and make a conscious choice of cases (Bewusste Fallauswahl) that represents the heterogeneity of the original sample. He depicts this procedure graphically (Figure 3.3) and explains that the principle of maximal structural variation is an important criterion in qualitative research that guarantees it being potentially representative. This maximal variation was achieved in the current study by choosing participants with different L1s and different teaching situations (teaching different L2s).

Grundgesamtheit



Bewusste Fallauswahl

Figure 3.3 Qualitative representation in sampling – Source: Kruse (2010: 83)

Secondly, further methodological decisions relate to the interview type. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that some relevant areas of concern or concepts that served to investigate how teachers contributed towards their own development were previously

¹⁰¹ I contacted only ten teachers, and all of them were happy to participate.

annotated in a short list (cf Appendix 2-3). However, the researcher was not constrained by the list because this was new territory and the answers could have gone in any direction. In this way the researcher employed the instrument in a flexible way, free to ask unplanned questions and to pick up on unexpected issues whenever it was considered relevant or necessary in the course of the conversation. The interview was structured in five sections¹⁰²:

- I – Warm-up, questions on the current personal professional situation (how many hours they work per week, what kind of position they have, their teaching experience in years)
- II – Questions about their experiences in teacher training (training they had before beginning language teaching, current professional development support available, perceived need of training)
- III – *KommUNikation* Workshops (reasons for attending them, expectations, evaluation of the learning benefit)
- IV – Teacher Development (what goals they have regarding their professional development, what they find useful for their professional development, how they think that teacher training may influence their development)
- V – Teaching (factors that effect changes in their teaching, perceived development in teaching, how they see their role as language teachers, the most rewarding aspect of teaching for them).

Although the questions followed the areas of interest defined previously, they were used flexibly according to unexpected issues raised by the participants themselves.

3. Finally, pragmatic reasons affected the sampling procedure too. A plurilingual approach was deemed pertinent, with respect to which language should be used for the interviews. Many reasons affected this choice: the wide range of L1 of the participants (including the teachers and the researcher) required a flexible approach, based on them feeling comfortable, i.e. the effort to maintain a pleasant situation for the participants¹⁰³. For example, some of the interviews were conducted in English for pragmatic reasons: for the majority of the teachers, German is a foreign language, with different degrees of proficiency; moreover, to avoid misunderstandings and to have a common platform for communication, English was

¹⁰² Cf. Appendix 2.

¹⁰³ That participants feel comfortable is an important criterion in qualitative research. Mackey & Gass (2005: 174-175) make this qualification explicit under their "caveats" when interviewing. In line with this, Flick (2009: 170-173) considers some key points to "create a good atmosphere" during the interview and to ensure it, such as avoiding bureaucraticity or rigidity, showing sensitivity to the concrete course of the interview and the interviewees.

considered a good resource, as it is currently established as a Lingua Franca¹⁰⁴. However, the teachers were still asked beforehand how comfortable they were in answering in English. When they were unsure, the interviews were conducted in a mixed mode: the questions were in English, but they answered in German (in one case Italian), in one case the questions and the answers were only in German. A further reason to adopt such a flexible approach derives from the fact that the concern of the research project is not the linguistic competence of the teachers but to uncover their meanings with respect to their own professional development.

The questions were for the most part open-ended, and the researcher took some short notes, while audio-recording the answers. For two items (referring to which activities they thought useful and easy /difficult), a number of options were anticipated on a sheet of paper, but where a list of options was given, a blank space for free answers was always left, so that the participants had the possibility of adding something that was not in the list of options provided. The need to anticipate some answers (in tick-off boxes) originated in the pilot interviews, due to the fact that the answers to these open-ended questions required a long time for the teachers to come up with ideas and were taking too much time (one pilot interview lasted more than 90 min. and the questionnaire used at the time had only half of the questions compared to the final version).

The answers in the interview required ‘delayed’ retrospection (recalling mentally thoughts or facts related to their past teacher training/development experiences) and introspection, defined by Nunan & Bailey (2009: 285) as the “process of observing and reporting on one’s own thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes, and mental states”. Both can be seen as forms of self-report, which is controversial, as some operations “may not be available for introspection” (Nunan & Bailey 2009: 300) and also because they may depend on the verbalisation competence of the participants. Some of the teachers in fact did not seem accustomed to this kind of reasoning and might have had additional difficulties in verbalising introspection.

Validation of the interview guide

In order to get accustomed to the interview method, some pilot interviews (= 5)¹⁰⁵ were conducted with diverse colleagues from different school types, who had not taken part in the program. They served to learn how to narrow the focus and to increase the “situational competence”, that, according to Flick (2009: 154), is fundamental to successfully carrying out

¹⁰⁴ This is the term currently used to as a means of communication in English between speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer 2005).

¹⁰⁵ The Appendices 2 and 3 contain all the versions of the guidelines, including the final version.

interviews.

A pilot interview with one participant of the program made it clear that there were not enough questions, and that I had to add and to structure the questions more clearly. The interview questions also changed through discussion in the PhD seminar.

Conducting the interviews

All interviews were conducted by the researcher. The participants were asked which place was most convenient for them. The majority (6 out of 10) chose my office (which turned out to be the best option in terms of lack of noise or interruptions), three preferred me to visit them at their home and the one remaining asked me to go to her office (this proved to have some disadvantages, because we were interrupted several times).

The positive attitudes of the participants, made the whole interview setting very easy for the researcher. This was a clear benefit and also contributed to limiting a certain unavoidable nervousness. The task of managing the “interpersonal drama” (de Sola Pool 1957 quoted in Hermann 2008: 361) and of being focused, open and attentive during the interview was thus clearly relieved by the pleasant atmosphere that the participants always contributed to. In addition, because they knew the researcher already, they could talk freely without feeling they were talking to a stranger.

The course of the interview was characterised by a briefing phase, with explanations about the purpose of the interview, the topics around which the questions revolved and the use of the audio-recorder. They had previously received all this information on the phone when being contacted by the researcher who asked them to participate in the interviews. On that occasion they had already heard about being audio-recorded and had given their consent. A couple of them expressed their concern about not being able to remember much about the Programme KomUNikation, but they were reassured that this was not the goal of the interview. Instead, it was considered very important to emphasise that their own opinions and views about teacher professional development were central in the study, and that, as such, there were no right or wrong answers. They were obviously relieved by this.

The warm-up contributed very much to maintaining an atmosphere free from anxiety for the rest of the interview. The teachers were asked to describe their current job situation, to express their general expectations about language teacher development programmes or teacher training in general. From that they proceeded to elaborate on their opinions about the benefits they felt they had from *KommUNikation* and on their development over time.

At the end of the interview a short *debriefing* (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 129) followed, in which the participants were asked whether they wished to add anything (only three accepted

this invitation, probably because the interviews were quite extensive).

The duration of the interviews amounted on average to about 90 minutes. The first pilot interview with teacher A54 took one hour and a half, but the interview guideline was at that time only a draft. She was contacted a second time¹⁰⁶, which took another one and a half hours. In her case the interview took three hours.

All interviews had a positive course, were pleasant and were characterized by a very friendly attitude towards the researcher and the questions (in one case a teacher took a very long time to answer all the questions and in another case another teacher did not seem as relaxed as the others, but in both cases their openness and willingness was manifest). In all cases their seriousness, their openness and desire to express themselves freely and honestly were impressive.

Post-interview script

After the interview was conducted, relevant information was annotated for each interview, regarding place, time and duration of the interview, comments about any incidents and impressions about their willingness, openness and attitude and about the global atmosphere.

After having described the methods, the following section offers a documentation of some aspects of the process of data analysis for this study.

3.5.4 The process of data analysis

The data gathered consisted of the participants' handwritten entries in the questionnaires, and audio-recorded answers from the interviews, both were transcribed. The interviews were audio-recorded, using a digital voice-recorder¹⁰⁷. The interviews conducted in English and German were transcribed by mother tongue speakers, respectively English and German, and the correspondence of the transcription with the recorded interview was then verified by the researcher. One interview that had been conducted in Italian was directly transcribed by the researcher¹⁰⁸. Each interview resulted in a transcription of on average 10 double-sided pages. The longest interview was 20 pages long. As almost all interviews were conducted inside, the noise was largely reduced, so that only very few passages were not comprehensible.

The following documentation of the process of data analysis examines the aspects of the

¹⁰⁶ Our schedules were so full that she suggested doing the interview on the phone. This proved to be unproblematic.

¹⁰⁷ The one used was a Olympus DM-20.

¹⁰⁸ Whose mother tongue is Italian.

coding design and the transcription of data.

Coding design

The analysis of data began when developing and coding the first pilot interviews ($n = 5$) with teachers who had not participated in the programme, and continued until the final research questions and the guideline for the semi-structured interviews were produced.

The process of data analysis was inevitably a blend of deductive and inductive categories. As Kruse (2010: 227) illustrates:

Auch wenn man nach dem Verfahrensprinzip der “Grounded Theory“ arbeitet (bottom-up gesteuerte Auswertung) [...] verfolgt man Analyseheuristiken, mit denen man die Analysearbeit strukturiert. Diese orientieren sich an den Forschungsfragestellungen und an die Gesprächsleitfäden. Eine völlig “voraussetzungslose” Analyse ist niemals gegeben und auch nicht möglich.

The categories were initially influenced by “sensitising concepts” (Blumer 1954; Bowen 2006; Flick 2009: 12), derived from the literature and unavoidably reflected in the research questions. The term refers to concepts “that suggest directions along which to look” (Flick 2009: 473) and are “required” to approach the issue under study (*ibid.* 12). They therefore initially helped to guide the analysis. However, as the process of analysis began, the categories were developed inductively by focusing on the concepts and the meanings emerging from the data. Grounded categories then evolved, as that they were “grounded in the data” (Freeman 1996: 371; Glaser & Strauss 1967). The points of views of the participants were thus included in the analysis, which was guided by the meanings they expressed in the interviews.

This process of defining the categories and identifying the dimensions occurred in a continuous interaction with the data. As a consequence, the process of data analysis, following an iterative approach (Freeman 1996: 371), required returning cyclically to the data to look for patterns and for associations.

The following figure is an example extracted from some of the categories which were developed:

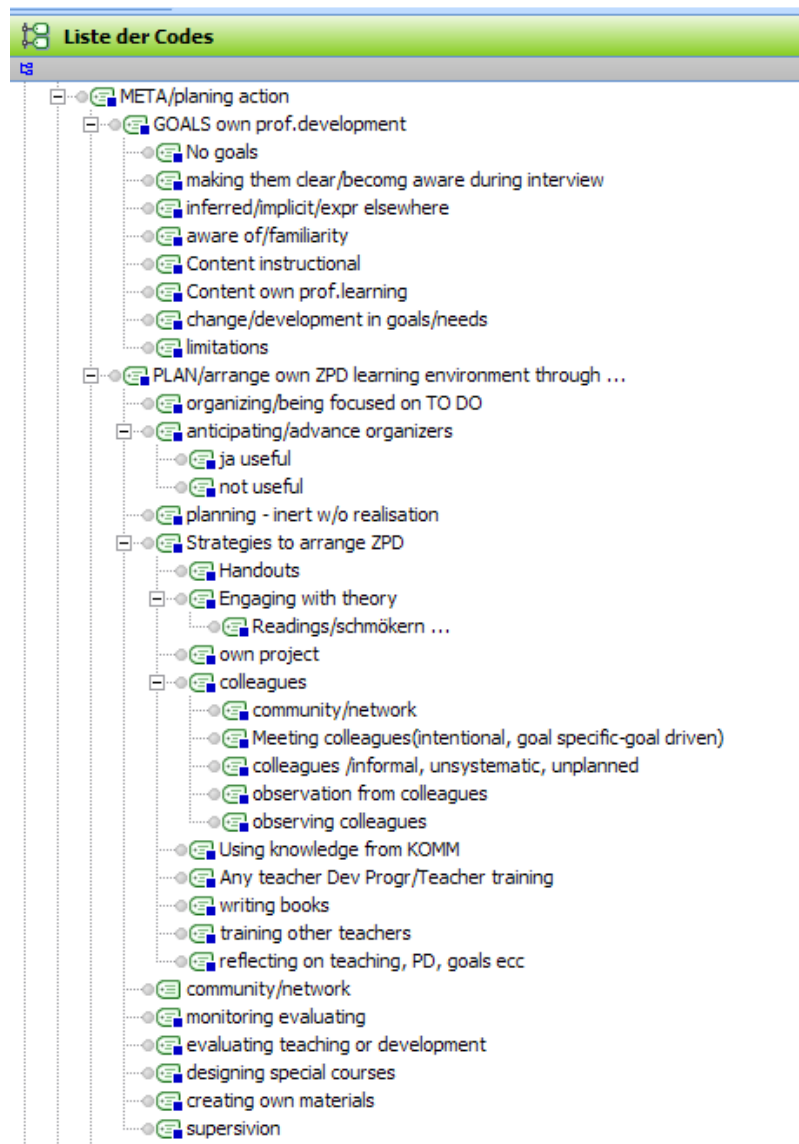


Figure 3.4 – Sample of categories used to code the data

The data analysis process was supported by a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQ-DAS). All interviews and entries from the questionnaires were coded to be processed by a software programme, (MAXQDA¹⁰⁹), a tool specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. The use of computer programmes to assist in the analysis of qualitative data has recently increased, due to the flexibility and versatility of these tools (Kuckartz 2008: 10; 15), and is thought to provide “invaluable assistance” (Mason 2002: 160). The integration of the categories in the software programme corresponds to the traditional paper-and-pencil procedure of annotating key words or themes on cards and does not exempt one from the “dull desk work” (Kuckartz 2007: 9) of reading the materials several times until patterns emerge from the data analysis task. The use of technology applied to the

¹⁰⁹ MAXQDA, software for qualitative data analysis, 1989-2010, VERBI Software. Consult. Sozialforschung GmbH, Berlin-Marburg-Amöneburg, Germany.

process of data analysis is merely a facilitation in “structuring and organising the data” (Kelle 2008: 488), in that all operations of highlighting related concepts under superordinate headings, looking for parallels or inserting comments can be executed more flexibly by marking with different colours the various relationships. Their main advantage of using such a tool is to assist the operations of exploring the materials and retrieving text passages, concepts or categories and the representation of the data (Flick 2009: 362). Codes can be assigned by dragging a marked passage onto the appropriate code in the corresponding category system. The task of retrieving data is also assisted by comparing items or associating them more easily than in handwritten notes. As a consequence, all the analytical tasks are facilitated.

Transcription of data

Since the primary focus of the interviews was on the content of the utterances and not on the mechanisms involved in the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Bergmann 2008: 535) or on the “system of talk” (Seedhouse 2011: 359), as in conversational analysis (CA), the adoption of a specific CA methodology was not applicable to the transcription of the data. However, the rules followed for the transcription of the interviews attempted to capture and render peculiar features when they were notably emphasised by the participants during the interview, in the assumption that this information belongs to the face-to-face event and does add relevant details to the transcription. Four of these main features were considered relevant:

1. emphasising utterances which were expressed in a peculiar mode, such as laughter or in a tone which was strikingly different from the normal speech of the teacher
2. highlighting references to contextual (discourse) information, such as indications of the topic being addressed, when the whole answer was not reported entirely because of its length
3. adding non-verbal communication, when it was an integral part of the discourse, such as in the case of one Spanish-speaking teacher, who tended to express her thoughts through gestures. This para-textual information was considered complementary to the face-to-face communication in course.
4. anonymising names, organisations or places to protect the speaker’s identities and replacing them with a description.

To differentiate between these descriptions and the texts themselves (Kowal & O’Connell 2008: 444), all the precautions above are provided in italics and in square brackets [] in the quotations.

Furthermore, the following procedure was adopted to refer to the answers of the participants:

The quotations of the teachers from the interviews are signalled with the label “Interview” in square brackets, followed by the teacher’s identification number, followed by the number of the row in the transcription of the interviews, as in the following example: [Interview D243: 197-9]. The researcher as interviewer is identifiable through the letter: “Q.”, abbreviation for “Question”. If it is not a question, but only a remark, it will be signalled by the initials “EG”.

The quotations from the questionnaire are identified as entries and are structured in the following way: they are first denoted as “Entry” (to distinguish them from the interviews), are then followed by the teacher’s identification number, followed by the number of the questionnaire and lastly by the number of the rows in which the transcription appears, as in the following example: [Entry P73, Q177-172: 53-4]

3.6 The role of the researcher

Qualitative research does not aim at eliminating the researcher’s perspective; quite the contrary. In qualitative research the case has often been made that the role of the researcher is decisive in many aspects (Shank 2006: 10). Although the perspective of the participants is considered central in qualitative research, and in this study as well, the researcher’s subjective construction of the research act as a constructivist act is an unavoidable counterpart. The integration of the researchers’ subjective point of view “is part of the research process” (Flick 2009: 16) and is indeed “expected” through the reflection on the methods and on the research process. The stance adopted in this study presupposes that the reflexivity of the researchers on their actions and impressions in the field (cf. Chapter 3.1.2) is an essential element of the cognitive accomplishment of the researchers. The significance of the researchers’ role and the impossibility of scientific results being detached from the observer are also endorsed by Flick (2008: 23), who considers them “a core characteristic of qualitative research” (cf. König & Bentler 1997: 89). It is precisely the explicitation of the role of the researcher in qualitative research that Altheide & Johnson (1994) see as an integral part and guarantee of validity, expressed in the concept of “validity as reflexive accounting” (quoted in Flick 2009: 390).

The perspective of the teachers was represented by their insights into their concept of teacher development and by their (past or current) experiences about their teaching and their development. However, what was their relationship towards the researcher? How did they see her, as a colleague or as an instructor? As coordinator, I may also have been a representative of the academic institution LMU Munich to them, which may have tipped the balance of colleague parity. The question of asymmetry is a point at issue in qualitative research, as in Appel (2000: 44), who points to the fact that in many studies on teacher knowledge the

participants opened themselves to a relation of dependence, sometimes even in test situations, which influences the nature of the products. The situation in this study was not one of dependence, and a balance was strived for between being a stranger and being close to the participants, between being a peer (as a colleague) and being the coordinator. According to the way they behaved with the researcher, it is believed that an ideal distance was reached that motivated them to open themselves without asymmetric¹¹⁰ effects of dependency.

3.7 Ethical issues

“The tension between the pursuit of knowledge and ethics in research”, as Kvale & Brinkman call it (2009: 16), can not be easily reduced, as it depends mostly on the researcher's ability to create a place where the informants feel free and safe to talk about their experiences and opinions while at the same time focusing on the research concerns. Moreover, the possibility of conducting research also depends on the trust of the individuals and on the researchers' respect towards them. This resonates with the description of ethical behaviour provided by Israel & Hay (2006: 3):

Social scientists do not have an inalienable right to conduct research involving other people (Oakes, 2002). That we continue to have the freedom to conduct such work is, in large part, the product of individual and social goodwill and depends on us acting in ways that are not harmful and are just. (...) If we act honestly and honourably, people may rely on us to recognize their needs and sensitivities and consequently may be more willing to contribute openly and fully to the work we undertake.

This alerts us to the necessity of proceeding in a sensitive manner, in order to protect the frankness of the participants, as Mason (2002: 99) perceptively explains:

So, for example, questions about the ethics of your overall research practice and where you derive your ethical position from, or questions about the way in which you build and maintain relationships in the field, (...) the issue of informed consent and your rights over the data and analysis, are all central in the practice of observation.

Because the teachers had seen the researcher many times during the workshops and often engaged in spontaneous conversations with her, she was a “known face” to them. The relationship between the participants and the researcher in this study was not impersonal, and this is also a reason why it was decided to call them - instead of writing a letter – in order to ask them to participate in a follow-up interview.

When they were contacted for the interviews, almost two years after the end of the *KommUNKIktion* Programme, all of them were very friendly and did not hesitate to engage in a conversation on the phone. Their first thought was that they were being contacted to

¹¹⁰ To this regard cf. Chapter 3.5.1.

announce a new teacher programme, which they all were impatiently waiting for. This enthusiastic attitude made the whole phone conversation very pleasant and easy for the researcher. The calibration of distance was not an issue, it is in fact the case that they did not “feel like an insect under the microscope” (Sennett 2004 quoted in Kvale & Brinkman 2009: 16). This does not mean that the issue of power asymmetry¹¹¹ in the interviews was suspended, but rather that its impact might have been minimal, which is most probably unavoidable.

Because the present research study involves collecting data from human participants, and the data elicited in the questionnaires were not anonymous, some ethical issues were taken into account to ensure that the participants would run no risks. Guaranteeing and maintaining the following concerns¹¹² was considered fundamental:

- The confidentiality of the participants was protected when reporting the interviews in this study and in other public situations.
- The identity of the participants was disguised, their identification was made impossible.
- The possibility of any potential harm to or consequences for the subjects was reflected upon and made impossible.
- A declaration of consent¹¹³ to participate in the interview was attained.
- An information sheet about the nature and aims of the research project was prepared for the participants and distributed to them.

¹¹¹ Cf. Chapter 3.5.1. and 3.6.

¹¹² These issues were adapted following the suggestions provided by Kvale & Brinkman (2009: 68-9).

¹¹³ The Appendix 4 contains the consent form used.

4 Teachers as learners - Discussion of results

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the empirical data, guided by the aim to understand teachers as learners and the way they approach their development process.

The analysis of the results was carried out in several steps that are reflected in the structure of the chapter itself. In the first two sections, the goals the teachers have set for themselves and the ways they realise them are the primary concern. The third section explains the impact goals may have on the professional development of the teachers, while the next section is devoted to exploring the individual factors that emerged; it focuses on the critical differences among the teachers. To conclude the analysis, all the elements that emerged are drawn together in the attempt to identify possible profiles that may explain how teachers' professional competence expands and develops. The last section is an evaluation of the methods used and points to some limitations of the study.

Structure of the chapter:

- 4.1 Language teachers' goals for professional development
- 4.2 Teachers' realisation of goals
- 4.3 Impact of goals on professional development
- 4.4 Individual differences
- 4.5 Teachers' professional profiles
- 4.6 Reflecting the research approach

4.1 Language teachers' goals for professional development

The question about the goals these teachers have set for their professional development proved to be the most difficult for most of the teachers, many answers being characterised by a long silence. Two of the teachers gave no reply.

The difficulty of explaining the goals is best illustrated in J106's answer:

[Interview J106: 154-162] "Setting goals", es ist schwierig zu formulieren, was für "goals" man so hat. Unterrichten an sich ist so eine Sache, es ist nicht so festlegbar, und für mich... es ist immer anders und natürlich habe ich meinen Plan, und das, was ich machen will, aber was am Ende dabei rauskommt ist halt doch immer was anderes. Es ist flexibel... oder ich verstehe es einfach nicht ganz genau, was hier gemeint ist.

Ich weiss es nicht. Es fällt mir total schwer, was Konkretes zu sagen.

EG.: Ja, das ist ok.

... Das ist eben das, irgendwie... Ich finde, ich habe ganz viel von diesem theoretischen Wissen, aber dieses ganz Übergeordnete. Das ist ganz schwer irgendwie, oder vielleicht will ich da einfach zu viel oder denk mir zu viel bei.

EG.: Ja, das ist nicht einfach, zu wissen, was es überhaupt alles gibt, um da auch irgendwo hinlangen zu wollen. Um ein Ziel zu haben...

Ja, dieser Austausch mit anderen fehlt für mich irgendwie total, dass ich weiß, was haben andere Leute überhaupt für Ziele. So dass man erst überhaupt formulieren kann... ich weiß nicht, wie es in anderen Berufen ist... ich kann mir das so genau nicht vorstellen.

In this section, an overview of the answers given by each teacher (their codes are in alphabetical order) will be given. The answers will then be categorised on the basis of the content.

Teachers	The goals teachers mention when speaking about their own professional development
A54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'd like to be as good as possible in my field and then I'd like to give the students as much support as they need - to understand better what kind of support I can give them - I want to be a colleague to others and I want them to be colleagues to me. So I want to share good teaching - to stay on top of things - I want to grow old as a teacher!
B282	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to have many visual & oral aids at my finger tips - to develop my language skills - to be on top of things in language teaching
D243	- dass die Schüler wirklich was gelernt haben
I312	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making nice hand-outs - publishing a book
J106	- I would rather stay open to different institutions, different things, not be pinned down to one thing, ... it's more a financial question
M171	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that students stay with me - to help my students reach their goals
M96	- mich in die modernsten Veranstaltungstechniken und Methoden... also fit zu sein... fit für die modernsten Sachen
N51	- increased awareness of what I do, acting more and more aware as a teacher
N95	- to teach more hours and have a permanent teaching position
P73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nicht faul werden als LehrerIn - glücklich bleiben bei meinem Unterricht

According to the content, the answers¹¹⁴ concerning what goals teachers have for their professional development centred around the four following areas :

Type of goals	Number of teachers
1. instructional goal	n = 6
2. occupational goal	n = 3
3. developmental goal	n = 5
4. affective-emotional goal	n = 2

Table 4.1 - Types of teachers' goals

I will now examine and elaborate more extensively on them in the following section.

1. Instructional goals (n = 6)

Instructional goals relate to answers whereby teachers focus on issues such as supporting

¹¹⁴ Teachers could mention as many goals as they wanted. Some teachers expressed more than one. According to their content, the goals were clustered in the four types listed above.

students' learning or on instructional matters.

In these cases, the way the teachers answer the question about which goals they have set for their professional development indicates how these teachers interpret the question, as teacher D243 exemplifies:

[Interview D243: 197-9] Q.: What goals for your professional development have you set for yourself?
Also, der Anspruch den ich an meinen Unterricht habe ist, dass am Ende die Schüler rausgehen und sagen, „ Gut, dass ich da war, sonst hätte ich etwas versäumt „ *[laughs]*.
Also ...Die oberste Maxime ist für mich nicht, dass die Schüler jetzt Spaß haben, sondern dass sie das Gefühl haben, sie kommen weiter.

The teachers with this goal refer to students' learning as their goal. Having visuals and oral aids to make classes very interesting, supporting students, or helping students reach their goals are typical answers for this category.

As an example teacher M171 says:

[Interview M171: 107] That I can help them, my students, to reach their goals. My goal is to help the students reach their goals.

Teacher B282 expresses a similar goal, in terms of having practical aids available:

[Interview B282: 96] To have so many visual, oral aids, etc. at hand and at my fingertips so that I can make classes very interesting.

Finally, teacher B282 addresses another aspect of this kind of goal, which affects the teachers, who like her, do not teach their L1, but the L2 and have to maintain a good level of competence in this area:

[Interview B282: 96] Well to develop my own language skills that is something that you have to keep doing. *[laughs]*

2. Occupational goals – (n= 3)

Three teachers were concerned with the livelihood aspect of their profession, such as teaching more hours, having many classes or with the necessity of retaining their students. (N95, M171, J106).

For teacher N95 it seems important to teach more hours and students and to be employed:

[Interview N95: 77] Ja das ist natürlich schwierig, weil ich schon etwas älter bin *[laughs]*. Ich denke ich würde auf jeden Fall sehr gerne es weiter machen so wie jetzt. Und nachdem jetzt der Bachelor-Studiengang dazu gekommen ist... also ich erhoffe, dass da mehr Studenten dazu kommen. Weil man doch irgendwie die Sprachen noch anders benutzen kann weil man sie 4 Stunden in der Woche hat dann, so wie jetzt das merke ich im Vergleich mit den normalen Studenten. ... Dass meine Sprache einfach eine Stelle wird und bleibt auch in der Zukunft.

It should be remarked that she refers to the new introduction of the Bachelor (BA) system,

which imposes a minimum of four teaching hours for learning a foreign language instead of two hours as in the system prior to the BA introduction. She perceives this as beneficial for herself (because she can teach more hours) and for the learners (because they have four instead of two hours per week):

[Interview N95: 79] Die normalen Kurse laufen immer 2 Stunden wöchentlich und die Bachelor Studenten haben 4 Stunden in der Woche und sie lernen einfach mehr, das geht schneller auch.

Teacher M171's goal "that my students still want to stay with me" can also be interpreted from this perspective. If she "loses" her students, she can not earn her living.

Finally, teacher J106, who found it was extremely difficult to answer, after a very long silence she expressed her concern about this aspect: she teaches many hours a week (more than 25 hours) and finds it important to have different teaching opportunities at her disposal:

[Interview J106: 124] I would rather stay open to different institutions, different things, not be pinned down to one thing. To always be able to switch, makes things happier maybe.

These answers stress the 'livelihood' necessity of the freelance language teacher. As freelancers, these teachers must meet the expectations of their clients, the consequence of losing them is namely not being capable to sustain themselves financially, not being capable to live on their limited income.

3. Developmental goals (n = 5)

In the third category we find answers with **developmental goals**. These address projects the teachers may have for their career as teachers, or professional development plans. Five teachers explicitly made this distinction clear and related their development goals to their own learning process as teachers.

Teacher N51 is also the only one to address an important aspect of professional development in terms of recognition on the part of the institutions she worked for. At the same time she denies that there are these possibilities in the career of a language teacher, arguing that there are no chances, which sounds dramatic, because it points to a job situation without career perspectives for language teachers¹¹⁵. She then shifts the focus of her answer to what she perceives as professional development for herself and specifies that she wishes to become more and more aware of what she does:

¹¹⁵ The implications for the context in which these teachers work are not a focus in this study, although they are an important element in teacher professional development. These aspects will be addressed in the Chapter 5 "Conclusion".

[Interview N51¹¹⁶: 133] Well, from the point of view of a career, let's say there are no chances, thus it has to be with an increased awareness of what I am doing, with acting more and more aware as a result¹¹⁷.

Two teachers, teacher B282 and teacher A54 share the same goal of “being on top of things” in their field. In addition to receiving practical tools for teaching, Teacher B282 added:

[Interview B282: 107] And to generally be on top of um whatever is discussed in the world of language teaching, not necessarily saying that I would follow every fashion but ...[laughs]

Another aspect of goals for professional development is expressed by teacher I312, who pursues the goal of preparing good material and would also like to publish a book:

[Interview I312: 66-67] I am disciplined in personal preparation, making the nice hand-outs and everything, that's very important to me. This year I did a Weiterbildung in Intercultural Competence with my language teachers because they needed to get the intercultural side of their teaching because this is what I sell¹¹⁸, and it went over six months and there was a lot of homework that they had to do. And we were thinking that we would like to take this work and make a book.

The teacher who best illustrates this orientation of goals is A54, who expresses her many goals on many occasions during the interview. She is concerned with her main goal of enhancing “quality” (both in her own teaching and in her learners) and with other sub-goals, like adding skills:

[Interview A54: 205] OK, what goals do I have? I've opened it out, so goals for my professional development, very abstractly I'd like to be as good as possible in my field and then I'd like to give the students as much support as they need, to understand better what kind of support I can give them. So I keep on changing the goals, you know, depending on the students that I have and what I learn from them. So my goal, my very general goal stays the same but for example in the last couple of years I've noticed that my students want more support in terms of blended learning, and so I've started to add skills in that area, so... that was something that I've invested quite a lot of time and effort into in the last three years or so.

Quality is her major concern, which clearly involves the development of the teacher, as it is again echoed in the following extracts:

[Interview A54: 209] and the other thing to have exercises, online exercises that they can use to supplement their learning and how to figure out that those are still of a very high quality and not just kind of mm test quality that is not conducive to learning, that doesn't teach you to learn. So I'm experimenting with what sort of input and online materials you can trigger learning curiosity so that the students can go

¹¹⁶ All the Italian quotations from the interview of teacher N51 were translated into English by the researcher.

¹¹⁷ Dunque, purtroppo dal punto di vista diciamo di una carriera, diciamo, non esistono possibilità, quindi ci possono essere una maggiore coscienza, diciamo, di quello che sto facendo, agire in maniera più consapevole, insomma.

¹¹⁸ It may be useful to remember that she is the owner of a language school, which is the reason why she uses expressions such as “my teachers”, I sell” etc.

out and start exploring and finding the sorts of things that they want, and that's something, an area that I've needed.

[Interview A54: 213] professional development also has to do with writing skills, improving my writing skills, improving my, you know, presentation of content in a readable, in an enjoyable manner. It's production of learning materials which I also do for xxx [*name of a publishing house*], so I'm working on my production, on the quality of the materials that I produce.

[Interview A54: 45] so, this is very important for me to stay on top of things.

Additionally, she wishes to be a valuable member of the teaching community. She seems to have a professional ethic, which derives from her sense of quality, as a tacit high standard:

[Interview A54: 30-3] Just to keep the quality of jobs.

Q - Is that a problem for you?

Yes very -- To have a quality both in terms of contracts to be [*reformulating*] have challenging students and jobs that are valuable, and that are valued by my community of teachers. So, I want my peer group to share in my teaching. I really want to be, you know, I want to be a colleague to others and I want them to be colleagues to me. So I want to share good teaching.

Q - So you think there is such a common level out there that you want to reach?

Yes, I do think so. I think those of us who are dedicated to good teaching also promote good teaching and want to share it.

The professional side of goals also has a social dimension, as teacher A54's words illustrate: "I want to be a colleague to others and I want them to be colleagues to me". She expands the meaning of professional development goals by stressing the importance for her of sharing "good teaching": professional development seems to result from a discourse community and to occur in interaction with other colleagues. The question of goals for teacher A54 seems to include social as well as individual dimensions.

Teacher A54 further explains that professional development for her as a freelance teacher means being qualified, having qualifications:

[Interview A54: 34] qualifications for teachers who had come to teaching like myself, you know, the housewife teacher, basically, you know, [*laughs*] who had to find a job because her husband moved, and that's the way it came with me. So you try to find something that reaches your academic level and you can't get a job in your academic field because of these biographical complications and then you try to reach the same quality level that you would have had in your field. And so, yes, having continuing on-the-job qualifications is exceedingly important.

Teacher P73 expresses her goals and at the same time her sense of professionalism when she explains her goals: she does not want to find herself in the situation where she comes to the classroom without being prepared. Her goal is to avoid becoming "lazy":

[Interview P73: 74] Normalerweise, weil ich verschiedene Gruppen habe, die lange Zeit bei mir sind, ich will nicht [*stops and reformulates*] ich habe Angst, dass ich in diese Gruppe ankomme und sage: „Ok, was machen wir heute?“ [*meaning not knowing what to do and not having prepared anything*], ich habe Angst, dass ich ein bisschen faul werde mit denen.

What seems to be implicit in this statement is her deontological ethics, her professional code which determines her professional behaviour/ activity. This ethics does not allow her to leave her professional behaviour to chance.

Three of these five teachers, P73, A54 and N51 were also the only ones who promptly answered the question, thus showing a good familiarity with the concept of goals for their professional development.

4. Affective-emotional goals (n= 2)

In the last category we find answers that relate to the **emotional** aspect of goal setting.

As present before in teacher A54's words, she explicitly speaks of 'peers' as very important for her, not only to share in good teaching – as stated previously – but also as a support, as in the following quotation:

[Interview A54: 49] [she was speaking of the enormous quantity of materials and research that language teachers may discover if they begin to delve into any topic]
This feeling that sometimes I feel overwhelmed by it, so that it's ... [reformulating] I am always looking for something like a support group, like "Hey dear, that's not so bad, it's ok, it's ok, we are all trying to learn!" So yes! I need support of friends basically, not so much a very structured program although I am looking around whether there is something, but right **now it's more just the pat on the back from friends**, you know, from time to time, consolation. "It's ok, you're not alone! Es geht nicht nur dir so!" That sort of thing! That's very helpful! [emphasis in her voice], because we are all struggling. [bold emphasis added]

In her words, colleagues seem to have an affective function, in helping overcome the frustration of being faced with huge amounts of information and the negative feelings that derive from it. This kind of support, which language teachers find in colleagues, sounds both social and emotional at the same time, a sort of well-being factor.

Teacher P73 seems to have another very clear goal: being happy as a teacher.

[Interview P73: 81] Glücklich bleiben bei meinem Unterricht, klar, [...] Bis ich in Rente komme, will ich Freude haben.

At the end of her long answer, her words sound like a motto: "Bis ich in Rente komme, will ich Freude haben". Her goal is similar in the long-term perspective to the one expressed by teacher A54, who would like to remain a teacher until retirement. Speaking of the challenges that language teachers are facing now, she concludes:

[Interview A54: 118] so this holistic aspect of becoming older as a foreign language teacher is just as important I think as the qualification side. And it might cause people who get older to find other jobs again, you know, to leave the teaching profession. I'm not planning to, I want to grow old as a teacher!

This last kind of goal, “being happy as a language teacher until retirement”, “growing old as a language teacher” indicates how “pervasive” the teaching experience can be. These goals express a strong sense of mission on the part of the teachers for their work and stress the importance of a holistic perspective on teachers.

As reported before, with a few exceptions (cf. section ‘developmental goal’ above), the question about teachers’ goals for professional development proved to be the most difficult one for most of the teachers. When speaking about goals for themselves, generally the teachers had problems in understanding what they could be and admit that it is difficult for them to say anything about it. This difficulty is best illustrated by three teachers, J106, M96 and D243. In the first case, this teacher could not say anything and remained silent a very long time, reflecting on this issue and making gestures to express that she had no idea. She felt she was unable to answer, but did not want to give up and kept delving into it until she found an answer:

[Interview J106: 123-4] ... [very long silence] ...

Q.: As a teacher. Would you like to develop in a particular direction, in a particular sense?

No, I would rather stay open to different institutions, different things, not be pinned down to one thing. To always be able to switch, [...] you don’t feel stuck.

In the second example, teacher M96 says:

[Interview M96: 188] ich habe allgemeine Ziele, zB die modernesten Sachen, aber was? Weiss ich nicht genau.

and teacher D243 concludes:

[Interview D243: 235] setting goals for my own teacher development, ich denke, das könnte sehr hilfreich sein, aber man braucht jemand, der einem hilft, diese Ziele zu definieren, in team, oder so.

The comment of teacher B282 when speaking of what helps for one’s own development addresses a different aspect, namely time:

[Interview B282: 118-9] Setting goals for my own teacher development...Yes, yes it can [*be useful*]... if you’ve got the time.

Otherwise, other comments (the teachers I312, A54, D243) were more like punchlines, making it evident, that setting goals may even be ‘easy’, but reaching them is less so, as exemplified in A54’ words:

[Interview A54: 284] it’s always easy to set goals, it’s always more difficult to attain [EG and A: *laugh*] reach them.

This appears to indicate that even for those teachers, who have developmental goals for themselves, meeting them is not as easy and self-evident as it might seem.

The goals, as expressed by the teachers in this study, seem to relate either to short-term immediate matters, or to long-term “vision” goals. The former type are important for the execution of the teachers’ task or for living, while the latter seem to be related to personal values, such as professional growth as a life project and as a perspective for their well-being. As the teachers A54 and B282 indicate, setting short term goals for material development is not incompatible with also having long-term goals, as they have set both for themselves as means towards their goal of professionalisation. Indeed, another feature that emerges when looking at teachers’ goals, is that some teachers set multiple goals for themselves, thus addressing the multiple aspects of teachers’ professional life. Teacher A54 has a group of goals of a different nature: intrinsic (learning) and extrinsic (the wish to gain recognition in the community of peer teachers looks like an external factor). Further, only one half of the teachers demonstrated an awareness of their own learning process, while the other half rather assumed the learners’ goals as their own. This may possibly indicate that in the former case teachers’ goals are more self-related than in the latter case, which sounds external¹¹⁹, a distinction that the following table attempts to capture:

Self-dictated, intrinsic goals	Outer, extrinsic goals
developmental	instructional
affective-emotional	occupational

Table 4.2 - Dimensions of teachers’ goals

An additional aspect that emerges from the remarks of the teachers in relation to their goals concerns the allusion to their specific situations as language teachers. The goals they mentioned do not seem to be associated with future perspectives of a professional career in teaching and no aspirations about a teaching career can be heard in their words. Their investment in the workshops, as well as their previous professional background, were more or less disregarded by the institutions they worked at. As teacher A54 suggests with her definition of “housewife teachers”, implicitly this attests to the awareness of a lack of status, of social recognition and of professional prospects as a freelance language teacher.

¹¹⁹ In the literature they are also called extrinsic, ‘ought’ goals (Bokaerts 1999: 452) vs intrinsic, intrapersonal goals (Schunk et al. 2010: 176).

Summary

Overall, the analysis of goals above makes explicit the many dimensions goals can have for language teachers.

Only some of the teachers seem to be aware of their professional development process and refer to their learning goals as **distinct** from learners' goals. According to this differentiation, the teachers either fall into the group with 'own learning goals' or not:

Group 1. the teachers with 'own learning goals': A54, B282, I312, N51, P73

Group 2. the teachers without 'own learning goals': D243, J106, M96, M171, N95

Although it is interesting to pursue both kinds of goals, the goals expressed by the teachers in group 1 are crucial for the basic research questions of the present study. Therefore this group of teachers will be more the focal center than the second one.

The questions that arise and that will be treated in this chapter are:

1. Do these teachers show peculiar patterns of learning behaviour related to their goals?
2. Is there a match or a consistency in the way teachers act and arrange their own "zone of proximal development" in order to reach their goals?
3. What professional profiles emerge from the data?
4. How do individual differences relate to the professional profiles?

4.2 Teachers' realisation of goals

Teacher development in the context investigated here is, as previously stated, a matter of self-regulation, because there is no one checking on the progress of the language teachers, except the teachers themselves. In this respect, the way the teachers conduct themselves as learners is decisive. The focus here is on their learning behavior, i.e. on how teachers proceed to achieve their goals, and this is operationalised as follows:

- A. the activities they engage in
- B. the strategies they use and develop

4.2.1 Language teachers' activities

The first striking result with respect to which activities the teachers engage in to pursue their goals reflects a wide spectrum of possibilities. The major differences among the teachers, first in quantitative and then also in qualitative terms will be the focus of this section.

Quantitative differences

When the participating teachers speak about what they undertake for their professionalisation,

they mention different activities. These are listed here as a catalogue. The order is determined by the activities that are more common among all the participants to those that are the least common among them.

Catalogue of activities teachers engaged in
Attending teacher workshops
Having informal exchanges with other colleagues
Observing colleagues' lessons
Creating learning materials
Learning another language
Being a teacher trainer
Drawing on theory
Enrolling in a Teaching Programme/ Teaching qualification diploma
Having a study group
Reading professional literature
Carrying out personal projects
Writing for other teachers (books, articles for teachers' magazines, etc.)
Networking
Blogging

Table 4.3 – Teachers' activities catalogue

The activities from the catalogue are distributed in an uneven way among the teachers. The next table (Table 4.4) shows the distribution of activities. Some activities seem to be common to all the participants (attending teacher training/workshops and having informal exchanges with other colleagues)¹²⁰. The table also aims at presenting the increased involvement of the teachers in additional activities (Extras). The teachers of Group 1, i.e. the teachers with 'own learning goals' are highlighted. Three of them clearly stand out because they engage in almost all of them.

¹²⁰ Johnson (2009: 95) and Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2009) indicate many different types of PD activities teachers could engage in, such as "Peer coaching", "Shared inquiry" (to quote but a few), but they were not mentioned by the teachers in this study.

	Attending teacher workshops	Having informal exchange with other colleagues	Creating learning materials	Having a study group	Drawing on theory	Reading professional literature	Extras
A54	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
P73	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
N51	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
I312*	x	x	x				
M96**	x	x	x				
D243**	x	x					
M171	x	x					
B282	x	x					
N95	x	x					
J106	x	x					
<p><i>The teachers with the asteriscs have an additional activity, such as: * Observing colleagues, being teacher trainer and ** Learning another foreign language. They are not listed in “Extras” to accentuate that the increment in the upper rows referred to more additional activities.</i></p>							

Table 4.4 - Distribution of professional development activities

The upper part of the table indicates three teachers (A54, P73 and N51) who engage in more activities for their professional growth than the others, such as “having a study group with colleagues”, “reading professional literature” and “drawing on theory”. Each of them also engages in further activities (column “extras”). Teacher A54, for example, uses feedback from students, observes colleagues, writes for a teachers’ magazine and promotes books for a publishing house. She blogs and networks a lot with the explicit aim of developing professionally (this will be further elaborated on later in this chapter in the section “Colleagues as learning opportunities”). Similarly to teacher P73, she had some experience being a teacher trainer herself, attending teaching conferences and carrying out personal projects. Teacher P73 is also learning another language for her professional development, (as teacher D243 above). Finally, Teacher N51 also shares one activity with A54: they are both attending a teaching qualification diploma programme specifically planned for teachers of a second/foreign language.

For two teachers (I312 and M96) the data show that besides attending teacher workshops and participating in exchanges with other colleagues, they engage in some additional activities. They mention “Creating learning materials” as a way of professionalizing and also of participating in either activities such as “Being teacher trainer” (I312), or “Observing

colleagues” (M96).

As regards the remaining teachers, their activities for professional development are restricted to attending teacher workshops and enjoying meeting other colleagues. These are the most frequent activities that the teachers in this study mentioned for their development, and which seem to constitute a sort of “default” or a minimum of activities in which most of the teachers engage for their professional growth¹²¹.

Teacher D243 is additionally learning another language, which she considers a “Fortbildung”, a useful activity for language teachers who wish to collect ideas for their teaching:

[Interview D243: 252-253] ich habe selber an einem Sprachkurs teilgenommen für Arabisch und war somit in der Schüler Situation und das war...also bis heute mache ich das...und das ist für mich auch eine ständige Fortbildung eigentlich... uh mal als Schüler das zu sehen z.B grad im Anfänger- Unterricht bei einer völlig fremden Sprache zu merken, wie toll das ist, wenn der Lehrer ein Wort auch ein drittes Mal anschreibt auch wenn das schon vor drei Stunden mal angeschrieben wurde und in der nächsten Stunde noch mal, und wenn es dann noch ein drittes Mal angeschrieben wird, es ist noch nicht zu viel. Also dies zu sehen, wie wichtig die Wiederholung speziell im Anfänger-Unterricht ist, wo man noch sehr unsicher ist über die Schreibweise und hat man alles richtig verstanden und so. Oder dann auch... ja also ich denke...mal die Seite zu wechseln und selber Teilnehmer zu sein von einem Sprachkurs finde ich eine ganz wichtige Erfahrung.

Qualitative differences

In the next section I would like to focus on one aspect that has emerged from the data, namely, that there is a remarkable difference in the way the various activities are experienced by the groups (even the common ones), which indicates that the teachers differ not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms.

I have selected two of the activities, beginning with the first (‘Attending teacher training’) that is common to all of them and then following it with the next one (‘Having exchanges with other colleagues’). The discussion of the data is in accordance with the grouping of the teachers established on the basis of their goals:

Group 1. the teachers with ‘own learning goals’: A54, B282, I312, N51, P73

Group 2. the teachers without ‘own learning goals’: D243, J106, M96, M171, N95

Although the first group was identified as crucial for my research, I do not limit the discussion to this group, because ignoring the remaining teachers would not adequately render the context and because the contrast between the groups sheds more light on their differences. Thus, although the first group is discussed in more depth and the teachers are characterised more individually, the second is discussed as well, but rather as a group, whenever the data

¹²¹ Because this result refers to the teachers who attended the programme *KommUNikation*, we could assume for them a greater degree of interest and motivation in comparison to the ones who did not and in this sense they are not the norm. Therefore, based on the data, the “default” standard refers to a special group of teachers and can not be generalised to all the teachers.

allow it. When differences occur, they are of course indicated.

4.2.1.1 Attending teacher training

Attending teacher training in the form of workshops is the most recurring activity in the teachers' answers. For the majority of them it seems to be either the most useful activity, or the most available one, a sort of "default" activity that comes to mind when teachers look for help:

[Interview A54: 211] I usually try to formulate something that I notice I'm having trouble with and then I try to read a book or mm go to a workshop.

When asked which forms of support they receive as language teachers, they all mentioned the lack of institutional support¹²². They reported that their available options are primarily reduced to some workshops offered by publishing houses:

[Interview B282: 35] training organized by publishing houses

[Interview I312: 23] That would mostly be the courses that the publishers offer, and then it would be our own in-company teaching that we do; peer teaching.

[Interview P73: 30] In München sind Fortbildungen sehr wichtig in unserem Institut [*name of the language institute she works for*] und sie machen richtig gute Fortbildungen.

The teachers were not obliged or expected to attend any form of teacher development activity as well, and reported attending workshops or completing teaching diplomas explicitly for themselves, like teacher A54 or teacher N51:

[Interview N51: 41-45] at the moment we are attending a course to attain a teaching certificate [*name of the diploma for teaching Italian*].

Q.: Is it mandatory?

No.

Q.: Ah, did the school director ask you or suggest it?

No, we were not even asked, but it was In any case it is interesting¹²³.

Only one teacher was expected to attend training specific for language teachers:

¹²² The programme *KommUNikation* and another previous teacher programme at the LMU constitute two exceptions.

¹²³ Adesso ci stanno somministrando un corso per ottenere un certificato, ilxxx [*name of the diploma for teaching Italian*].

Q.: Obbligatorio?

No.

Q.: Ah, la direttrice della scuola ve l'ha chiesto?

No, non ce l'ha neanche chiesto, però insomma la cosa si è ..., del resto è anche interessante.

[Interview A54: 67] Well, xxx [name of the publishing house she works for] sent me to Wales, so it was a part of my job there basically to go. The other institutions I work for, for example [name of the institution] don't expect me to have any workshops, so I really do it all on my own. I do it for myself.

The answers of the participants attest to two issues: first to one characteristic of the group of teachers, all being highly motivated teachers, who feel the urge to professionalise themselves. Secondly, they point to the lack of institutional support for them.

In general, the teachers considered teacher training and workshops in a positive way and found that they definitely have a lot to offer. The teachers all seemed to learn from them, but they varied in their answers with regard to

1. what they learn from teacher training and workshops,
2. what they perceive as useful and difficult.

These aspects will be illustrated in the following sections.

What teachers learn from teacher training and workshops

Speaking about what she thinks she learns from teacher workshops, teacher A54 finds that what she can get out of workshops consists mostly in the opportunity to reflect:

[Interview A54: 296-8] Usually I take away very general ideas that start working in me. I don't ever use worksheets one-to-one, I don't need worksheets that I can put to practice on the following Monday, that's not the way I go about teacher training, I use it as a time-out from...., to think about things, to really yeah, to reflect on my teaching and to reflect on teaching and where I'm going as a teacher. No, I use them, yeah I really do use workshops for professional development and not for, you know, to run my next lesson [laughs].

Q.: [laughs] mm mm Ok. Why do you say this?

Yeah, well, when I was a younger teacher, you know, at the beginning, I'd come away with photocopies and then I'd put them in the photocopier on Monday and I'd run a class with them, you know, that was how I used it and I don't really do that anymore because my classes are much more specialized and I usually make the materials for them, so I might take an idea and then rework it, you know.

Worksheets, handouts and most of all the opportunity to “run the next class” without much effort (to quote teacher A54) are not in the foreground, she expects much more and is – together with teacher N51 – very critical towards the kinds of workshops that do not meet these expectations. As clearly expressed by teacher N51, they both were able to discern quality differences among the activities available for teachers.

Teacher N51 manifests her disappointment about teacher training sessions she had attended in the past because it had spoiled her interest and disheartened her, as she had not benefitted from it. She articulates her discontent in the word “recipe”:

[Interview N51: 87-93] What we have been learning so far, was mostly a blend of strategies, teaching, at yeah really low level, something between the recipe and the strategy, I would say

Q.: And now?

Well, lately, now yes, through the master course and the KommUNikation-workshops, we have begun to see the theoretical foundations of certain recipes. I had reached a point where I felt I had lost all interest,

yes, I refer most of all to the workshops organised by the publishing houses, for example, which is the most frequent thing that is on offer for teachers.

Q.: In which sense is the ‘recipe’ not satisfying?

Yes, because I need to know whether to follow a certain line, yes, I need to know the theoretical presuppositions of why we act in a certain way, also because we as teachers are exposed to certain pressures, I would say, to different types of demands on the part of the learners, isn’t that so?¹²⁴

Teacher N51 criticises those examples of teacher training that offer “recipes” without giving the theoretical background, which she thinks she needs (this will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter in the section about the teachers’ perceptions of usefulness). According to her and teacher A54, going beyond the ‘recipe’ seems necessary in order to expand one’s own knowledge base and be able to cope with the various demands placed on language teachers. Although they also benefit from practical aids, what they seem to learn from teacher training is of a more abstract kind and refers to rather intangible aspects, such as confirming that their own teaching is fine or gaining more confidence, as in the following examples:

[Interview N51: 116] I felt confirmed that, also in an academic setting, my way of teaching was fine¹²⁵.

Other abstract gains are touched upon also by teacher P73. In her case, she sees the gains from workshops in terms of opportunities to incorporate new perspectives. On the question of whether she thinks she feels the need for further teacher training, she reacts positively, the reason being her need to know about new ways of seeing a phenomenon and to look for intellectual challenges¹²⁶:

[Interview P73: 31-33] ja klar, nicht nur lernen und das war’s, wir können nicht bleiben ... und das ist auch persönlich, ... [short pause] in jedem Moment denkt man, wir machen das Beste, aber dann kommen andere Leute, die anders denken, anders sehen, und wir müssen es hören, es sehen, und dann vielleicht „Ok“.

¹²⁴[Sì, quello che si è imparato fino ad adesso, fino a poco tempo fa era soprattutto un insieme di strategie, un insegnamento, o anche sì, a livello anche proprio abbastanza limitato, magari, tra la ricetta e la strategia, diciamo, soprattutto, direi ...

Q.: Invece, adesso?

Mah, ultimamente adesso, con il master e con questi workshops, ecco, si cominciano a incontrare i presupposti teorici, di certe ricette. Io sono arrivata ad un punto in cui ero un po’ disamorata, insomma, mi riferisco soprattutto ai workshop organizzati dalle case editrici, per esempio, che sono le cose più frequenti che ci vengono offerte.

Q.: In che senso la “ricetta” non è soddisfacente?

Sì, perché la mia esigenza era sapere se mi muovo su una certa linea, ecco, conoscere i presupposti teorici per cui si agisce in un certo modo, anche perché si è sottoposti come insegnanti a tensioni, diciamo, a richieste di tipo diverso da parte dei corsisti, no?]

¹²⁵Ho trovato la conferma che, anche in ambito accademico diciamo, il mio modo di insegnare poteva andare bene.

¹²⁶In her case, the range of concrete and abstract gains can be found in the same person: [Interview P73: 48] Diesen anderen Blick, neue Perspektiven. Und natürlich, [short pause to think] es ist, muss ich auch sagen, es ist manchmal gut, auch solche Seminare zu haben, wo man ganz praktische Aktivitäten lernt, weil ich zB. Konversationskurse habe, die schon 7 Jahre laufen, und irgendwann sage ich: “Was soll ich zum Unterricht bringen? Jetzt weiß ich nicht mehr“.

Later she refers to the project *KommUNikation* and summarises what she thinks she learned from it in this way:

[Interview P73: 63] Es war das Feedback, das die Kollegen gegeben haben, "Das können wir nicht so in der Uni beibringen!" und dann habe ich mehr überlegt, ... Damals habe ich nicht an der Uni gearbeitet, es hat mich noch mal erinnert, dass es nicht nur die Grundschule oder die VHS gibt, es gibt andere, es war wichtig für mich persönlich.

This sounds like a recognition of her learning attitude, according to which she is always looking for challenges and – at the same time – also an indication of her communicative and social orientation, according to which knowledge is socially constructed (Johnson 2009: 9). This emphasises the social aspects in teachers' development¹²⁷, and denotes the „zone of proximal development“ as a social **and** cognitive zone of development, in which the peers play a critical role in learning, as teacher P73 further explains:

[Interview P73: 48] Q.: What do you think you learn from teacher training in general?
Diesen anderen Blick, neue Perspektiven.

According to teacher P73, she sees the gains from teacher training in terms of professional or intellectual insights, such as expanding her professional experience through different perspectives, through new ways of seeing things. If professional growth is an increase in something, the broadening of perspectives is one example of it and teacher P73 makes this clear in her words.

As for teacher I312, she also profits from teacher training:

[Interview I312: 37] New ideas, new approaches, and um...yeah that's it.

Methods seem to be not only constitutive of the teachers' domain, they also appear to be indispensable in maintaining both the learners' interest and motivation at a high level and in avoiding being bored themselves as teachers, as I312 states:

[Interview I312: 80] they [the workshops] gave me new ideas, then it helped me add something new to my repertoire. For me it is important, absolutely. If it's routine it gets boring and then I don't want to do it.

Within this interest in methods, the interest in multimedia and information technology (IT) applied to language teaching is one of the top concerns of the teachers:

[Interview I312: 25] You can never have enough...methods. And also with modern tools.

Technical expertise seems to be a pervasive concern for language teachers, who very often

¹²⁷ And is also similar to what happens in classroom learning, cf. Klippel & Doff (2009: 208).

mention the need to become more expert in information technology, in using learning platforms, multimedia, and “technical instruments” in general (N51: 119). This even applies to those who think they do not need information technology for their lessons, as teacher B282 for her translation classes:

[Interview B282: 41] Yes, I think what would be ... something I do not use at the moment and don't really um well, ... I do not use computers, is the information technology, because it does not lend itself, at the moment, to what I do.

If in the quite recent past teachers were suspected of teachers' ‘technophobia’ (Lam 2000: 413) and of being averse to technology, this does not seem to apply any longer. The teachers in this study seem to feel the appeal of the “last innovation” in teaching methodology and want to develop expertise in this domain.

In addition, what many teachers appreciate most are ideas that can be easily applied one-to-one as recipes and handouts, because they relieve the teachers of their work load. The word “recipes” also recurs in the interviews of other teachers, either *verbatim* or with similar concepts, as teacher B282 conveys:

[Interview B282: 71] General ideas are good and you then have to apply them to the language you are teaching. But sometimes it is very handy if you can just take things and use them as a recipe.

The chance to “run the next class” without much effort (to quote teacher A54 again) is exactly what teacher B282 considers a learning gain and expects from workshops.

The “recipes” find their materialisation in “handouts”, which emerge as one of the most appreciated benefits for the teachers, especially for teacher B282 or teacher J106:

[Interview J106: 96-7] Q.: Can you think of one feature in the design of the KommUNikation-Workshops that was beneficial for your development as a language teacher?
I think it was good that it was on-hand practice, with hand-outs and examples and trying it out, it was good.

As for the group 2 of teachers, they as a group are more consistent. This group mentioned practical gains from the *KommUNikation* programme or from teacher training in general, which are usually related to the instructional dimension of teaching in terms of methods that help the teachers to arrange learning situations in their classes. When the researcher asked how they had profitted from the workshops, one of the most frequent words mentioned by the teachers in both the questionnaires and the interviews was “methods”. Here a selection:

[Interview M171: 47] New methods of teaching.

[Interview M96: 134] Viele Methoden... von denen ich wirklich bis heute auch einige anwende.

[Interview M96: 144- 146] Na ja, dann Methoden würde ich sagen, Methodik.

Q.: Methodik, uhh uhh, in welchem Sinn?

Ja also... es ist schwierig zu sagen... also, verschiedene Methoden mit verschiedenen Materialien wie zum Beispiel Zeitungen. Oder mit Stationenlernen, oder das Unterrichtsprojekt. Also wie kann man, nicht was, sondern wie kann man unterrichten. Die Methoden allgemein, das habe ich, Methoden gelernt.

[Interview J106: 54] New methods, new ideas, to vary teaching, to make it more interesting for myself and for the students.

Like teacher B282 above, they also appreciate being able to “run the next class”, as teacher M96 illustrates:

[Interview M96: 140] Ja zum Beispiel den Unterricht mit Zeitungen, den habe ich übernommen, für neunzig Minuten habe ich das ganze Programm gemacht.

New ideas, new methods are markedly a great concern for the teachers. Also in this group the interest in multimedia and information technology (IT) applied emerges as one of the top concerns of the teachers:

[Interview M96: 161] einfach die modernsten Sachen zu kennen, um sie anzuwenden.

Abstract gains do periodically surface also in this group, as with teacher D243 who finds that attending workshops gives her more confidence in her teaching:

[Interview D243: 104] Also auf jeden Fall, sie [die Veranstaltungen] sind immer motivierend, man unterrichtet danach in mancher Hinsicht bewusster, reflektierter.

To summarise, all the teachers attended the workshops out of personal interest and not because it was mandatory. In this regard, no expectations were placed on them by the institutions. Concerning what the teachers report as gains from teacher training, there are some differences, registered in the data, between direct and indirect gains. Although all teachers confirm the advantages of direct practical benefits, a few also note the advantages of the indirect, abstract gains, as indicated in the following (Figure 4.1):

Gains from workshops/teacher training	
Direct ← -----→ Indirect/abstract = immediate implementation	= ‘processed’ implementation *
* Processed implementation means that the implementation follows some conceptual processing and some personal elaboration.	
Methods	Inspiration for own ideas
“Recipes”	Challenge of perspective
Handouts	Theoretical foundations
Technical tools	Confirmation of teaching approach
	Confidence and self-awareness

Figure 4.1 - What teachers learn from teacher training/workshops

The gains listed on the left (direct gains) are immediately realisable and more specific than those on the right (indirect gains). They require teachers to “copy&use” ideas or materials and methods that are illustrated in the workshops. The teachers in these cases are not involved and do not seem to contribute anything personal in their implementation. Their participation is rather passive.

The need for new tools and technical “tricks of the trade”, as Wilson & Berne (1999: 198-9) define them is “a legitimate one”, however, they suggest that a prerequisite of teacher development demands that teachers go “beyond picking new techniques”. This becomes clearer in the following consideration about the second kind of gains, which is obviously reflective in nature. The teachers are here more involved and more active. What they mention as beneficial gains seems to require extensive changes and a major participation on the part of the teachers. The teacher reflects, re-invents, and integrates new ideas into the habitual repertoire after making a deliberate cognitive effort. The integration of new ideas results from changes in the teachers’ thinking and from personal and cognitive involvement.

Teachers’ perceptions of usefulness and difficulties

A similar contrast, as seen above for what teachers report they gain from attending training and workshops, surfaces again when teachers speak about their perceptions of usefulness or their difficulties in pursuing professional development. The following set of results provides insights into what teachers find more helpful for their professional growth. The question was “Which one of the following options helped you most for your development as a language teacher?” The following table lists the results in decreasing order, beginning with the ones that teachers found most useful¹²⁸.

USEFUL FOR DEVELOPMENT	
talking to colleagues	7
evaluating my own teaching	5
attending teacher training/courses	4

The following items were mentioned as the least useful:

engaging with theoretical issues in language learning/teaching	3
setting goals for my own teacher development	2
self-assessing my own professional knowledge	2

The table points out what helps teachers most in their development task and what possible

¹²⁸ As described in Chapter 3.5.3, for this item a number of options were anticipated on a sheet of paper and a blank space for free answers was also provided for the participants. The list of options originated in the pilot interviews and was used to reduce the time that these open-ended questions required.

ways they “learn” as professionals. What is striking in these results, however, is that the very elements of one’s own autonomy (setting goals and self-assessment) received low marks, whereas activities with social involvement (talking to colleagues) scored higher. The majority of the teachers indicated that colleagues seem to be an important resource for them. Attending teacher training was considered an activity that helped the teachers less than talking to colleagues or evaluating one’s own teaching.

The researcher also asked the teachers what they thought was easy or difficult for them, and this inquiry produced the following results. The teachers mentioned as “very easy”:

EASY ACTIVITIES	
attending teacher courses	6
evaluating benefit of teacher training	6
setting goals for my own teaching	6

Conversely, the following were considered to be “very difficult”:

DIFFICULT ACTIVITIES	
setting goals for my own teacher development	7
engaging with theoretical issues in language learning/teaching	7
self-assessing my own professional knowledge	5

A glance at the bottom of both tables (“least useful” and “most difficult activities”) revealed that **in general what helped least are also the most difficult activities**. Referring to these activities however, it is interesting to note that three teachers indicated them as the most useful in spite of being the most difficult: P73, A54¹²⁹ and N51.

Of the major difficulties mentioned by the teachers in this study, the difficulty of engaging with theory will be specifically addressed in the following, to point to significant differences among the teachers.

The difficulty of engaging with theory

The teacher who best exemplifies the tendency of the first group is teacher N51. When asked whether she has specific interests with regard to teachers’ training, she answered that she has a specific one, namely a preference for the “very theoretical”¹³⁰, as she needs the theoretical background to know how to create a framework for a phenomenon or an approach. As she

¹²⁹ Although teacher A54 found self-assessing to be useful, she had severe doubts that she can do this, as she thinks she lacks the necessary competence. This points to a weakness in teacher education, which will be addressed in the “Implications”.

¹³⁰“un interesse specifico, beh, ti dirò sì, per me molto teorico” [Interview N51: 77].

expressed it, after having mentioned the tensions teachers may be exposed to, she sketched situations in which students complain to the teachers because of their approach to language learning:

[Interview N51: 93] In any case, I have heard other kinds of comments, it is not always only a request for a more traditional type of teaching. Well, then I think that it is necessary for a teacher to be aware of what s/he does, meaning that one is able to say: “Look, I understand you, I know and understand your point, but I teach so and so because I have this belief, I follow this approach and so on”¹³¹.

Her explanation is based on the necessity for her as a language teacher to be aware of differences in the approach that may inform her teaching, for example when adopting a traditional vs. more communicatively oriented one. For teacher N51 practical suggestions alone seem insufficient when facing the learners’ demands. But the learners are not the only reason for enhancing her professional awareness as a teacher, she herself is a reason:

[Interview N51: 95] Yes, this in the necessity of having to argue with someone, but also for oneself, that means: I choose a certain approach, because it is coherent¹³².

[Interview N51: 163] I like engaging with theoretical issues in language learning, these are things that I find useful, I would say very useful, at the very least they give me confidence¹³³.

She feels a considerable responsibility for herself and her own professional action. She further explains that theory helps at all levels: in planning, in acting, and in taking decisions. As a source of confidence, theory performs for teacher N51 a supporting function. And because she relies on it, theory also has an orienting function. Speaking about the teaching diploma that she is aiming for, she also speaks about theory as a source of answers to questions that teachers have. In this sense theory is her professional ‘compass’ and she behaves accordingly in her teaching:

[Interview N51: 97-99] Of course we are learning a lot of theory for this exam, it [theory] is a very important part ... both [*practical and theoretical training*] are absolutely necessary, yes, because one may ask oneself, you know, in front of repeated errors, or in front of certain oral and written productions,

¹³¹ Comunque ho sentito tutti e due i generi di commenti, non è che sia sempre solo una richiesta di un insegnamento tradizionale. Allora, penso che sia necessario per un insegnante avere la coscienza di quello che fa, cioè poter dire: “guardi sì, io la capisco, so, capisco bene i suoi motivi, però io mi comporto così e così e così perché ho questa convinzione, seguo questo approccio ecc.”

¹³² Sì, questo sicuramente nella necessità di dover argomentare, ma anche per se stessi, come per dire: io scelgo una certa linea, perché questa è coerente.

¹³³ Occuparmi di teorie, a me piace, insomma, sono cose che trovo abbiano un senso, quindi direi senz’altro molto utili, perlomeno mi danno sicurezza.

one may ask oneself: “How can I ...? What is the right way to choose?” And so it is good in my opinion to have an appropriate methodological and theoretical background¹³⁴.

Teacher N51 is aware that working with theory is not an easy task, but despite this difficulty, she does not refrain from making the effort and does so intentionally:

[Interview N51: 191-2] Engaging with theoretical issues in language learning and teaching - this was difficult, in the sense of working with these aspects, I had to hunt for them, it was difficult for me.¹³⁵

The reason for this seems to be in accordance with what she had stated previously with respect to her professional development goals, namely, becoming more and more aware of what she does.

Confidence is also important for teacher A54. Asked when theoretical knowledge about language learning and teaching plays a role in her professional development, she mentioned the supporting function of theory for her; in her words:

[Interview A54: 300-301] It is ... usually, when I find a theory that backs me up, it relaxes me and it helps me develop. [...] you know, there are just interesting things to think about, so thinking about theories, it keeps my brain awake and makes me rethink things and try not to make things too simple so it usually gets me back to being a barefoot teacher, gets me back to being an honest teacher who doesn't use any tricks.

When asked about whether she has some preference for practical or more theoretical input, she takes time to ponder the question:

[Interview A54: 122] Oh God, that... that's, I like both, I can't say. I think more the theories because I've got a lot of practical tools and I usually develop my own exercises based on my learners. So it was good. I like to see tricks, quick tricks, you know, something to take home, but it's not what really moves me. It's not what keeps me busy, what keeps my head busy. That's more the theories, the big picture, is what is interesting.

What is the function of theory then? According to teacher A54, first and foremost it gives the “big picture”. Secondly, it is something that has sense if put into and tested in practice and thirdly, theory offers the opportunity to be “awake to the situation”, as the next quotation illustrates:

¹³⁴ Chiaramente adesso stiamo facendo molto teoria per questo esame, è una parte molto importante ... sono assolutamente necessarie tutte e due, sì: perché uno si chiede, no, di fronte a errori ripetuti, di fronti a produzioni orali o scritte, magari uno si chiede “Come faccio a...? Qual' è la strada giusta da prendere?” E quindi è bene secondo me avere un presupposto metodologico e teorico che corrisponda.

¹³⁵ Occuparmi di teorie sull'apprendimento o insegnamento di una lingua, questo era difficile, nel senso proprio di, occuparsi di questi aspetti, ho dovuto cercarli, risultava difficile per me.

[Interview A54: 244-6] there are very few theoretical issues that have really helped me but those that have helped me have helped me a lot, so, most of the things I find only become really valuable to me when I look at them in practice, [...] So, just having things there, having things on offer to allow learners to reflect and to develop new things that is, kind of being wired, being totally awake to the situation has always worked better for me.

EG.: Ok

Yeah, I do enjoy thinking the theories through.

Her words indicate another function of theory, as vital for her as foraging¹³⁶ is for her brain.

Furthermore, in A54's words theory seems to be a matter of development:

[Interview A54: 298] Yeah well when I was a younger teacher you know at the beginning, I'd come away with photocopies and then I'd put them in the photocopier on Monday and I'd run a class with them you know, that was how I used it and I don't really do that anymore because my classes are much more specialized and I usually make the materials for them, so I might take an idea and then rework it, you know.

As for teacher N51, she is also aware of the difficulty of engaging with theoretical issues, but at the same time she needs their 'challenge' as well. This becomes evident in the following quotation:

[Interview A54: 286] engaging with theoretical issues, I find is hard, because I'm lacking the theoretical background, I don't have an academic degree, so it's really hard work and I often feel that I've got gaps and might be making a fool of myself, so I find it very hard. I find it challenging and interesting, but hard.

This positive relationship to theoretical knowledge is also a distinctive trait of teacher P73, who appears to draw on theory as a valuable source of solutions:

[Interview P73: 151] weil alle diese Übungen und alle diese Theorien sagen, "normalerweise erst x und dann y" aber dieser Mann macht es umgekehrt, und ich versuche zu wissen, zu verstehen warum er das schaffen kann und andere Dinge nicht, warum umgekehrt? Und ich versuche, die Antwort in der Theorie zu finden. Aber nur wenn ich Probleme habe, die ich nicht lösen kann. Wenn ich etwas nicht weiß, suche ich in der Theorie.

She told during the interview that she completed her studies in Education, but this did not mean a lot to her at that time. She explained that she learned most through practical training and made apparent another aspect of theory that emerged before with teacher A54: that theory might be a matter of "professional maturation"

[Interview P73: 138-151; emphasis added] Q.: Do you think you have learned better so far through practical or theoretical training?

Practical

Q.: Practical, OK. Warum?

Practical, weil..., ich meine jetzt z.B. mein Studium der Pädagogik. Ich würde gerne **jetzt** [*emphasis in her voice*] studieren und dann würde ich gerne die Bücher nehmen, die ich gelesen habe ... von diesen

¹³⁶ By using the word "foraging" I explicitly refer to Schumann (2002: 21), whose metaphor of "foraging for mental food" is at the basis of his motivational theory of learning.

Lehrern, würde ich gerne **saugen**¹³⁷ [*emphasis in her voice*], damals als Studentin ohne Practica, habe nichts gehabt von diesen Theorien. Ich sehe jetzt, was mir fehlt ... oder was mich interessiert.

Q.: Also, du hast durch Praxis gelernt, aber du denkst, jetzt würdest du sehr gerne Theorie haben
Ja.

Q.: Also, du hast mit Theorie angefangen, aber du würdest es jetzt brauchen

Ja genau, brauchen und verstehen auch. Ich habe damals nicht... ich habe schon verstanden, aber es hat mir nichts gesagt. Ich hatte keine Erfahrung und wenn ein Lehrer sagte „Wenn die Kinder drei Jahre alt sind, sprechen sie ganze Sätze und so und so“... aha, ok, hab ich notiert, in der Prüfung habe ich das gesagt, aber jetzt habe ich Kinder im Kopf „diese sind so... drei Jahre ja, aha“ und dann kann ich denken: „Was machen die meisten Kinder? Hmmm... aber dieses macht nicht so... „

Q.: Das sagt dir jetzt mehr?

Ja, es hat eine Bedeutung jetzt. Damals hatte es keine Bedeutung. Es war einfach Information, die ich bekommen habe, aber ich habe es nicht mit der Realität verbunden

Q.: Wann hat theoretisches Wissen für dich eine Rolle gespielt?

Z.B. wenn ich ein Problem mit Studenten habe, also Studenten oder Schüler oder wie das heißt... äh Teilnehmer, die überhaupt keine Lust empfinden z.B.... ich habe z.B. eine Frau... die ist jetzt nicht mehr bei mir... und sie schreibt in einer Art, ich kann nicht ihre Aufsätze korrigieren! Ich schaff es nicht. Ich kann nicht. Ich weiß nicht, wie ich weiterhelfe. Und dann, in solchen Momenten komme ich zu der Theorie und vielleicht kann die Theorie mir helfen, einen Weg zu finden

Q.: Und findest du normalerweise eine Antwort?

Äh... also, ich habe.. schon, ja, doch... doch, nicht immer, klar ... aber die Antwort ist da... wie z.B. mit dieser Frau ...

Her words suggest that the common approach in teacher education to provide teachers with theoretical knowledge at the start of their careers could use some revision (cf. Implications for Teacher Education, Chapter 5.2.1): in fact, she could understand the theories while studying, but they had no meaning for her. Only now does theory have a meaning for teacher P73, after many years of experience, because she can make the appropriate associations to real learning situations. Teacher P73 would now “gobble up” the theories, using a metaphor that again has to do with “eating” and that sounds similar to “brain forage”, as with teacher A54. Further, teacher P73 looks for answers and solutions in theory when she has teaching problems, in order to teach in an informed and well founded way. This echoes what teacher A51 expressed above.

As regards the other teachers in group 1, what was striking during the interview with teacher B282 was that she seemed to appreciate theory, but there was some confusion about what theory is: Teacher B282, for example, referred to theory on different occasions, but what she called theory are rather some practical or instructional information:

[Interview B282: 155-6] Q.: So... the theoretical issues that you know, are important in the process...so you apply them in practice? Have I understood?

Yes, yes in the sense that if I know that you put too much on an overhead [*laughs*] ... uh information overflow doesn't help. You should only give them as much as they can possibly absorb in the time given. Or which colors are a good signal which other ones don't work. Don't write, don't use a very light yellow colored pen on a white board [*laughs*] very simple things sometimes, like that.

¹³⁷ "I would just **gobble them up**".

[Interview B282: 199-201] Q.: Is there any method or approach you feel uncomfortable with? It isn't anything to do with language teaching: very generally the atmosphere should be good.

[Interview B282: 208-9] Q.: Is there any theory or approach you don't feel comfortable with at all when teaching? Is there any approach that you like least?
Um, well but it's something that I think that nobody these days does to a great extent is that it should just be *me* talking.

As regards teacher I312, she thinks she learns more from practice:

[Interview I312: 83-4] Q.: Do you think you as a teacher have learned better so far through practical or through theoretical training?
Definitely practical. That's how I learned best, it's trial and error or being taught the theory and then putting it into practice immediately.

When asked whether theories in language teaching could help somehow, she reports appreciating theoretical issues:

[Interview I312: 88-9] It does, it does! When it underpins my action, I like having a theoretical basis, a background that I can fall back on in case there are questions.

But later in the interview, a conflict emerges in her attitudes toward theoretical issues. She again refers to theory as follows:

[Interview I312: 107] Engaging with theoretical issues: this is difficult, I just don't do it.

This indicates a possible resistance or an internal dilemma. She also indicates that – even when the workshops seem to be at the “right” level (cf. teacher J106 below) – applying the theories or adapting the input or the ideas of the workshops has another drawback: it is time-consuming. This becomes clear when teacher I312 reports how interesting some concepts were for her¹³⁸. She was enthusiastic about “classroom learning stations”¹³⁹ and about adapting the idea to their own classes, but she also complains that she eventually capitulated on her intention because of time (and effort):

[Interview I312: 55] I couldn't use it because it's too much work, you know.

When group 2 was asked whether they preferred workshops in which they learn practical things about how they can teach in class, or those in which they can learn about theories of language learning and teaching, many dismissed theory. One expression that marks these teachers with regard to theory is a sort of aversion or even “hate”:

¹³⁸ The same is valid also for teacher D243 of the second group: [Interview D243: 142] Denn, wenn man das dann wirklich selber machen will, ist es ein enormer zeitlicher Aufwand.

¹³⁹ This teaching technique is sometimes also defined as “carousel workshop” or “circuit learning”. Cf. <http://www.teachingmethodsonline.com/80-learning-station/>.

[Interview M171: 134] I hate theory, I don't know how to apply it in my private tutoring so to say, no, I don't like it.

[Interview M96: 192] Ich finde viel besser praktische Seminare als Theorie in Büchern, teuer und nicht nützlich...[laughs]

As two extreme examples, I will quote the difficulties expressed by teacher D243 and by teacher J106 to show how theoretical knowledge can be experienced as a daunting task. In the first example, this becomes manifest in the words of teacher D243, who very well conveys the feeling of being overwhelmed by the task of approaching theory through the image of a high mountain:

[Interview D243: 66] Textgrammatik ist ein ganz neues Fach jetzt speziell bei DaF, aber ich denke das spielt auch für andere Fremdsprachen-Unterrichte eine Rolle. Textgrammatik ist ein ganz neues Gebiet. ... Und wenn man sich da jetzt selber einarbeiten will, da steht man vor einem Riesenberg, ja.

Frustration was also very clear to perceive in the expressions used by teacher J106. This teacher finds it difficult to adapt and extract from the workshops what each single teacher may need:

[Interview J106: 58] I think it's very difficult to tag it, all teachers attend at the same time, so if you have different language teachers and everyone teaches something different and different groups, so it's, it's very hard to pick the things you need from that training.

She is here referring to a workshop on the stages of development in language learning which she found interesting, but at the same time confusing, because it required the teachers to process the information, to abstract and to adapt the input to their own language and to their teaching situation:

[Interview J106: 93-5] I mean I know now that there are steps, I know that now, that changed my way of thinking, but I don't know exactly how, you know?
[short pause] ... I understand the point, but I don't know how it works. ... [another pause] I can not pin it down.

She also explains that the reason is what she calls “transfer”:

[Interview J106: 108] it's hard to transfer it back to my own students, to do that transfer.

This transfer-accomplishment is beyond her capabilities. What she needs is - as she explains later - “tailored” input, tailored to her particular needs, target group and target language. To use a term from the workshop itself, which dealt with language processability, the input she was exposed to, might have been far beyond her processing capacities.

To summarise, according to the information that has emerged so far, the variation in the teachers previously evidenced in the way they seem to profit from attending teacher training, is also manifest in another aspect: the role played by theory. While the majority of the teachers were rather daunted when facing theory, only a few expressed their appreciation of theoretical foundations as an element that allows them to carry out informed teaching, and which they use as a springboard for subsequent autonomous action. The focus will now be on “colleagues”, another aspect that characterizes the learning environment of the teachers and that indicates further qualitative differences among the participants.

4.2.1.2 Colleagues as learning opportunities

The second most common activity among the teachers regarded the informal opportunities to meet colleagues. All the teachers reported enjoying meeting other colleagues at the workshops. This result was first revealed in the entries of some teachers in the questionnaires, and later confirmed in the interviews.

To the open-ended question 13 of the questionnaire (*What was particularly important for me today?*) some of the answers referred explicitly to “Austausch mit Kollegen” (exchange with colleagues) as a beneficial feature of the workshops for them¹⁴⁰. The different terms¹⁴¹ that were used were: andere Leute kennen zu lernen / Austausch mit Kollegen / Diskussionen / Die Meinungen von Kollegen / Ideenaustausch / u.a. Kommunikation und Austausch mit Kollegen / Erfahrungenaustausch.

Not all the ten teachers in the study verbalised this aspect in the questionnaire. The ones who did so in the questionnaires are the following, (listed together with their entries; each entry refers to a single workshop). The teachers of group 1 are highlighted.

¹⁴⁰ It is worth noting that this result about “colleagues” emerged as a result also for the totality of the questionnaires. About 42 % of all the entries mentioned “Austausch mit Kollegen” as “particularly important for me” after the workshops.

¹⁴¹ The teachers answered mostly in “note form” to the questions.

<i>Q.13 - What was particularly important for me today?</i>	
Teachers	Entries
A54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - der Austausch - Diskussion - Austausch mit Kollegen - eigene Erfahrungen zu reflektieren und auszutauschen - Gruppenarbeit, Beispiele, Theorie, Reflexion
I312	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diskussionen
N51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideenaustausch - Das Gespräch mit der Leiterin und mit den Kollegen - Diskussion
N95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - der Austausch mit anderen Lehrenden
P73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Die Meinungen von Kollegen - Umtausch¹⁴²
<i>The teachers of group 1 are highlighted.</i>	

These results show that besides content-related information (see the previous section “Attending teacher training”), the participants also perceived their peers as a benefit from attending the workshops.

In general, all the teachers mention this beneficial aspect of workshops during the interviews. As an example, it is worth noting that although teacher M171 could not remember much about the workshops she attended, she says:

[Interview M171: 79-80] Q.: What did you learn attending the KommUNikation-Workshops?
 I think it's a long long time ago now and my memory is not working very well.
 Q.: Just something general that you have learned? (...)
 The organisation was good, I enjoyed tea time, it was very fun *[laughs]*

Meeting other colleagues is not only an enjoyable, but also a useful source of learning for them. To take one example, which makes apparent that the social dimension of teacher professional development is beneficial for the teachers, I again quote teacher M171, who does not find solutions to her specific problem of one-to-one classes in books or in teacher training and concludes:

[Interview M171: 63] I just need to have some more exchange of experience with other people.

In her view, colleagues are a useful source of ideas, a re-source.

However, from a more in-depth analysis of the interviews, another aspect emerges that

¹⁴² “Umtausch” is very probably intended as “Austausch”. This mistake depends on the fact that the majority of the teachers in the study speak German as a foreign language.

distinguishes the teachers when they mention their colleagues or learning from colleagues. Whereas the majority of the teachers refer to occasional sharing and learning in these situations as informal, a few teachers mentioned colleagues and associated them with a different kind of situation, which I label “intentional”. In these cases, the teachers met other colleagues in study groups, networks or blogs as opportunities to learn, as ‘learning tools’.

The teachers who do not only enjoy meeting other teachers during events such as conferences and workshops, but additionally exploit the learning opportunities that peers offer for their professional learning are teacher A54, teacher N51 and teacher P73.

All three had mentioned “Austausch”, “discussions” and “colleagues” in the questionnaires.

These teachers are the only ones who also have a study group for meeting and learning. Teacher N51 meets a group of colleagues to prepare for a teaching specialisation master diploma. Teacher P73 attends many workshops and conferences on a regular basis. When asked whether she had attended other workshops after *KommUNikation*, teacher P73 answered that she attended many:

[Interview P73: 25-28] Q.: Alleine?

Mit Kollegen, wir sind sechs Lehrer und schauen, was es auf der Welt gibt und wir gehen hin! Es ist eine Mischung von Lernen und mit Freunden zu sein.

Later in the interview, speaking about what is useful to develop as a language teacher, she adds:

[Interview P73: 92] Sprechen mit Kollegen, das bringt nicht so sehr für den Unterricht, aber ich brauche es, es ist schon hilfreich, es bringt schon viel, wenn ich frage: Du, kannst du mir einen Tipp geben? Natürlich muss ich schauen, wie ich trotzdem selber besser machen kann, aber ist sehr beruhigend, mit jemanden zu sagen: „Ja, bei mir ist genauso so. Bei mir ist auch so“, und das machen wir mit meiner Gruppe, wir sprechen viel von der Arbeit, wirklich viel.

As her answer illustrates, the gains may thus not be immediately instructional, but rather emotional or personal, like support or confidence.

Teacher A54 does not have a “real” study group, she has a virtual one, because she blogs and enjoys networking.

[Interview A54: 44] Local contacts these are very important to me, so people I can call and contact, then internationally I am very closely connected through my blog and I read other teachers’ blogs and they read mine, and we are also on Twitter, so I am very closely linked with the network of maybe twenty teachers now, that live in Spain, in Amerika, in Japan. So, this is very important for me to stay on top of things.

The local contacts are very important for her, as well as the virtual ones and she calls her blog her “professional development blog”:

[Interview A54: 211] My blog is a big reflective project, it's almost like my professional development blog. But also, it's a combination of many things, it's professional development, it's materials development, it's thinking through the courses I've given it's also kind of thinking through the world I'm living in and preparing materials that very generally that anyone who skips and skips by you know comes by might find my blog entertaining.

The peers seem to have many functions: a supportive function and a “cognitive” function. The former is apparent both in the interview and in the entries:

[Interview A54: 49] I am always looking for something like a support group, like “Hey [*her name*], that's not so bad, it's ok, it's ok, we are all trying to learn!” So yes! I need support of friends basically, not so much a very structured program although I am looking around whether there is something, but right now it's more just the pat on the back from friends, you know, from time to time, consolation. “It's ok, you're not alone! Es geht nicht nur dir so!” That sort of thing! That's very helpful! [*emphasis in her voice*], because we are all struggling, I think, it's just so much out there. When I come back from a conference it's ... it almost kills me! [*laughs*]

As acknowledgment and realisation of what she has learned after the workshop, she mentions “Austausch” twice in answering question 11 (*Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?*) of the questionnaires. Here one of the entries, as an example:

[Entry A54, Q305-6: 33] viele gute Geschichten, die wir ausgetauscht haben

For teacher A54, the exchange with colleagues surfaces also as expectation (in answering question 3 of the questionnaires):

[Entry A54, Q144-5: 9] Welche Erkenntnisse wünsche ich mir zu gewinnen?
Austausch

Additionally, colleagues also have a role to play in acknowledging good practice, i.e. a recognition function, as teacher A54 makes clear when she says:

[Interview A54: 32] So, I want my peer group to share in my teaching. And ... I really want to be, you know, I want to be a colleague to others and I want them to be colleagues to me. So I want to share good teaching.

This seems to accord well with her professional development goal of becoming a valuable member of the teaching community (cf. Chapter 4.1). Her development process appears to require and at the same time promote changes in her participation, exactly as argued by situative theorists (Lave & Wenger 1991; Borko 2004: 3). Accordingly, she caters for these connections, (“staying online, every day”), which means not only discipline, but also interest and relevance:

[Interview A54: 45] reading their blogs, every day, staying online, is very important to me.

[Interview A54: 161] It's been learning by doing, and I read all those blogs, I'm trying to keep up ...

[Interview A54: 286] having a knowledge basis in language learning and teaching is more work so I'd say, that has to be a lot of time so mm, I do it a lot though, that's why I blog, so I'd say I invest a lot of time in it

Bloggng equals sharing for her, always with her “learning goal” of being on top of things:

[Interview A54: 44-45] then internationally I am very closed connected through my blog and I read others' teachers blogs and they read mine, and we are also on Twitter, so I am very closed linked with the network of maybe twenty teachers now, that live in Spain, in Amerika, in Japan. So, this is very important for me to stay on top of things.

[Interview A54: 181] And I also share, I write a blog! So people can read, see what I'm doing, everyday! I share everything, but it's really difficult because I don't want to be an exhibitionist. And I'm not writing it because of that, I'm writing it for the sharing, it's always reciprocal. And that's what blogs are. No blog is an island. It's - I read other people, and other people read me.

[Interview A54: 177] Yes, and that's really the only reason I work with Melta. That's because of my peer group, English teachers.

[Interview A54: 179] so it is the social networking thing that is very important. Then there's this kind of keeping on the ball, creating a professional network, um, helping each other out in, in finding jobs, so kind of the framework of the professional side of things, that is important, what we can give each other, and that's something that is sometimes forgotten when you've got a real position someplace, but very few people have a real job, you know, we're all sitting hand to mouth.

Recalling *KommUNikation* during the interview, she emphasises that she enjoyed the workshops because “they created a community“.

[Interview A54: 177] and I really liked the KommUNikation courses because they created a community and I was a part of that, and I liked that very much, we saw each other again and again. I had forgotten, it was about seven or eight that I attended, and I saw people again and again, and that was quite nice. So it would be nice if we could have something like that again.

Social networking is very important for her at the local and international level:

[Interview A54: 45] So the local and the international connections, using various different means. Local: meeting each other and having coffee, having events, and international: reading their blogs, every day, staying online, is very important to me.

In her words, the discourse in a professional community depends on the ability to share common understandings: teachers share meanings and also conceptual frameworks.

The colleagues also have a “cognitive” function for teacher A54; they help her to process information:

[Interview A54: 179] We went to IATEFL together. A lot of people on the board. We travelled together and we lived together in a hotel, we went together, and that made it much easier to process all of that information. To laugh about it, to feel like it's not so bad if we don't understand everything or whether we don't, and yet to share and to write it out,

as she also realises in the questionnaires:

[Entry A54, Q169-180: 33] Austausch mit Kolleginnen: sehr wichtig, um Erfahrungen zu verarbeiten.

Summary

Overall, this part of the analysis indicated that some teachers are more active than others. The data show that even when teachers apparently do the same things, for example attending workshops or meeting colleagues, there are nevertheless striking differences between them regarding what they learn from the workshops and how they approach them. Two prominent differences relate to the comfort or discomfort of the teachers with regard to theory and to the possibility to intentionally exploiting colleagues as opportunities for professional learning and for emotional support. As regards the role that these aspects seem to play for the teachers, it could be defined as a "stretching" function, because they contribute to extending their learning environment. In addition, this round of the analysis indicates that not all the teachers of group 1 ("with own learning goals") behave in a similar way. With respect to the way the teachers realise their goals (what they do and how they engage in activities, what are their learning gains), they appear to be split and instead display a similarity with the second group of teachers ("without own learning goals").

Prominent differences in the way teachers realise their goals		
	Exploiting theory	Exploiting colleagues
A54	•	•
P73	•	•
N51	•	•
B282		
I312		
D243		
J106		
M96		
M171		
N95		
<i>The teachers of group 1 are highlighted.</i>		

Table 4.5 - Prominent differences in the way teachers realise their goals

The next section is devoted to the strategies employed and developed by the teachers, focussing again primarily on the teachers of group 1 but still integrating the second group of teachers in the discussion in order to better pinpoint the differences among the teachers.

4.2.2 Teachers' strategies

At the outset of the present study I could not rely on existing strategies to describe those used

by the teachers. An exception does appear in Hahn (2007), but the existing teachers' strategies described in her study refer rather to teachers' teaching procedures than to teachers' autonomous learning. Therefore, new categories of learning strategies for teachers in the learning mode were needed for this study.

To categorise the answers of all the participants, I adopted O'Malley & Chamot's classification of strategies: cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective (O'Malley & Chamot 1990). They in part coincide with Oxford's classification (Oxford 1990), who grouped the learning strategies under two main categories: 'direct' and 'indirect' strategies¹⁴³. Although these strategies originally refer to language learning, some of them are still useful for describing teachers' learning processes. Others, which were less appropriate, were therefore adapted or newly created for the context of this study.

As an example that illustrates how the data have been read and how these new strategies were defined, I have summarised a selection of answers given by one teacher to the same question from different questionnaires: in the middle column are the answers of the participant in different questionnaires, in the right column the strategies that were identified in the answers.

<p><i>Question 11. Which knowledge have I gained?</i> <i>(Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?)</i></p>		
	Answers	Strategies
Teacher A54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bei welchen Schritten ich einen Fachmann konsultiere - Langfristige und übergreifende Kursplanung mit Zielorientierung; - Bewertung und Konzept des Kurses sehr eng verlinken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elaboration of new input
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - drill fragwürdig wegen Auslösung von Ängsten und bringt nichts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of the new input & relating it to existing knowledge (reframing)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nach dem Modell des Referenzrahmens eigene Kursziele als Raster aufbauen / Entschlüsselungsstrategien bewusst machen - Diese Methode will ich experimentieren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer - Stimuli to subsequent action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - viele gute Geschichten, die wir ausgetauscht haben - Austausch mit Kolleginnen sehr wichtig um Erfahrungen zu verarbeiten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative construction of meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bestätigt, dass Sprachenlernen in allen Sprachen nach Stufen läuft - Bestätigung von Task-based-approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affective gains in terms of being reassured, of more confidence

¹⁴³ For one set of data that surfaced in the answers I adapted the social strategy "Becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings" as described by Oxford (1990: 145), because it does not feature among the social-affective strategies listed in O'Malley & Chamot.

The classification of the strategies is unavoidably a delicate issue¹⁴⁴, in the sense that it is not always possible to classify the statements in a clear-cut and unequivocal way. One answer serves as an example of this difficulty: “Austausch mit Kolleginnen sehr wichtig um Erfahrungen zu verarbeiten” entails a cognitive aspect (elaboration of the new input) and a social aspect (“Austausch” as a collaborative construction of meaning). In these very few cases, the entry was categorized as both.

The following strategies emerged from the data. They are listed according to the categories with which they are associated and noted in small capitals¹⁴⁵. I maintained the tripartition given by O’Malley & Chamot (1990) of cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies. For many strategies the names used in O’Malley & Chamot (1990) were adopted. However, because the strategy used by O’Malley & Chamot refer to language learning, their content was here adapted to better suit the teachers’ processes. All the names derived from O’Malley & Chamot are starred (*).

Cognitive strategies

These strategies involve any form of interaction with the input from the workshops, mental elaboration of the input, or cognitive engagement on the part of the teachers.

C1 ELABORATION OF NEW INPUT* is a strategy by which the participants elaborate on or make meaningful personal associations involving the new input, or judge-self in relation to the new information. This is observable, for example, in response to question 10 after the workshops that asks “What knowledge have I gained?”, the teachers’ answer makes meaningful personal associations or reframes, relating the new input to their previous knowledge.

C2 TRANSFER* is the strategy by which the teachers immediately relate the new information to their teaching. They consider the new input as a stimulus to subsequent action and find in it an inspiration and new ideas that they would like to apply in their classroom.

C3 INFERENCING* the effort implied by the input to oneself in terms of workload is another

¹⁴⁴ For more instances of difficulty in classification of strategies, cf. O’Malley & Chamot 1990: 144-5). Further, all metacognitive strategies could also be seen as cognitive ones as well.

¹⁴⁵ These are capital characters set at the same height and weight as surrounding lowercase letters (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_caps)

cognitive strategy, which could be seen as the extension of the second strategy: it means that the teachers associate the new input with their teaching situation and infer how much is to be done, translating the new information into a personal effort or working load. This strategy in itself is neutral, but in this study it usually co-occurs with negative feelings and a subsequent desire to avoid the workload.

C4 NOTE TAKING* is a cognitive strategy which implies writing down relevant concepts during the workshops and taking notes about new information that is considered important.

C5 IMITATING* refers to the strategy used by the participants who report using handouts received during the workshops in their classroom or learning by observing another language teacher.

C6 FRAMING is a strategy by which the participants develop a structure for a problem or a phenomenon in language learning/teaching in a larger context and express their appreciation of theoretical background information as important for their professional growth¹⁴⁶. These teachers derive assurance and confidence from theory and need theoretical background to act in a professional way.

C7 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH is the last cognitive strategy identified and it refers to those participants who reported having extensively researched a topic and/or had been teacher trainers themselves.

It should be noted here that the successive order of these strategies implies an increasing conceptual processing: the teachers go one step further in the cognitive elaboration and the strategies become increasingly demanding at each subsequent conceptual level.

Meta-cognitive strategies¹⁴⁷

These strategies refer to many aspects of controlling one's own learning, including planning, organising and monitoring oneself on the learning task. They have an executive character.

¹⁴⁶ This strategy is a borderline case, it could also be seen a meta-cognitive strategy, in the sense that the teachers intentionally use theory for their growth. Because of the extensive cognitive elaboration implied it was categorized as cognitive.

¹⁴⁷ Oxford includes meta-cognitive and social & affective strategies under indirect strategies as well. In this study they are separated because I use the O'Malley and Chamot tripartition.

M1 SETTING GOALS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT refers to teachers having goals for their own professional learning, as distinct from learners' goals.

M2 SELF-MANAGEMENT* is a planning strategy and refers to the teachers' understanding of the conditions that help them accomplish their development task. The decision to attend teacher training or have a study group would fall under this category.

M3 ADVANCE ORGANISER* is another planning strategy and includes the ways the teachers prepare for the task, using advance organisers or previewing the material to be learned and their previous knowledge.

M4 GIVING RELEVANCE refers to the responsiveness of the teachers to the opportunities of becoming aware of the personal importance of the topic for themselves.

M5 EXPECTATIONS is similar to M4 and refers to teachers being aware of their expectations as a way of tuning into the workshops.

M6 EXECUTION STRATEGY refers to the choice of a specific organisational/planning strategy that teachers use to manage a complex task, (showing person and task knowledge) in a concerted effort to tackle the task at hand and be effective in the realisation of goals.

M7 SELECTIVE ATTENTION* Through this strategy the teachers approach the different tasks or the workshops in a focused way and decide to direct their attention in advance to specific aspects, for example looking for answers they need or identifying problems (or gaps) that require a resolution.

M8 SELF-MONITORING* refers to the teachers' ability to observe themselves and identify whether the situation is challenging (enough) or whether there are hindering factors (or beliefs). Self-monitoring includes self-evaluating "against an internal measure of completeness"¹⁴⁸ as well as the teachers' ability to adopt a critical stance towards themselves with which they intentionally seek ways to challenge their own convictions or practice. It allows the teachers to determine whether they have reached their goals or not, but also to spur themselves on towards their attainment.

¹⁴⁸Quoting from O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 137).

These strategies are also hierarchically ordered, the last (monitoring) being the most demanding¹⁴⁹.

Social-affective strategies

The third set of strategies includes affective and social strategies as well. Knowing how to control one's own feeling and emotions is very important, firstly, to avoid negative feelings that may hinder progress and action, and secondly, to enhance motivation. These strategies are mainly used to regulate emotions relevant for learning. Oxford (1990: 140) states that "the affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on learning success or failure". She laments, however, that the few studies on affective strategies reveal that these strategies are indeed "woefully underused" (*ibid.* 143). These strategies play a role not only in language learning, they also play a role in teachers' learning as well.

S-A 1 COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS is a collaborative learning strategy which involves interaction with others (mainly colleagues) in order to cope with the task of professional development. The learners using this strategy realise the benefit of meeting their peers (i.e. colleagues in similar situations). In such casual meetings they informally learn and collect ideas. As well as increasing their understanding, they may feel part of a community with similar interests, and by asking for clarification, they finally may feel closer to the complex meanings that were at issue in the shared situations (for example workshops).

S-A 2 GETTING FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS is another collaborative strategy which indicates a particular appreciation of experts (supervisors, for example) or others (one's students) and the importance of social interaction as a way to progress.

S-A 3 SELF-SUPPORT includes a range of substrategies that aim at reducing negative feelings of frustration, helplessness or anxiety, or increasing one's own self-esteem, "one of the primary affective elements" (Oxford 1990: 141). The strategies include having a support group. Making positive statements to oneself is another affective strategy which refers to teachers who use self-encouragement to develop reassurance and confidence.

S-A 4 TEACHING OTHER TEACHERS: the teachers using this strategy report the need to

¹⁴⁹ This is not surprising, as monitoring is an effortful process, like Krashen's 'Monitor Theory' (1981) about language learning attests.

communicate and teach others in order to understand and learn better for themselves. It is not only by deepening their knowledge about a topic, but also by sharing their own insights with colleagues, that the teachers feel they are promoting their own growth.

S-A 5 SELF-TALK* involves redirecting one's thinking by carrying on a talk/a dialogue with oneself as a means of clear up doubts. The difference to S-A 3 is that here the teachers are just talking individually to themselves, not encouraging themselves.

S-A 6 BEING/BECOMING AWARE OF OTHER'S POINTS OF VIEW¹⁵⁰ is a social strategy by which the teachers perceive and observe others' thoughts and feelings and, in so doing, arrive at a wider understanding of themselves, which is perceived as an enrichment of oneself¹⁵¹.

The results show that some strategies are common to all the teachers, such as C1 (ELABORATION OF NEW INPUT) and C2 (TRANSFER), which is understandable; the former because attending the workshops demands their cognitive involvement, and the latter because they expect the workshops to be a source of ideas applicable to their teaching. This strategy confirms a result from another study on teachers' strategies: "when learning, teachers keep thinking about their teaching task" (Hahn 2007: 199).

Other strategies common to the teachers in group 1 are the meta-cognitive ones M1 (SETTING GOALS) and M2 (SELF-MANAGEMENT), the former includes setting goals related to one's own professional development, and the latter refers to the decisions taken to realise the goals, such as attending teacher training, for example.

Among the social-affective strategies, the normally preferred one is S-A 1 (COMMUNICATING), which refers to teachers' appreciation of other colleagues as a useful way of informal learning.

In the next section the strategies used by the teachers are discussed, in order to determine whether specific strategies distinguish the teachers from each other.

4.2.2.1 Strategies used by the teachers

To offer the reader an overview, a table (Table 4.6) will present the ten teachers and the occurrences of strategies for each of them.

¹⁵⁰ Adapted from Oxford (1990: 147)

¹⁵¹ This strategy could also be categorized as cognitive, because by intentionally wanting to perceive and to incorporate other points of view into one's own conceptual framework implies challenging oneself cognitively. However, because of the social aspect (the reliance on the others) and because of the empathic component involved, it was included in the social-affective strategies.

A caution is mandatory: the table refers to absolute numbers (occurrences). Of course, the teachers who attended more workshops had the opportunity to write more than the others, i.e. these numbers are only to be interpreted as tendencies, to be verified in further studies.

Total strategies for each teacher	
A54	83
P73	70
N51	65
M96	62
I312	40
N95	36
B282	28
M171	28
D243	22
J106	8
Mean: 44,2%	

Table 4.6 Total strategies for each teacher

Table 4.6 indicates where the five teachers of group 1 (highlighted rows) are located. As a group, these teachers are not consistent, three of them (A54, P73 and N51) are above the mean (44,2%), while two (teachers B282 and I312) scored below the mean.

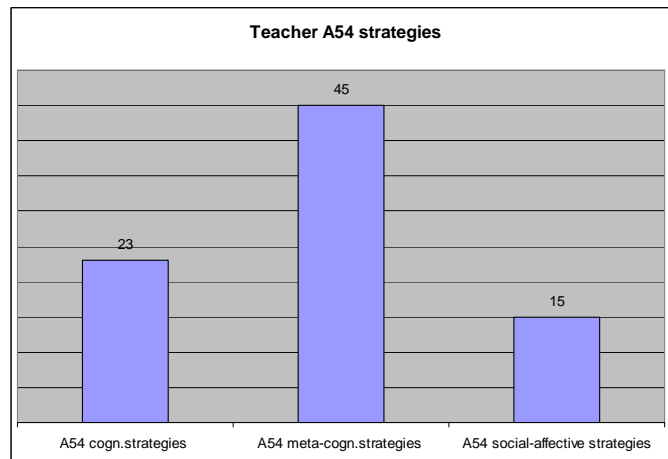
Keeping in mind the caution mentioned above, we notice that teacher A54 has a prominent position with the most use of strategies compared to the ten teachers of the study and to the teachers of group 1.

The next section aims at delineating the profiles of the teachers in their use of strategies. The analysis of the data focuses primarily on the five teachers of group 1 in detail¹⁵² (discussed in the order established in table 4.6), and looks as well at the teachers of the second group, but rather as a group.

The first result appears to be the abundance of strategies used by the first three teachers. Because discussing all of the strategies would be unsustainable for the scope of this study, only the strategies that uniquely characterise the teachers will be treated. A diagramme for each teacher will provide an overview of the teachers under examination.

¹⁵² Maintaining the grouping established at the end of Chapter 4.1.

Teacher A54



The means are respectively: cognitive strategies 15,8, meta-cognitive 22 and social-affective 5,8.

Diagramme 4.1 - Strategies of teacher A54

As mentioned above, teacher A54 scored the highest in strategy use. Characteristic for teacher A54 is her being far above the mean in all strategies.

As regards the cognitive strategies, she shows a preference for some of them C6 FRAMING and C7 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH, which are the more demanding cognitive strategies.

Her most noticeable results concern the use of meta-cognitive strategies (45 occurrences against the mean of 22) and of social-affective strategies. The former type will be examined first.

The meta-cognitive strategies are the dominant type of strategies teacher A54 uses and at the same time the highest score in comparison to all the other teachers. She uses all the strategies of this category. Setting specific professional development goals (M1), preparing for the task by using advance organisers (M3) or committing to her goals by reflecting on the relevance of the topic for her (M4) are only examples of her meta-cognitive strategies.

However, the meta-cognitive strategies that particularly distinguish her are M6, M7 and M8, to which attention will now be directed.

M6 EXECUTION STRATEGY refers to specific strategies that help the teachers attack¹⁵³ and manage complex tasks, such as professional development. One of the most recurring terms teacher A54 uses is “to focus” (13 occurrences), mentioned in relation to both herself (to the way of organizing her professional learning task) as well as to her students (this aspect will be dealt with in the later section “Attitudes towards students’ learning”). Speaking of what she is currently doing, whenever she addresses the many activities she is engaged in, she uses the term “focus” (its occurrence will be highlighted in bold for convenience in the following

¹⁵³ I am adapting this term here as derived from Rubin & Thompson (1994: 94), who refer to the use of “efficient word attack strategies”.

selection):

[Interview A54: 5] Another type of course that I am teaching right now are 'one day call-backs' and those are **focused** skills, for example correspondents or telephoning or intercultural communication for people in business, who come in and they do one or two day compacts. So that's very intensive and have to be scripted as well, which not all of my courses have to be, but those have to have a script to go with them. A script would be a comprehensive manual that they work through, a workbook basically that I produce for them. On top of that I also teach online and blended learning courses and I've been **focusing** lately on producing materials for online learning

[Interview A54: 19] so right now I have been **focusing** on my work for ... [name of publishing house] which is writing online exercises

[Interview A54: 7] and in teaching using electronic media and using things like blogs, those have been my **focus**

[Interview A54: 71] the project that I also did then, **focusing** on peer evaluation and then working on my own evaluations based on that. So, that was something that I was interested in.

[Interview A54: 209] and that's an area that I've spent quite a lot of time now developing, because many of my students are one-to-ones and how to coach the one-to-one, how to be a better one-to-one teacher to create very small tasks, to give immediate feedback, so that's an area that I've been **focusing** on, making very small tasks.

She also uses this term when speaking about her goals and how they might be different from the past:

[Interview A54: 224-228] One of my companies is a bio-tech company.

Q.: Ah, ok.

A: So I need to be on top of things in bio-technology, you know, and that's something I didn't have to be when I started out, there I had to be on top of things in banking for example.

Q.: Aha, ok, so ... are you saying that this changed ?

A: Yeah, there are a lot of little changes, you know, it's not big change [sic]. It's always little change [sic] and **refocusing**.

Teacher A54 seems to rely on this strategy when facing the complex task of professional development: being focused, making to-do-lists, and breaking procedures down into small tasks seem to assist her in the execution of her work.

'Focusing' seems to be used in the sense of restricting the attention to one small point: by obliterating the surrounding context in order to concentrate on one item (or on a restricted amount of items) and by breaking down the complexity into little manageable bits, she manages to produce "little changes". This is a process which she appraises, by using strategy M8 MONITORING, the meta-cognitive process of monitoring oneself, by which she can recognise that something in herself has changed and can evaluate it.

[Interview A54: 169] So this sort of **focusing** on a to-do list and getting that done, that's definitely something that guided me. I think, yeah.

Ticking things off seems to be a means for her to get the sense of having completed the task and may also give her a positive feeling, thus sustaining her self-confidence.

Other examples of using the meta-cognitive strategy M8 are to be found in the answers to question 19 of the questionnaire, which asked the teachers to self-monitor and detect what they probably would not be able to apply in their teaching and why. She is one of the very few teachers who took the time to answer this question. This could be interpreted as a sign of great responsibility for her own learning and of monitoring ability.

Belonging to monitoring as well are some examples of self-evaluation, which seem to be a big issue for teacher A54. Interestingly, she does not conceal her weaknesses in this area:

A54: 250] Self-assessing my own professional knowledge, hmm I don't know if I can do that because I don't have enough training to really self-assess it.

Her doubt is related to a bigger concern, such as her very individual professional sense, as evident in the following reflection of teacher A54:

286] Self-assessing my own professional knowledge is also somewhat difficult, ... I sometimes don't know what it means from an outsider, someone who's very established in a school. As a freelancer you never know what your market value is, or what your level is compared to other people, hmm... I've got a network and that helps me very much ...

She concretises with her comment the dramatic consequences of being freelance teachers. Due to the particular nature of their job, these teachers do not seem to have a value and are extrinsically compelled (from the market) to evaluate themselves and to look for their own professional identity. She also expresses the belief that this represents an additional load that freelance teachers have (“it costs me a lot of effort and it's a bit tricky”) which in contrast “established teachers” do not need to accomplish.

Another type of meta-cognitive strategy that characterizes teacher A54 in her approach to the workshops is M7 SELECTIVE ATTENTION, according to which she seems to decide in advance what to direct her attention to. She comes to the workshops with questions or problems that need an answer and a resolution, as the following extracts indicate (they refer to her answers to question 11 of the questionnaire, i.e. what knowledge she thinks she gained by attending the workshops):

[Entry A54, Q144-5: 32-33] Bestätigung von Task-based-approach, drill fragwürdig wegen Auslösung von Ängsten und bringt nichts

[Entry A54, Q237: 32-33] Bestätigt, dass Sprachenlernen in allen Sprachen nach Stufen läuft

[Entry A54, Q112-3: 23-24] Kommunikativer Aspekt **darf** das Gros der Kompetenz ausmachen

From these answers it is apparent that she found “confirmation” and clarification of doubts she had had before, for example whether the communicative aspect may constitute the bulk of competence¹⁵⁴. Overall, she displays a focused approach for attending a workshop, which is consistent with the M6 “EXECUTION STRATEGY”.

As for the social-affective strategies, with 15 occurrences, teacher A54 is also the teacher with the highest score for this kind of typically “underused” strategies and clearly above the mean (5,8) as well. The strategies that mostly characterize her under this aspect are S-A 3 SELF-SUPPORT, S-A 4 TEACHING OTHER TEACHERS, and S-A 6 BEING/BECOMING AWARE OF OTHERS’ POINTS OF VIEW.

Through the strategy S-A 3 SELF-SUPPORT teacher A54 seems to come to terms with her need for reassurance and support.

[Interview A54: 49] I am always looking for something like a support group, like “Hey [her name], that’s not so bad, it’s ok, it’s ok, we are all trying to learn!” So yes! I need support of friends basically, not so much a very structured program although I am looking around whether there is something, but right now it’s more just the pat on the back from friends, you know, from time to time, consolation. “It’s ok, you’re not alone!” [...] That sort of thing! That’s very helpful!

Her answers to question 12 show that she acknowledges the gains from the workshops, not only in cognitive terms (knowledge), but also in affective terms (confidence):

[Entry A54, 161-2; A54: 35-6] Woran erkenne ich, dass ich etwas gelernt habe?
Fühle mich sicherer

Another strategy that she reports using intentionally is S-A 4, which refers to teaching other teachers:

[Interview A54: 49] I usually try to formulate something that I notice I’m having trouble with and then I try to read a book or go to a workshop and then I need to turn it around, I need to teach others, I need to think it through deeply enough so that I can explain to someone else.

This strategy, which echoes the saying “if you want to learn something, then teach it”, serves a specific learning need to understand an issue in depth, and the other colleagues are a means for her to reach this end.

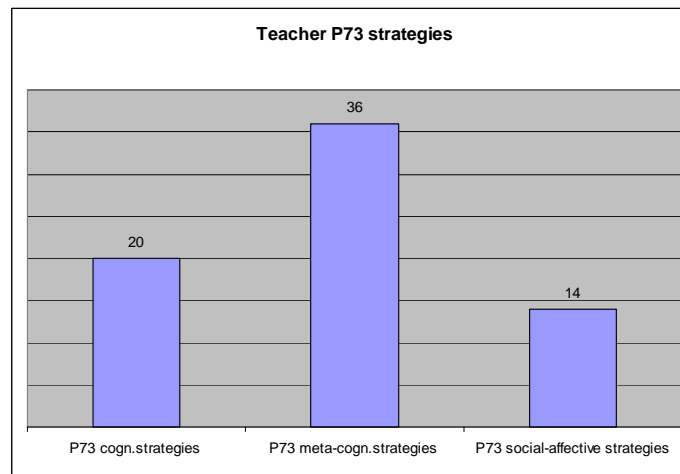
S-A 6 is the strategy used to incorporate other points of view. Apart from the metaphor of “opening the door”¹⁵⁵, symbolic for her openness towards others, she very often speaks of

¹⁵⁴ Her focused approach surfaced again during the interview, when she spoke about her habit of identifying a problem before attending workshops.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Chapter 4.4.1.1 Attitude towards one’s own learning.

“significant others” and of colleagues being important for her professional development.

Teacher P73



The means are respectively: cognitive strategies 15,8, meta-cognitive 22 and social-affective 5,8.

Diagramme 4.2 - Strategies of teacher P73

Teacher P73 is not dissimilar from the previous teacher. In common with teacher A54, she also does not deploy the cognitive strategies C3, C4 and C5 (inferencing effort, note taking and imitating) and exhibits preferences for C6 FRAMING and C7 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH. In the entries of the questionnaire responding to the question “Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?”, she wrote “the theory”. She also has researched intensively about the language acquisition of children.

As regards the meta-cognitive strategies, like teacher A54, she also uses all of them. The ones that most characterize her are M6 EXECUTION STRATEGY, M7 SELECTIVE ATTENTION, and M8 SELF-MONITORING. Similar to teacher A54, teacher P73 has a specific execution strategy (M6): she concentrates on one thing at a time.

[Interview P73: 73-75] **Q.:** What are you currently doing for your development as a language teacher?
Normalerweise, weil ich verschiedene Gruppen habe, versuche ich mich auf eine Gruppen zu konzentrieren, dann sage ich: ok, diese Gruppe muss..., ich muss schauen, wie weit ich mit diesen Leuten machen, wie weit ich sie bringen kann, ich spreche mit ihnen, ich habe Gruppen, die lange Zeit bei mir sind, und ich will – ich versuche es – klar, wir sind fast wie Freunde, weil ich habe sie jahre lang gehabt, ich versuche ... ich habe Angst, dass ich in diesen Gruppen ankomme und sage (*change of voice*): „Ok, was machen wir heute?“, ich habe Angst, dass ich ein bisschen faul werde mit denen, deswegen jedes Semester sage ich immer, immer: Ok, für diese Gruppe muss ich was bewegen, ein bisschen überlegen, für jede denken, überlege ich: Uh, die Marianne hat solche Schwierigkeiten ... und so, aber wenn ich in jeder Gruppe, in allen, in jeder Gruppe, die ich habe, in allen, versuche alles ... das schaffe ich nicht, weil es ist zuviel. Ich ... Ich natürlich versuche ich normal Unterricht zu geben, aber ich versuche jedes semester in einer Gruppe ein bisschen mehr ..., manchmal waren Zeiten, die ich mehr Material für die Kinder gemacht habe, ich meine, jetzt zB für die Kinder habe ich eine Zeit lang gemacht und habe gesehen: "Es läuft, es funktioniert ok", dann sage ich: "Ok", dann lasse ich es ... wir in Spanisch sagen *vivir de renta* [= *to rest on one's laurels*], dann sage ich „Ok, eine andere Gruppe, ich packe diese Gruppe an".
So mache ich es, dass ich versuche, jedes Semester ein bisschen.

Weil sonst, kann ich irgendwann kommen und sagen: [*change of voice*] “OK, mit diesem Material, das ich habe, reicht, ‘rein!” und so. Das mag ich nicht, Aber alles geht nicht, wenn ich zu jeder Gruppe versuche, so gut zu sein, ... geht nicht!

P73’s strategy to achieve some change in her teaching and to develop herself as a teacher is to concentrate on one of her groups. “Concentrate” indicates focused attention (similar to teacher A54) and implies a reduction of volume and of complexity. However, despite the similarity with teacher A54, she seems to use this strategy with a different rationale and goal. For teacher P73 the reason to rely on this strategy seems not so much the reduction into small portions as with teacher A54, but rather to prevent herself from “becoming lazy” and not doing anything more. What she aims at through this strategy is trying to maintain or protect her own involvement by creating targeted materials for one group. ‘Resting on one’s laurels’ seems to be permitted only after she evaluates the classroom situation as satisfactory (implying that she has an individual mental representation of standards), or after she decides that it works well enough to turn her attention to other groups.

One meta-cognitive strategy peculiar to teacher P73 is M8 SELF-MONITORING. There are many occurrences of self-monitoring in her answers to the questionnaire and in her interview. Similar to teacher A54, she is one of the few teachers who responded to almost all the post-workshop questions, and also to questions which were neglected by the others, such as question 19:

[Entry P73, Q73: 14]

19. Was werde ich sehr wahrscheinlich nicht umsetzen können? Woran liegt es?
Überhaupt kein Wort Deutsch benutzen.

Another example that points to the effect of self-monitoring on her development is evident in the following quotation, which indicates teacher P73 appreciates the fact that the workshops were not language-specific, (like the ones that she usually attends for Spanish teachers) and makes explicit that she “saw” (i.e. realised) it later:

[Interview P73: 56] während das Programm [she refers to the project KommUNikation] war für alle, das war gut, und es war gut auch für – das habe nicht erwartet, das habe ich nachher gesehen – dass es gut war, dass andere Kollegen andere Sprachen unterrichten, ihre Fragen.

It seems that there was some monitoring activity (of her ‘professional system’) behind her insight, if she specifies that she realised it “later”. This recurs again during the interview when she judges which were the gains of the workshops for her and identifies that the questions and the feedback of different kinds of colleagues spurred her to reflect:

[Interview P73: 63] Q.: What did you learn attending the KommUNikation-Workshops?
Es war das Feedback, das die Kollegen gegeben haben, “Das können wir nicht so in der Uni

beibringen!“ und dann habe ich mehr überlegt. ... Damals habe ich nicht an der Uni gearbeitet, es hat mich noch mal erinnert, dass es [...] andere gibt, es war wichtig für mich persönlich.

Through reflecting on the benefits of the workshops, she understands “later” that what the other colleagues were saying is of relevance to her too. Her becoming aware that their questions were important for her development implies some monitoring activity on her part and results in a broader horizon, an enrichment of her thinking, which she defines as the ‘added value’ of a workshop for language teachers for her.

Another example of the strategy M8 is her specific way of approaching the workshops:

[Interview P73: 31] ... nicht nur lernen und das war's, [...] man muss immer skeptisch bleiben im eigenen Beruf, oder?

"Being sceptical" seems to be her way of challenging herself, of maintaining a level that is demanding enough, which is the ideal precondition of motivated learning.

Teacher P73 is very strong also in her use of social-affective strategies. She considers having a support and a study group very important (strategy S-A3):

[Interview P73: 93] Sprechen mit Kollegen, das bringt nicht so sehr für den Unterricht, aber ich brauche es, es ist schon hilfreich, es bringt schon viel, wenn ich frage: du, kannst du mir einen Tipp geben? Natürlich muss ich schauen, wie ich trotzdem selber besser machen kann, aber ist sehr beruhigend, mit jemanden zu sagen : Ja, bei mir ist genauso so, bei mir ist auch so, und das machen wir mit meiner Gruppe, wir sprechen viel von der Arbeit, wirklich viel.

The group of colleagues seems to achieve a blend of cognitive and affective (“beruhigend”) functions for her. The strategy S-A 3 includes other examples of self-support. Teacher P73 indicates them on many occasions during the interview:

[Interview P73: 118-119] Q.: How do workshops for language teachers influence your teaching and your professional development?
Bewusster zu sein, oder auch für die Inhalte, ja bewusst, zu sein

Other examples of social-affective strategies surface when, speaking about the difficulty to self-assess her own professional knowledge, teacher P73 finds positive words for her sense of professional competence, demonstrating S-A3 SELF-SUPPORT to reinforce her self-confidence:

[Interview P73: 116] self-assessing my own professional knowledge – Ich bin optimistisch, ich kann das gut, ja, ich kann schon viel.

A peculiar social-affective strategy for teacher P73 is S-A 5 (self-talk), by which she reports carrying out dialogues with herself :

[Interview P73: 32] Ok, das habe ich gelernt, das ist gut, das bleibt immer so.

[Interview P73: 36] aber man muss immer sagen: nie vergessen: „Ehh, vielleicht machst du es nicht richtig!“

[Interview P73: 35] Aber ich sage: „Ja, aber vielleicht hast du nicht richtig gemacht!“

[Interview P73: 125] Erst habe ich gedacht, „Jetzt sagst du nichts hier“

[Interview P73: 146] dann kann ich denken: „Was machen die meisten Kinder? Aber dieses hier macht nicht so...“

This strategy appears to have many functions, warning, urging herself and reminding herself about very important things, and it seems to underpin the strategy M8 SELF-MONITORING, because by means of these self-dialogues, she manages to monitor herself, to remain “sceptical” and open to other perspectives¹⁵⁶ and to motivate herself not to become “lazy”, which is extremely important for her.

The last strategy that teacher P73 uses in relation to her social-affective dimension is S-A 6 BEING/BECOMING AWARE OF OTHERS’ THOUGHTS. This refers to the occurrences in the entries and during the interview in which she mentions her need to remember that there are other perspectives. This aspect surfaces for example in her post-workshop evaluations about what was of particular importance for her:

[Entry P73, Q73: 29-30] 13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
Nochmal hören, dass der Lernende der zentrale Punkt ist

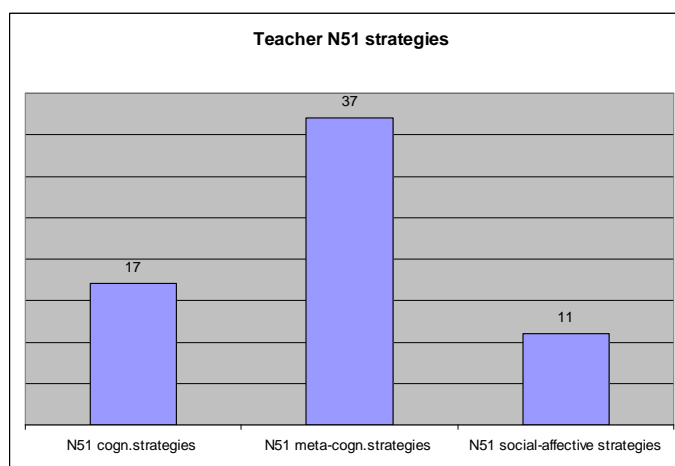
[Entry P73, Q177-172: 53-4] 18. Woran werde ich sicher/höchst wahrscheinlich weiter arbeiten
Ich will nicht vergessen, dass alles, was für mich gut ist, nicht für jeden gut ist.

These entries sound like ‘memos’ whereby she tries to remind herself of what is important for her and seem to point to both a willingness to take on cognitive challenges (different points of view) into her own framework, as well as to some degree of empathy¹⁵⁷. Overall, these entries seem to indicate an explicit **appreciation of the differences** in the points of view of other people (colleagues, trainers, learners).

¹⁵⁶ This will be elaborated further in the section 4.4.1.1 “Attitudes towards their own learning”.

¹⁵⁷ The attitude behind this aspect will be examined closer in the section 4.4.1.1

Teacher N51



The means are respectively: cognitive strategies 15,8, meta-cognitive 22 and social-affective 5,8.

Diagramme 4.3 - Strategies of teacher N51

The third teacher in the order of strategy used is teacher N51. She is similar to the previous two teachers with respect to the kind of strategies employed.

Peculiar to her is the cognitive strategy C6 FRAMING, which refers to her need for creating functional organisers for her own learning, which she calls “parameters”. This strategy takes the form of creating a coordinate system. Teacher N51 stresses in the entries the value of theory for her:

[Entry N51; Q325-6: 38-9] Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
Theoretische Richtlinien zu gewinnen

[Entry N51; Q386-7: 53-4] Theory

This strategy seems to have a prominent meaning for her, and seems to underpin her need to be aware of what approach may inform her teaching (cf. “The difficulty of engaging with theory” in 4.2.1.1).

Her way of tackling the task of professional development is managed through the meta-cognitive strategy M6 as execution strategy, according to which she develops a coordinate system that helps her determine her own position as a teacher. For example, speaking of her interest in intercultural issues, she expresses her need to “enframe this phenomenon, this knowledge in the teaching practice¹⁵⁸”. Theory seems to have for her the function of a compass, that serves for orientation. This issue is not trivial in teacher professional development, as increasing demands placed on teachers include having a sound knowledge base (Kelly 2011: 33; cf. also Chapter 2.4.5).

¹⁵⁸ “Inquadrare questo fenomeno, queste conoscenze nell’ambito della lezione “ [77].

She explains this need for a reference system with her academic learning habits, she is namely accustomed from her university courses to developing “parameters” for studying¹⁵⁹ that she then needs as criteria for framing problems and phenomena. (This aspect will be addressed during the interview and clarified in the section “Attitudes towards one’s own professional learning”).

She also exhibits person knowledge when she reports that evaluating the benefit of teacher training for her is necessary and requires the teachers to think back after a while:

[Interview N51: 199] in my opinion it [*the benefit of teacher training*] must settle down, one has to reflect on it; immediately after [*the workshops*], in a hurry, was difficult for me¹⁶⁰.

This answer seems to indicate that she is in some degree accustomed to self-monitoring (M8), and to checking changes in herself, as entries from Question 12 also indicate:

[Entry N51; Q325-6: 35-6] Woran erkenne ich, dass ich etwas gelernt habe?
Dass ich anders denken kann

[Entry N51; Q85-6: 26-7] Ich habe neue Ideen

Monitoring extends for her to include assessment. In this regard, she indicates that after attending the workshops and the master course and by being confronted with different theories, self-assessing has become less difficult, because she now knows “where she stands”¹⁶¹.

In the area of the social-affective strategies, she seems to appreciate S-A 1 as a form of collaborative elaboration, through which she re-elaborates the contents of the workshops. Several examples of this are her answers to the post-questionnaire, which present her reflecting over the workshops. She considers that they contributed to spurring her reflection and pinpoints that this was due to exchanges with “interesting” colleagues, here is a selection:

[Entry N51; Q386-7: 65-66] 13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
Ideen austausch

[Entry N51; Q51-63: 56-7] 13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
Interessante Kolleginnen

[Entry N51; Q85-6: 29-30] 13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
Das Gespräch mit der Leiterin und mit den Kollegen

¹⁵⁹ “venendo dagli studi universitari, dove uno è abituato a imparare e a farsi certi parametric” [220].

¹⁶⁰ Secondo me si deve anche un po’ depositare, uno deve meditare sopra; subito, in fretta, per me era difficile.

¹⁶¹ “fino ad adesso era abbastanza difficile, forse adesso che vedo un pochino quello che c’è in giro, mi rendo conto, cioè, se non sei confrontato non sai dove ti trovi” [198].

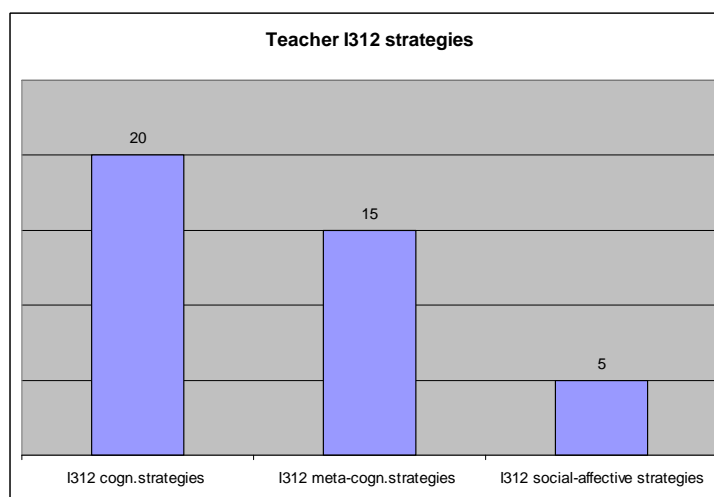
In addition, she is one of the few teachers who has a study group with other colleagues, with whom she is preparing for an exam, to qualify for a teaching specialisation diploma.

Like teacher P73, she also seems to use S-A 6 BECOMING AWARE OF OTHERS' POINTS OF VIEW and is able to acknowledge others' perspectives, not only from “interesting colleagues”, but also from her students. Among the factors that promote changes in her teaching she mentions the needs and the demands of her students:

[Interview N51: 208] Some times for example also the needs of some students, I mean, the problems that I encounter and that require a solution¹⁶².

This seems to indicate that she tends to consider her teaching as a “construction site”, something to work on.

Teacher I312



The means are respectively: cognitive strategies 15,8, meta-cognitive 22 and social-affective 5,8.

Diagramme 4.4 - Strategies of teacher I312

The first striking result regarding the strategies used by teacher I312 as well as the next one, teacher B282, is that the two teachers display less use of strategies overall and are below the mean. The other difference is related to the type of strategies used.

The main strategies that characterise teacher I312 are the cognitive ones, C1 COGNITIVE ELABORATION. Attending workshops is a strategy to gain new ideas for teacher I312. She elaborates the new input, associating it to her situation:

¹⁶² Certe volte ad esempio anche le esigenze di certi corsisti, non so, per esempio, i problemi che mi vengono posti e che quindi mi richiedono una risoluzione.

[Interview I312: 64] I would say that it helped a lot, especially through incorporating the work with films which I can do in language teaching and in intercultural teaching because it made the lessons more interesting and more fun.

The instructional dimension is very important to her, manifest in the strategy C2 TRANSFER, by which she relates the input of the workshops to their application in the classroom:

[Entry I312; Q384-5: 33]

11. Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?

Neue Methode erfahren

14. Wie groß ist jetzt meine Bereitschaft, die Anregungen vom Workshop in meiner Unterrichtspraxis umzusetzen?

100%

[Entry I312; Q412-3: 37-9]

13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?

Der praktische Ansatz

One of the most recurring strategies that teacher I312 mentions is C3 INFERENCING, which refers to the tendency of the teacher to consider how much work is implied if she has to implement the ideas she encountered during the workshops. There are many examples of the mental “translation” of the input into practical effort:

[Entry I312; Q412-3: 31-3]

11. Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?

Testaufgaben selbst zu entwerfen ist schwierig.

[Interview I312: 55] I've used film [*she refers to a workshop about using videos*], but Learnstationen I couldn't use because it's too much work.

[Entry I312; Q335-6: 4-6]

2. Warum ist das Thema für mich wichtig?

Erleichterung der Vorbereitung

Effort emerges also while preparing for the task before the workshops by recalling previous knowledge on the topic:

[Entry I312; Q335: 1-3]

1. Was weiß ich schon über das heutige Thema?

Dass es viel Arbeit ist, mit Zeitungsartikeln zu arbeiten

She mentions her preference for having handouts (C5 IMITATING) and relies on the cognitive strategy C4 (NOTE TAKING):

[Interview I312: 55] I still have all the papers and am still planning on using it with the children that I teach.

She uses the questionnaires to prepare for the task by employing the meta-cognitive strategy

M3 ADVANCE ORGANISERS. She reflects on her expectations as a way of sticking to her goals:

3. Welche Erkenntnisse wünsche ich mir zu gewinnen?

[Entry I312; Q335-6: 8-9] neue Ideen

[Entry I312; Q384-5: 8-9] neue Methoden

[Entry I312; Q392-3: 8-9] wie ich Filme nutzen kann

[Entry I312; Q412-3: 8-9] verschiedene Textmethoden, Links

It seems important as well to reflect on the relevance for herself of the topics of the workshops (M4 RELEVANCE):

2. Warum ist das Thema für mich wichtig?

[Entry I312; Q335-6: 6] Erleichterung der Vorbereitung

[Entry I312; Q384-5: 6] um meinen Unterricht zu verbessern

[Entry I312; Q392-3: 6] ich möchte Filme mehr im Training einsetzen

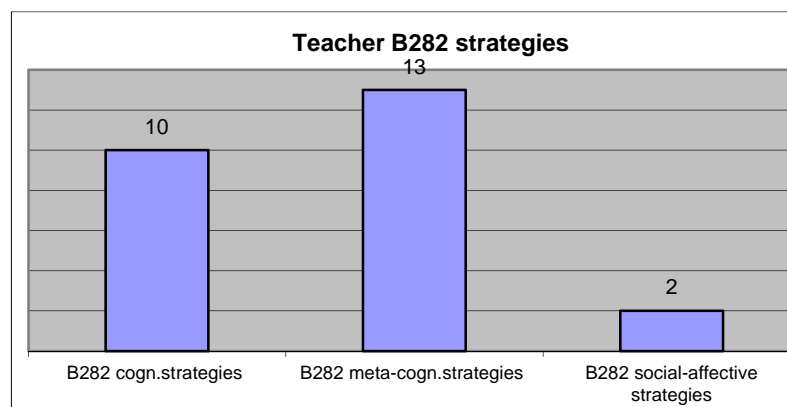
[Entry I312; Q412-3: 6] ich möchte in meinen Kursen laufende Erfolgs- bzw. Fortschrittskontrollen haben

She exhibits some strategies that help her manage her emotions. The ones that surface are S-A 1 and 2. The former, S-A 1 COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS, explains that she appreciates discussions with colleagues as a form of collaborative elaboration of the new input. The strategy S-A 2 GETTING FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS supports her in her need to have feedback from experts. When answering the question about what helped her most for her development as a language teacher, she emphasises the importance for her of talking to expert colleagues when discussing teaching problems, especially supervisors and getting their feedback.

She also uses S-A 4 TEACHING OTHER TEACHERS: as the director of a language school, she organises training sessions for the teachers who work for her.

A look at the strategies that she uses reveals that she does not rely on the more demanding strategies C6 and C7 and M6, M7 and M8. Overall, she displays an overreliance on cognitive strategies and less on meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies.

Teacher B282



The means are respectively: cognitive strategies 15,8, meta-cognitive 22 and social-affective 5,8.

Diagramme 4.5 - Strategies of teacher B282

Not dissimilar from teacher I312, also teacher B282 displays a use of less strategies than the first three teachers mentioned above. This derives in part from having left out many answers in the questionnaires.

She seems to be cognitively engaged with the input in the workshops and uses for example C1 (COGNITIVE ELABORATION) while reflecting on the benefit of the workshop for her:

[Entry B282; Q353-4: 39] die Betonung der Interaktivität

Deriving ideas from the workshops that she can apply in her classroom is evident when relying on C2 TRANSFER, as a form of cognitive elaboration of new information for application in the classroom:

[Entry B282; Q353-4: 35] Neue Ideen

[Entry B282; Q265-6: 39] praktische Hinweise

The strategy C3 INFERENCING also appears in her repertoire: she appraises the incoming input and infers the implied effort:

[Entry B282; Q265-6: 33] 11. Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?
Es bleibt die Schwierigkeit, das z.T. erhebliche semantische Material vorzubereiten / aufzubereiten, ganze Reihen zu entwickeln

C5 IMITATING and C4 NOTE TAKING are in her repertoire as well, the former as a support for the latter, as she explains in her appreciation of handouts:

[Interview B282: 61] What is always very good is if you can take away some documentation of it, if there are handouts, which quite often there are but not, not necessarily. So that while you are there you can concentrate on what's happening and do not have to frantically *[laughs]* copy something.

C5 is also evident when she elaborates on the new input as ideas that help her in her practice and that can be used easily:

[Interview B282: 71] general ideas are good and you then have to apply them to the language you are teaching. But sometimes it is very handy if you can just take things and use them as a recipe.

As meta-cognitive strategies, she uses the strategy M4 GIVING RELEVANCE to associate the insights from the workshops with herself and to reflect on their relevance for her:

3. Welche Erkenntnisse wünsche ich mir zu gewinnen?

[Entry B282; Q307: 9] praktische Umsetzung

[Entry B282; Q265-6: 9] Anregungen, für die prakt. Umsetzung; Aufgabenstellungen

13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?

[Entry B282; Q321-2: 37-8] Trennung: Übung – Aufgabe, vielleicht sehr “basic“ aber im Alltag...

[Entry B282; Q353-4: 39] die Betonung der Interaktivität

Similarly, she answers question 2 “Warum ist das Thema für mich wichtig?” with

[Entry B282; Q282-3: 6] um auf der Höhe zu bleiben, oder besser gesagt, dorthin zu kommen

[Entry B282; Q265-6: 6] um lebende Sprechkanäle zu schaffen, die auch kulturelles Wissen transportieren und sich im “Tun“ ergeben

In addition, she is active in SELF- MONITORING (M8), paying attention to what teaches her.

She reports that selecting materials has been one option that helped her in her development:

[Interview B282: 121] I have rarely taught set material, ... usually you go out and choose every single bit of the material that you would be using. So yes that is very..., that teaches you a lot.

During the interview, too, it is clear that some degree of monitoring herself is behind her words:

[Interview B282: 108-110] How are the current goals different from the ones you had at the beginning of your professional development ?

I don't think that they've changed, the only problem is that I haven't got as far as I would like to get
[laughs]

Although she takes it with humour, she is conveying her awareness that there is a discrepancy between her goals and her achievement, and I believe that this is made possible through monitoring. What seems to be missing are the regulation strategies that would be necessary to intervene and correct the course of action and improve achievement.

At the social-affective level she displays some appreciation of social aspects with S-A 1 COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS.

[Interview B282: 82] Can you think of one feature in the design of the KommUNikation-Workshops that was beneficial for your development as a language teacher?

Um, discussions with colleagues

Affective statements are present in her questionnaires in terms of displaying less confidence, either as a negative feeling of being left with the incapability of preparing materials (“es bleibt die Schwierigkeit, das z.T. erhebliche semantische Material vorzubereiten / aufzubereiten, ganze Reihen zu entwickeln”) or of concluding, that she is “not being so far” as she wished to be.

Like teacher I312, she does not rely either on the more effortful strategies C6 and C7 and M6, M7, but she does not use social-affective strategies as often as teacher I312 does.

A note is necessary regarding teacher B282, because she is a language learner herself. Whereas the other teachers teach in their own mother tongue, she teaches translation classes (English into German) and she in fact mentioned the development of her language skills as one of her goals. This suggests that an explanation of the findings related to teacher B282 could be that her competence could be displaced onto language acquisition rather than on the development of teaching competence.

The strategies used by the second group of teachers

The remaining teachers in group 2 exhibit overall use of fewer strategies¹⁶³. They indicate an overreliance on cognitive strategies on one hand, and a very limited use of meta-cognitive¹⁶⁴ and social-affective strategies on the other.

They seem to rely on C5 IMITATING, either in the form of “fertiges Material” or of colleagues they observe, as the following two teachers suggest. Teacher D243 for example, expresses several times the wish to apply “one to one” the material, or to receive links where she could find materials, “es war allerdings kein konkretes Beispiel dabei, das ich 1:1 umsetzen könnte”; “aber ideal wäre natürlich schon fertiges Material zu finden”; “ich hätte mir gerne noch mehr Material gewünscht.” [Entry D243, Q191-192: 48; Entry D243, Q243-244: 136].

Also in the case of teacher M96, the strategy C5 IMITATING stands out. She refers to colleagues as being helpful for her development, either by talking to them or observing them. While considering which options helped her most, she stated:

[Interview M96: 175] Observing colleagues – das hilft mir viel mehr, das habe ich für das Zertifikat gemacht, ich habe eine spanische und eine russische Kollegin beobachtet. Mir hilft es sehr, wenn ich sehe, wie die anderen das machen. Ich weiss, was ich nicht gut mache, oder was ist bei mir zu fördern, dadurch dass ich die anderen sehe. Das hat mir sehr geholfen.

This group of teachers displays the same self-evaluation weakness as the teachers of the firstgroup examined above. In this regard, teacher M171 is emblematic; she pinpoints one aspect of this problem:

[Interview M171: 127-129] Evaluating my own teaching is somewhat difficult..

Q.: Why?

Because it's not a classroom situation where you can compare with other colleagues how they teach, it's

¹⁶³ The Appendix 5 contains the diagrammes of the strategies used by each of the remaining teachers.

¹⁶⁴ One exception is teacher M96, who, compared to the other teachers, displays a higher use of meta-cognitive strategies (M3 AVANCE ORGANISER, M4 RELEVANCE, M5 EXPECTATIONS). Her high score might be explained by the fact that she, together with teacher A54, attended the largest number of workshops (n=11). In regard to the reflective framework of the workshops, during the interview she explained that reflecting before and after the workshops was not useful for her, and that she completed the questionnaires as “feedback to the trainers, not as reflection for herself”. Nevertheless, she actively took part in the reflective excercises.

always me and the students and the students are also very different, they're individuals so I can't really evaluate if my teaching does good for this, I think it's good otherwise I would not be doing it, but I don't have a fair view of myself. I can't really say.

4.2.2.2 Strategy profiles of the teachers

The analysis conducted in this section indicates that there are critical differences in the strategies used among the teachers of the first group ("with own learning goals").

Three teachers, (A54, P73 and N51), are similar in the strategies they employ and are distinctively different from the remaining two (B282 and I312). This outcome reflects the differences and the split examined in Chapter 4.2.1. For practical reasons, I will refer to them respectively as subgroup 1 (the teachers A54, P73 and N51) and subgroup 2 (B282 and I312). The results and their consequences for the professional development of the teachers are summarised in the following.

The teachers in subgroup 1 do not make use of some cognitive strategies (C3 INFERENCING, C4 NOTE TAKING and C5 IMITATING). Instead, they display an extensive use of all meta-cognitive strategies and are the only ones who rely on the elevated processing and more demanding ones C6 FRAMING and C7 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH. What is striking is that employing specific strategies seems to be a determinant. Two teachers of subgroup 1 demonstrate exceptionally well the fundamental function of specific strategies in professional development. Demonstrating person and task knowledge, Teacher P73 is aware of the fact that it is impossible for her to change everything at once and therefore adopts certain strategies, such as concentrating on one group of learners at a time and meeting with other teachers to develop professionally. By cyclically focusing on one thing at a time, she succeeds in renewing her teaching repertoire and getting the learners' progress moving into the right direction. Teacher A54 displays a similar pattern: also she is aware of how much there is to learn ("it is like opening the door and then suddenly you realise how much more there is"), and accordingly, she adopts a strategy similar to teacher P73: she "focuses", makes to-do-lists that help her stay on task and breaks down her goals into small tasks that then result in "small wins" for her. At the same time she likes to share with other colleagues as well. In so doing, she enters a cycle of change, as she explains: "little change and refocusing".

The teachers in subgroup 1 may differ in the rationale behind their use of strategies (preventing "laziness" for teacher P73, or simplifying complexity in small "wins" for teacher A54). Despite the differences, however, the main characteristic of these strategies is that **they render the task of professional development manageable for these teachers**. Furthermore, what is essential to these teachers is that they **avoid a loss of job satisfaction**. This is expressed very clearly in the affective goals these teachers set themselves ('being happy as a

teacher’ and ‘growing old as a teacher’). This reminds us of what Corno (1993: 15) claims about self-responsible learners: once they “move from planning and goal-setting to the implementation of plans, they cross a metaphorical Rubicon”, which implies that they take charge of their learning, protecting their intentions and goals.

The teachers B282 and I312 in subgroup 2 do not seem to use particular strategies at hand and exhibit primarily a use of the strategies from C1 to C5, and a reduced use of the meta-cognitive and social-affective ones. Despite monitoring activity in identifying failures or divergences between their goals and outcomes (“haven’t got as far as I would like to get”, for teacher B282, or being afraid to publish a book, for teacher I312), they are not able to develop coping strategies that allow them to break down these demanding tasks into manageable units and thus come close to their goals. They do not use self-diagnosis to self-correct, and respond rather “with self-handicapping emotionality” (Kuhl 2000: 115). This absence of control over the outcome of their efforts seems to suggest a latent “learned helplessness”¹⁶⁵ (Schunk et al. 2010: 92-3) in these two teachers. With respect to the way these two teachers realise their goals (what activities they engage in and how) and with which strategies, they belong rather to the second group of teachers (“without own learning goals”), which will be summarised in turn here.

As regards the remaining teachers (Group 2 “without own learning goals”), isolation (“Einzelkämpfer”, as teacher D243 several times defines the situation of the teachers) and practice orientation (overreliance on experienced teachers, handouts or trainers) are the prominent features. For these teachers knowledge seems to be embedded in competent teachers, however, as Cochran-Smith & Lythe (1999: 274) argue, “practice is more than practical”. Indeed, teacher trainers or colleagues may function as ‘models’. Bauer (2005: 9) argues that to be able to recognise a model as such presupposes that the teachers know what their goals are. Nevertheless, the case of teacher M96 illustrates how complex the situation can be: teacher M96 searches for orientation in ‘models’, i.e. in colleagues, trainers and peers, although she repeatedly said in the interview that she does not know what her goals are. If Bauer’s assumption is valid, then either teacher M96’s strategy (C5 IMITATING) automatically means that she has clear goals for herself, or she is only not aware of her goals. The first case is not supported by the data. According to the examination of teachers’ goals in Chapter 4.1, she was assigned to the second group of teachers. The second case (unawareness of

¹⁶⁵ This term is used in the literature about research on motivation and indicates the tendency not to perceive a relation between behaviours and outcomes and to be rather passive (cf. Schunk et al. 2010).

developmental goals) may be one plausible explanation. Another explanation could be that she adopts the strategy C5 of learning by observing others bypassing the necessary reflective work implicit behind it. This in turn could mean either that she is not accomplishing the reflective work only in that situation (i.e. at her stage of development), or that her behaviour is typical of employing this strategy at a first or a certain stage of development, (i.e. staged progression within a strategy) or that she is bypassing reflection out of habit¹⁶⁶.

The contrast among the teachers in subgroup 1 and 2¹⁶⁷ demonstrates for the first subgroup the attempt to make a connection between the formal knowledge of a wider professional discourse, their thinking and their practice, a connection which was not as easy for the other teachers to establish. The results suggest that some strategies can play a key role in helping the teachers realise their professional aims and in overcoming the difficulties involved in the process. The critical effects of those strategies are illustrated in the following figure:

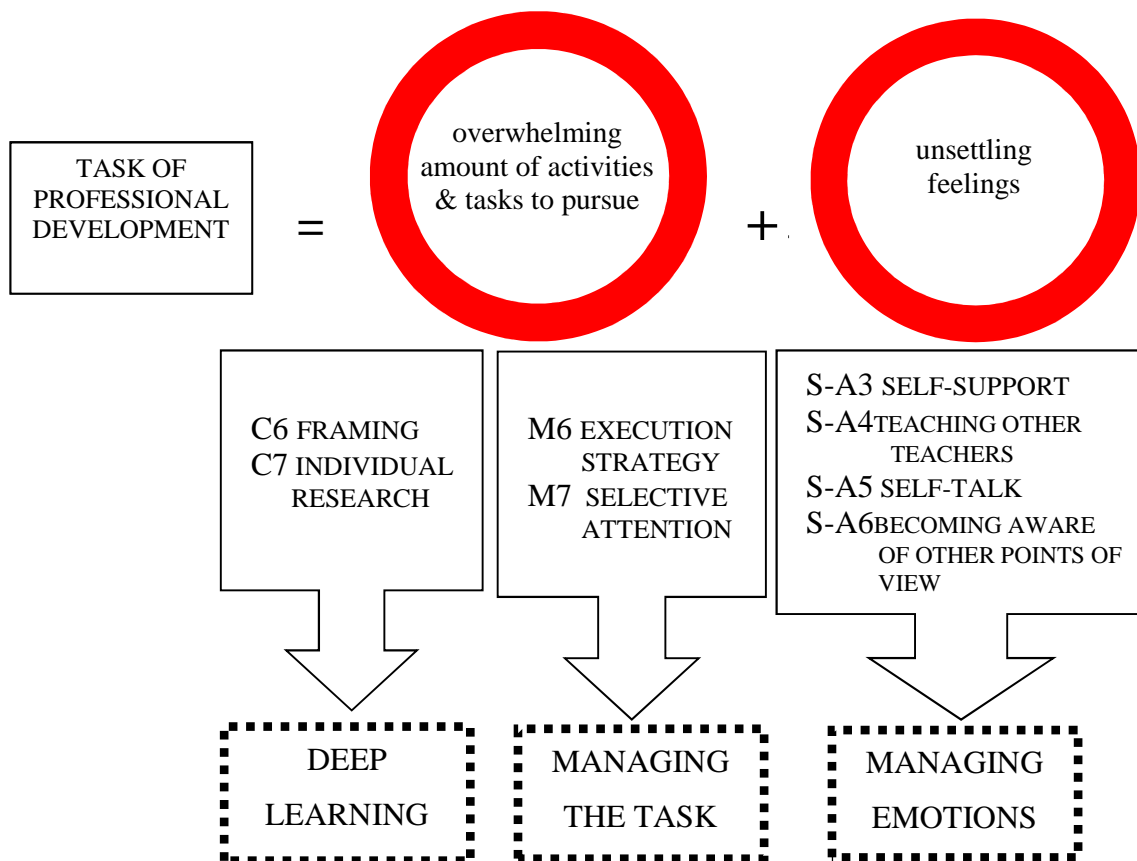


Figure 4.2 - The effects of strategies as supported by data related to the teachers in subgroup 1

¹⁶⁶ The data at our disposal regarding the strategies do not allow us at the moment to discern developmental stages in their use, i.e. whether the use of the strategies could signal at which stage the teachers are when employing them. More longitudinal studies would be required to detect this developmental aspect in teacher professional development.

¹⁶⁷ With regard to their learning behaviour (activities and strategies) also the remaining teachers (Group 2) could be included in the latter.

Nevertheless, the results indicate that the competence of self-evaluation proved to be insufficiently developed in both teachers' groups. From the answers of the teachers, it seems that they lacked orientation in this regard. They felt the need to look for comparisons or determine their market value in order to define their own 'professional sense'. Specific support thus seems to be required in this area¹⁶⁸.

Summary

In this section the attention had been primarily focused on the teachers of group 1 in their use of strategies.

The attempt to delineate a 'strategic' profile of the teachers demonstrated that overall the teachers of group 1 were not consistently similar as a group. As regards the strategies chosen, the subgroup 1 of the three teachers A54, N51 and P73 seemed to be assiduous users of strategies, and to be well-equipped with a various set of cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies, which enabled them to take challenges more willingly (they even sought them out). These teachers relied less on judgment strategies (such as C3 INFERENCE), maintain a focused attention on their goals and various means of pursuing them, were attentive to their positive emotional well-being as teachers as well and acknowledged the need of the social dimension as indispensable for their professional growth. Due to these characteristics, they were rather in a 'challenging and collaborative mode' (Schunk et al 2010: 159-160) and indicate an overall balance of cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective dimensions.

For the remaining two teachers of subgroup 2, teacher B282 and I312, less use of strategies was evidenced. Some, such as the last two demanding cognitive strategies do not surface at all. The teachers were in a rather 'judgmental mode', anticipating the potential work that would ensue from implementing the ideas gained from workshops or other professional development activities. Two meta-cognitive strategies, M6 EXECUTION STRATEGY, useful for managing complex tasks, and M7 SELECTIVE ATTENTION for participating in the workshops in a proactive way, were not employed either. The integration of social aspects (informal learning with colleagues) is indeed acknowledged, although not exploited as much as by the teachers mentioned previously. Finally, the social-affective strategies beneficial in managing emotions and maintaining a positive emotional household were lacking for this subgroup of two teachers. As regards the strategies that were used, these two teachers belong more to the

¹⁶⁸ This will be addressed in the Implications.

second group of teachers (Group 2 "without own learning goals").

4.3 Impact of goals on professional development

As established at the end of the section “Language teachers’ goals”, grouping the teachers according to their goals produced the following results:

Group 1. the teachers with ‘own learning goals’: A54, B282, I312, N51, P73

Group 2. the teachers without ‘own learning goals’: D243, J106, M96, M171, N95

I focused on group 1, guided in the analysis by the question of whether their goals were also reflected in the learning behaviour (as expressed in the activities they engaged in), and the use of strategies). The results so far demonstrated that the teachers in the first group do not automatically behave consistently as a group. Instead, a striking consistency is evidenced for a split in the group, which will be summarised in this section.

As far as professional development activities are concerned, not all the teachers who have “own goals” display the same behaviour, they are divided. Only three (teachers A54, N51 and P73) share the same learning approaches, as manifested in their engagement and in their orientation towards difficult and demanding aspects of professional development, such as dealing with theories in language learning and teaching. These teachers seem to see a learning opportunity where other teachers may possibly feel discomfort or avoid effort. Finally, when strategies are concerned, the teachers A54, N51 and P73 again form a distinct group. They are able to develop specific coping strategies that allow them to break demanding tasks into manageable units and thus approach their goals quite effectively. This was not the case for the other two teachers who scored rather low in strategy use.

A major weakness was identified across all the teachers in the area of self-assessment, notoriously a difficult part of the learning process (Huttunen 1986: 163). However, it is also worth noting that the role usually attributed to self-evaluation is that of an essential “road to autonomy” (*ibid.* 163). When this is omitted or missing, an important part of the learning experience is missing as well and the control over learning may be prejudiced.

The results so far have thus produced evidence that following one’s “own learning goals” **may** in itself be an indicator of subsequent learning behaviour, but not always. A consistency, i.e. a match between learning goals and learning behaviour in order to reach specific goals could be observed for only three of them.

For the three teachers in subgroup 1, A54, N51 and P73, the goals are then reflected in the

way these teachers act and arrange their own „zone of proximal development“ in terms of global engagement, (being more active and developing more strategies than the others). They employ more higher-level strategies (either cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective) and approach their development task holistically. The same was not true for the remaining two teachers, who, in regard to their learning behaviour, belong rather to the second group of teachers (Group 2 "without own learning goals").

The difficulty the teachers have, as learning professionals, to define objectives for themselves is also confirmed for other learners, like those in research on language learning. Conceptualising the “learner as manager”, Holec (1987: 149) points out how this part of learning is the most difficult and explains that the main reason is related to their lack of awareness of the personal responsibility for doing so:

It is the part of the management process bearing on the *definition of objectives* with which learners seem to have most difficulty, and this for two main reasons. First: they seem to be utterly unaware of the fact that objectives are not acts of God to submit to but that they can, and in fact must, be chosen. [...] (italics in original).

One consequence for the teachers of group 2, recalling what Holec (*ibid.* 151) claims, is that if learners do not set objectives for themselves, “they obviously can not assess their progress and the relevance of their objectives to their needs”. This means that they also disregard assessing whether the techniques which were suitable for their objectives. In addition, they can not direct their learning to realising objectives if the latter are not fixed.

In light of the differences that became apparent, the results suggest a revision of the teachers’ grouping (Group 1 "with own learning goals") into two subgroups. The first subgroup (subgroup 1 - teachers A54, N51 and P73) is characterized by a match between goals and their realisation, the second (subgroup 2 - teachers B282 and I312) displays a divergence between the goals and their realisation:

Understanding the subjective interpretations of the teachers towards their own professional development was one of the central questions within this study. Further questions arose from the findings presented above. It is in the nature of this investigation to operate regardless of the number of the participants, i.e. regardless of quantitative measures. Therefore, in line with the nature of the qualitative criteria that guided the present study, such as for example the sensitivity towards the different perspectives and ‘meanings’ of the participants (cf. Chapter 3.1.2) and with Denzin & Lincoln's (2000: 3) call for making “sense of [...] phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”, the researcher was then urged to verify and look for answers why some teachers in the first grouping behaved differently. These results will

serve as a springboard for subsequent analysis in the following section, in which I will focus on further elements in the data that may support or reject the groupings. Therefore it is now interesting to further investigate the following questions:

Which other factors may influence goal-setting and professional development?

How do individual factors relate to the learning behaviour of the teachers?

4.4 Individual differences

The specific focus in this section will be describing which characteristics seem to distinguish the teachers. Both subgroups of teachers “with own learning goals” were examined according to the following aspects that resulted from the analysis of the interviews: they produced evidence of differences in terms of attitudes, awareness and motivation¹⁶⁹.

4.4.1 Attitudes towards learning

In this section the focus will be on both teachers’ attitudes, first towards their own learning for professional development and then on the way they view their students’ learning.

The aim is to detect what characterises the differences in the learning behaviour in the two subgroups that have emerged so far.

4.4.1.1 Attitude towards one’s own professional learning

During the interviews, some tendencies became evident with regard to the attitude of the teachers towards their own learning. In general, the teachers in both subgroups seemed to be sensitive to the epistemological pressure to professionalise, in other words, for the need of lifelong learning, which has been increasingly advocated in the educational field over the last decades. The difference between the groups is a matter of degree.

The salient characteristics are summarised and illustrated in this section through examples from the interviews:

1. openness vs learning with reservations
2. self-responsibility vs delegating behaviour

Openness, “lifelong learning” vs learning with reservations

A striking feature of the attitude of the subgroup 1 (teachers P73, A54, and N51) is their openness. Teacher P73 is exemplary in this respect, being characterised by a critical stance towards learning:

¹⁶⁹ Contextual factors are important in any learning situation. They were addressed in Chapter 4.2.1.1 in the context of the support the teachers receive from their institutions. This did not yield results, as there was no or minimal support received by the teachers from their institutions, although the programme *KommUNikation* was indeed a supporting professionalising initiative for teachers at Bavarian universities.

[Interview P73: 31] ... nicht nur lernen und das war's, wir können nicht bleiben ...das ist auch persönlich, (*short pause*) in jedem Moment denkt man, wir machen das Beste, aber dann kommen andere Leute, die anders denken, anders sehen, und wir müssen es hören, es sehen, und dann vielleicht „ok“, und dann ein bisschen ... , man muss immer skeptisch bleiben im eigenen Beruf, oder? Man kann nicht sagen: „ok, das habe ich gelernt, das ist gut, das bleibt immer so“, also ... (*laughs; Mimik, gestures: indicating it is not conceivable for her*)

This sounds like a manifesto, a very pronounced personal theory of professional learning. Her openness is emblematic in her willingness to accommodate new and foreign perspectives, which are explicitly mentioned in the way “andere Leute die anders sehen”.

In line with her tendency to draw parallels between her private and professional life¹⁷⁰, teacher P73 then compares teachers with mothers in order to exemplify her stance towards learning and at the end provide the maxime of “skeptisch bleiben” that summarises her thinking:

[Interview P73: 31] ...und dann sage ich: „Ok“, und dann überlege ich mir. Es gibt solche Mütter, die fünf Kinder haben, und sagen: „Wer kann mir etwas sagen? Ich habe schon fünf Kinder erzogen.“ Ich sage: „Ja, aber vielleicht hast du es nicht richtig gemacht!“ [*laughs*] Oder für das erste war okay, für das fünfte ist es zwanzig Jahre später, das Leben hat sich verändert und du bist immer mit der gleichen Methode!“ Skeptisch sein ist für mich wichtig, [*interrupts herself*] natürlich überzeugt, aber man muss immer sagen: „Nie vergessen. Hey [*warning tone*], vielleicht machst du es nicht richtig! Oder es gibt etwas zu verändern, hör dir eine andere Meinung“ [*in a sort of dialog with herself*].

For teacher P73 ‘skeptisch bleiben’ is an indispensable characteristic of professional thinking. Her professional ethics does not permit that a teacher remains the same over the years. In unison with her deontological credo, her attitude of continuing to question her own beliefs seems to function as a sort of built-in self-renewal device that allows for innovation and further professional learning. Teacher P73’s attitude, as revealed here, seems to correspond to the necessary prerequisite for teachers if lifelong learning is to be pursued. It also corresponds to the “‘what’ of teacher knowledge”, as claimed by Wilson & Berne (1999: 194), when they state that only when teachers re-conceptualise their professional development can they redirect their practices.

Interestingly, one of teacher P73’s early entries in the questionnaires actually attests to a development in her teaching. The answer to question 19, referring to a workshop about the use of the L2 in the language classroom, shows teacher P73 doubting that she would be able to use the L2 exclusively:

¹⁷⁰ Several times she adds parenthetically: “und das ist auch persönlich” to what she is saying.

[Entry P73, Q73: 14] 19. Was werde ich sehr wahrscheinlich nicht umsetzen können? Woran liegt es? Überhaupt kein Wort Deutsch benutzen¹⁷¹.

However, when I met her about two years later, she spoke of using only the L2 in her teaching, which by this time seemed an obvious procedure for her. Her attitude of being open to *different* perspectives (different in the very sense of divergent) and presumably her strategy of “SELF TALK” to remind herself not to miss *other* perspectives could be an explanation for this change in her teaching¹⁷².

A similar attitude characterises teacher A54 as well, who expresses her “lifelong learning”-orientation and her professionalisation concern in sentences such as: “the more I learn, the more I realise that I need to learn”:

[Interview A54: 48-9] Q.: And do you think you need more support for your professional development as a language teacher?

I think so, yes, ... the more I learn, the more I realise that I need to learn. It's this ..., it is like opening the door and then suddenly you realise how much more there is. And that's just this experience, so it doesn't matter where I go, whether it's in comparative linguistics, if I just discover some things, I suddenly realise “Oh my God, there is a huge field out there that is dedicated to it,” or if I say; I've got my own Moodle site, and I'd like to learn how to write better, I start to practice writing online and I realise, oh my gosh, how much you have to know about writing properly and how readers learn online. That's a huge field!

“Opening the door” is just a significant metaphor for her attitude towards professional learning as a disposition for discovering new aspects. The term ‘realising’ reoccurs very often in her answers, suggesting her constantly becoming aware of new or deeper aspects and indicating the disposition for doing so. This specific attitude recalls Freeman’ (1989: 36) model of teaching, whereby attitude and especially awareness are crucial for development. Similarly to teacher P73, teacher A54 thinks being a teacher is a matter of development. When she evaluates the contribution of the workshops to her development, she displays a critical attitude, but towards herself:

[Interview A54: 99-100]

Q.: To what extent do you think the “KommUNikation”-workshops helped you in your development as a teacher?

Oh it definitely took me from muddling through, to someone who knows more or less, you know, what could happen [laughs]...I mean, it was a first step. It was clearly - it wasn't like I had the feeling “Oh my gosh, now I'm ready for... to call myself a teacher and full stop, you know, no, not like that, but it was clearly a first step in professionalizing my teaching.

There is not such a thing as being a “teacher and full stop” in her professional ethics. Thus,

¹⁷¹ She teaches Spanish, and German is her students' first language.

¹⁷² Of course we rely on self-reported data.

being given a chance to introduce new theories or trying to accomodate them in her “interpretive frameworks”¹⁷³ represents a challenge but constitutes learning for her (cf. next section “Attitude towards students’ learning”) and results in a commitment to her teaching practice:

[Interview A54: 318] I keep going back to it, you know, even if it doesn’t work at first I kind of think it over and it becomes a part of repertoire in some cases.

A last feature of the learning attitude that characterises the first subgroup of teachers is illustrated by teacher N51, who at the end of the interview was asked – as were all the others teachers – if she wished to add something that had not been said, and she promptly answered that the interview had led her to self-knowledge, which echoed her need and goal of becoming increasingly self-aware as a teacher:

[Interview N51: 242-5] Q.: Is there something that you would like to add and say?
Yes, I want to say that is was more interesting than I expected.
Why, what did you expect?
Yes, it was quite spontaneous, thus in a certain sense it has been a process of self-knowledge¹⁷⁴.

This attitude is quite emblematic of this first subgroup, which seems to welcome any opportunity as a learning and reflecting experience.

The other teachers of the second subgroup (B282 and I312) also seemed to be aware of the necessity for life-long learning, as teacher I312 exemplarily expresses:

[Interview I312: 125] I don’t think it’s experience when you do the same thing for ten years.

However, the teachers in this subgroup approach newness in their field with reservations. Teacher B282 does wish to “be on top of things”, but her critical attitude seems to minimise her openness:

[Interview B282: 107] to generally be on top of um whatever is discussed in the world of language teaching, not necessarily saying that I would follow every fashion but *[laughs]*...

The word ‘fashion’ applied to language teaching refers to the methods or theories of teaching as being rapid transitory just as with fashion, which is popular in a particular time and place

¹⁷³ This seems to parallel what Myers & Clark (2002: 51) claim about teachers’ accomodation attitude.

¹⁷⁴ C’è qualcosa che vorresti aggiungere e che vorresti dire?
Sì, voglio dire che è stato più interessante di quello che mi aspettavo
Perché , cosa ti aspettavi?
Sì, [...] è stato abbastanza spontaneo, quindi in un certo senso è stato un processo di autoconoscenza.

but likely will be forgotten after a short while. Her remark summarises in few words the characteristics of an information flood, a rapid succession of methods and paradigm changes in the language teaching field, with the ensuing problem of teachers' destabilisation, which language teachers have to face. At first glance, it could sound similar to "skeptisch sein", like that of teacher P73, but there are substantial differences: in teacher P73 the target of the scepticism is herself, while in teacher B282 it is the successive newness. Teacher B282 seems to draw the conclusion that a critical stance is necessary to cope with the various fashions in the course of time.

This could be seen as an artifact of the interview, with the teachers' need to position herself as critical. However, other occurrences of her mental reservation that surfaced every now and then during the interview suggest that "reservations" are a trait of her attitude towards professional learning. Some of these examples follow:

[Interview B282: 140] Q.: Have you ever participated to a training for language teachers where you felt that your ideas or your own teaching philosophy contrasted with the ones being presented?

Not necessarily the ideas, it is just that you sometimes wonder how – as you are not necessarily teaching in an ideal world [laughs], how well something would really work when you tried to do more or less the same thing. You know some things just look very wonderful and then you think: Would I have x, y or z....

[Interview B282: 223] I can try and, if not keep abreast, but stay in contact with my field, with language teaching.

Although the teachers all wish to keep abreast of the professional debate, for the second subgroup of teachers the difference seems to be in their attitude towards newness. They ultimately rely on their teaching experiences and less on the incorporation of input from the outside (new theories or new methods, etc), while the first subgroup displays an unprejudiced stance towards newness, which has a striking similarity to the openness advocated for qualitative research. Quoting Schütz (1974), Kruse (2010: 21) for example, explains one of the most important principles in pursuing qualitative research, "Verstehen [ist] stets ein Fremdverstehen". According to this principle, "understanding" equals "understanding other perspectives" and this awareness very clearly resonates in the open attitude of the teachers in the first subgroup.

A further difference in the teachers' attitudes became obvious between the two subgroups in relation to the teachers' position on getting things done, on translating intentions into actions. Whereas the teachers in subgroup 1 were looking for challenges and reported experimenting and trying new things in their teaching, they never mentioned the effort involved during the interviews. For the second subgroup the effort stands out in the foreground.

This result is very apparent for teacher I312, who mentions several times, in the entries of the questionnaires and during the interview as well, how much work it takes to integrate new ideas into her teaching:

[Entry I312; Q335: 1-3] dass es viel Arbeit ist, mit Zeitungsartikeln zu arbeiten

[Interview I312: 55] I've used film [*she refers to a workshop about using videos*], but Lernstationen I couldn't use because it's too much work. You know.

Even her professional goal to publish reveals itself as too effortful, and she capitulates when realising how difficult it could be.

[Interview I312: 67] But this is such a daunting task I don't know how I'm going to go about doing that.

For the teachers in subgroup 2, the effort ensues in the teachers' **avoidance** of time-consuming implementations, such as development of activities or experimentation with innovating concepts presented in the workshops.

One possible explanation could be that the teachers in the two subgroups have different strategies at their disposal. As illustrated in the "Strategic profile of the teachers" (Chapter 4.2.2.2), the teachers in subgroup 1 use specific meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies, M6 (EXECUTION STRATEGY) or S-A 3 (SELF-ENCOURAGEMENT) for example, which seem to render the professional development task more manageable. This could explain why the effort involved in implementing new ideas in their teaching was not mentioned, not because teacher professional development is an easy task, but because they can metabolise it through their strategies. As a consequence, what stands out is their enthusiasm for their job, rather than the extra work implied.

In contrast, the teachers in subgroup 2 do not have effective strategies to cope with the development task at their disposal: they perceive the work load implied when they try to implement new (but time-consuming) ideas (both use the strategy C3 INFERENCE), but seem to rely solely on handouts and "recipes" (teacher B282) or on help from a supervisor (teacher I312) for their development:

[Interview B282: 60-61] Q.: What could be done to make them [the workshops] more effective/useful for you?

Hmmm... let me think. What is always very good is if you can take away some documentation of it, if there are handouts, which quite often there are but not, not necessarily.

Overall, as far as their attitude towards their own professional learning is concerned, the two teachers of subgroup 2 display similarities with the teachers in the group "without own learning goals".

Self-responsibility vs. delegating behaviour

A consequence of this self-critical attitude is that the teachers in subgroup 1 are more attentive than the others to what triggers their learning or to the way they are “instructed”. The best example of this attitude is illustrated by teacher A54:

[Interview A54: 102]

Q.: And do you think you need more support for your professional development as a language teacher? That's a good question. I mean what you did..., what was quite interesting, what I liked, was that you had this very complex structure from beforehand, you know, asking people what their expectations were, and what their general philosophy of teaching was. Then to go through the workshop, what do you expect from this particular workshop, then to give feedback on the workshop, and then to think about ‘what have I learned from it’. So you followed through the whole process of us attending the workshop, holding our hand all the way through. So I think this promoted the sense that you could get something out of the workshop. Because otherwise you might go in, and find one or two ideas, but you don't really reflect on the learning process in attending the workshop. so that was helpful. And I think doing it like that does help a teacher attending such a workshop get a lot out of it.

Teacher A54 is the only one who became aware of the design of the workshops and the only one to refer to the reflective framework (cf. Chapter 3.3) during the interview, which makes her a special “learner” within her subgroup. Her remark stated above about the reflective framework serves as an outstanding example that very clearly illustrates the sensitiveness of the teachers towards the way they were approached during the workshops and of their being responsive to the learning opportunities in any situation. It recalls the notorious “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975) – usually quoted in the literature to explain the impact of past (i.e. “traditional”) personal learning experiences, which implicitly form and inform teachers’ ideas of teaching. Teacher A54’s sensitiveness may depend on a matching relationship between the reflective framework and her learning style, which was not apparent among the other teachers. Another explanation could be that the reflective framework actually initiated a process of reflection.

Teacher A54 demonstrates that teachers as learners can learn other lessons and indicates what teachers may discover when attending workshops: **they develop meta-cognitive knowledge.** The teachers in subgroup 1 seem to switch between the cognitive and the meta-cognitive level when learning, developing a high awareness related to their own learning matters, realising the learning opportunities offered by the different situations and thus taking a critical stance. Interestingly, “critical” is directed rather towards oneself than towards the new incoming information and means challenging oneself, being open for new information. To say it in teacher A54’s words, the three teachers in the first subgroup attend the workshops to “concede themselves a time out to think” or with teacher P73:

[Interview P73: 70] [*referring to the reflecting framework*] Ja, ja, es war nützlich, weil es ist immer nützlich immer zu reflektieren, nicht einfach: “Ok, heute um vier Uhr darein blublublub and bye!”, es war eine kurze Denkpause.

The workshops that the teachers attended were experienced as something that was not received passively or – in teacher P73’s words - drunk as simple water (“blublublu”) but something that requires the teachers’ concentration, reflection and elaboration. They use the workshops to “become more and more aware” of what they do, as teacher N51 reports, who feels the urge to maintain a high professional level in her teaching, due to a pressure external from her (having students “above the average”¹⁷⁵) as well as internal to her, in her need to know where she is professionally situated:

[Interview N51: 197] Now that I see what is out there, I am more and more aware I mean, if you have no confrontation, you don’t know where you stand¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, what she says about self-evaluation shows that professional development is for her something that comes from the inside, from the continuous internal work of reflection:

[Interview N51: 164-8] self-assessing my own professional knowledge, well, this self-evaluation always occurs. Yes, but this is a continuous process, when one is observing oneself I think, from a distance.

Q.: Is this less referred to your teaching than to what you know, in a sense, right?

Yes, but I think that it is this internal work that brings about your progress¹⁷⁷.

She seems to expect no one to be in charge of her development except herself and does not avoid difficult tasks. She feels very acutely the difficulty of engaging with theoretical issues, but at the same time the sense of responsibility leads her to actively “seek” them:

[Interview N51: 190] Also engaging with theoretical issues in language learning and teaching was difficult for me, in the very sense of being able to deal with them, I had to look for them, and it was difficult for me.¹⁷⁸

This sounds like a clear contrast to the teachers of subgroup 2, represented here typically by teacher I312 who has an ambivalent attitude towards theory. On one hand she reports her appreciation of it, on the other she refuses to work with theory herself:

¹⁷⁵ [Interview N51: 153] ma sicuramente ho a che fare con alunni che sono molto più bravi della media, quindi devo mantenere questo livello.

¹⁷⁶ [Interview N51: 197] Adesso che vedo un pochino quello che c’è in giro, mi rendo conto di più ..., cioè, se non sei confrontato non sai dove ti trovi.

¹⁷⁷ [Interview N51: 164-8] autovalutare le mie conoscenze professionali, bé, questa è un’autovalutazione che c’è sempre, credo. Sì, però questo è un processo continuo, quando uno si osserva sempre credo da fuori.

Q.: Questo è meno riferito al tuo insegnamento, quanto a quello che tu sai, insomma..?

Sì, però penso che sia questo lavoro dall’interno che ti fa procedere.

¹⁷⁸ Anche occuparmi di teorie d’apprendimento o insegnamento di una lingua, questo era difficile, nel senso proprio di occuparsi di questi aspetti, ho dovuto cercarli, risultava difficile per me.

[Interview I312: 107] Engaging with theoretical issues: this is difficult. I just don't do it.

Teacher I312 also finds supervisors to be the most useful support for her development:

[Interview I312: 90-101] Q.: What options helped you most for your development as a language teacher? Reflecting on my teaching is certainly helpful, especially if I can discuss it with someone, in a supervisory capacity.

Q.: Do you find it useful?

Yes, absolutely

Why do you think they are useful?

I get the feedback from somebody who has the knowledge, who can observe my students and maybe see them differently from the way I do, and if there is criticism then maybe they can also suggest improvement. And when I reflect on my own teaching, then I know what my goal was, and I can see whether I reached it or not, or what I could've done to be better.

Supervisors are surely a good support in teacher professional development, but the potential risk of relying on supervisors can involve expecting others to be responsible for one's own development, which coincides with a traditional model of learning (cf. next section Attitudes towards students' learning).

In their sense of responsibility for their own learning, the two teachers in subgroup 2 differ from each other: teacher I312 thought the reflective framework was useful, while teacher B282 thought that it was not, the reason being that:

[Interview B282: 83-90] Q.: Reflecting before and after the workshops on your previous knowledge, on your expectations and on the relevance of the subject and so on...was this in your opinion useful?

Right, in general I would say it is useful.

Q.: Um.... in general it's useful, but in this case?

No, I think it had to do...., from what I remember what those questionnaires looked like, I think they very often asked for things, you know, you would do the same questionnaire every time, yes, and I seem to remember that you then tend to write what you have written before.

Q.: Ok. But the first time, was it useful?

Hhmmm.... Slightly so.

These words could be an answer to teacher B282's responses to the questionnaires, which were the lowest in the study. In reality, in her questionnaires she did not even try to repeat what she had written in the preceding ones, she very often left out the answers. Her explanations seem to suggest that she avoided answering the questionnaires, apparently because they were repetitive, but her actual behaviour indicates an inconsistency between her assessment and her actions. If the reflective framework was seriously taking into account the teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs, teacher B282 seems to circumvent the very purpose (self-reflection) for which this framework had been designed. The words of teacher B282 also seem to point to what has been claimed about the fact that the learning situation does not automatically generate goal-directed behaviour (cf. Huttunen 1986: 40).

Overall, the teachers in the first subgroup do not avoid effort and difficulties. Openness is a striking feature of their attitude and they seem to be aware that development means involvement, investment of energies and of effort. Their attitude is also evident in the self-responsibility towards their learning, in the sense that they expect no one else to be in charge of their professional learning except themselves. This was not true for the second subgroup of teachers.

According to the attitudes that were identified in this section, if the workshops were seen as a means to support teachers' teaching and their professional development, and if we try to represent the process implied in the two subgroups graphically, it would seem that in subgroup 2 (Teacher B282 and I312) the connection between the workshops and the learners is almost immediate (Figure 4.3b), whereas in the first subgroup (teachers A54, N51 and P73) it undergoes a process of re-elaboration and reflection, before reaching the learners (Fig 4.3a):

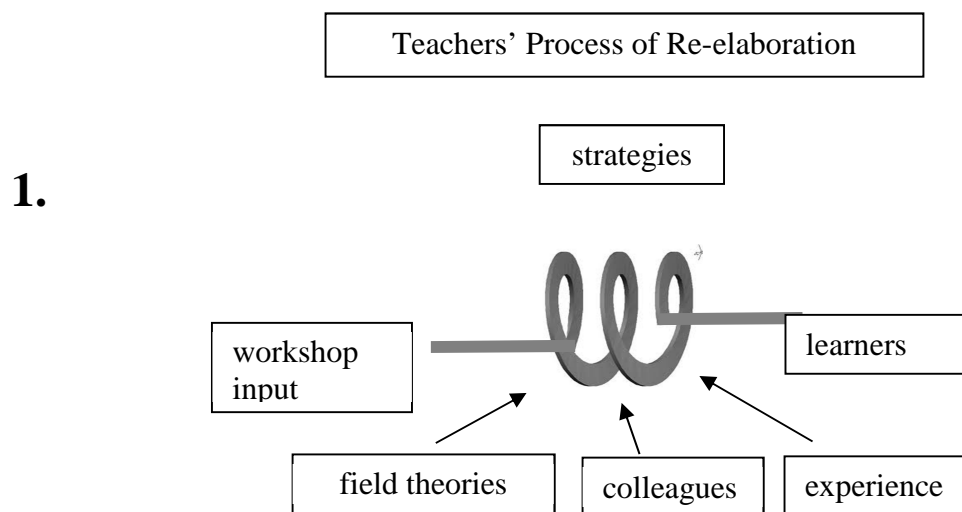


Figure 4.3a Teachers' process of re-elaboration in subgroup 1

In this model (Figure 4.3a), the ideas from the workshops eventually reach the learners after a process of personal and effortful elaboration and integration, whereby the theories of language learning, the input from training and workshops, experiences, and colleagues, all contribute to expand the teachers' own professional knowledge. Reflection, here, is a process by which the teachers oversee their own learning, from the goal-setting phase to the realisation phase, with monitoring occurring at all stages. It is also a process of enrichment, whereby the teachers personalise others' theories and experiences and make them their own.

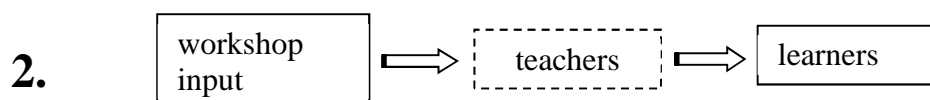


Figure 4.3b Teachers' process of re-elaboration in subgroup 2

In the case of subgroup 2 (Figure 4.3b), the ideas from the workshops reach the learners

almost directly, without personal elaboration on the part of the teachers. The teachers' contribution is represented here as dotted line to symbolise the minimal elaboration on the part of the teachers, who do not seem to be involved in the implementation of ideas gained during the workshops.

The two modalities identified above recall Hoyle's (1980: 49) definition of professionalism. He distinguished between **restricted professionalism**, when it is mostly intuitive in nature and based on experience rather than theory, and **extended professionalism**, when the teachers are concerned with locating their teaching in a broader context, evaluating their work systematically and being interested in theory and current educational developments.

These results seem also to accord with Bokaerts et al.'s (1999: 448) account of the learning differences evidenced among high-school learners followed longitudinally. The variance they identified revolved around two major learning modalities, with "surface-level learning" opposed to "deep-level processing". The majority of learners were shown to primarily use the first modality which correlated with engagement in reproductive activities, with no concern for conceptual integration. Only 16% of the learners in Bokaerts et al. used "a deep-level processing style", which was associated with enjoying the exploration of new information and effective strategy use. This recalls the opposition in the results of this study for the teachers of subgroups 1 and 2.

The concern in the next section is to investigate whether there is a match between teachers' behaviour in the 'learning mode' and the way they view their learners' learning i.e. the way they internalise their teaching role.

4.4.1.2 Attitude towards students' learning

In general, all the teachers in both subgroups care about their learners and are sensitive to their learners' needs. The data further indicate that the teachers are similar inasmuch as they feel responsible for their learners and for motivating them. Two teachers help to illustrate this for both subgroups: teacher P73 (subgroup 1), for example, thinks that:

[Interview P73: 178] Motivation ist für viele etwas, das von dem Lehrer abhängt. Klar müssen sie schon motiviert kommen, aber nicht immer, in der Schule - wenn der Lehrer nicht motiviert ist, dann sind sie verloren. Motivation ist besonders wichtig.

Teacher B282 (subgroup 2) similarly emphasises the claim that teachers know what learners "want":

[Interview B282: 169-172] Q.: What is the biggest challenge today for language teachers in your opinion?

To give students an idea of the validity of accuracy, to strive to form good sentences, to not just communicate but to...to do it well...Yes, to make things interesting enough for them to [laughs] to want to learn them, to want to absorb them.

The role motivation plays for language learning is a striking result also for all the other teachers participating in the project *KommUNikation*. Answering to the open-ended Question 9¹⁷⁹, 52% of the entries (81 occurrences out of 157) referred to “motivation” or to related words such as “interessiert sein”, “Begeisterung”, “Wille”, “Lust”, “Spaß”, to quote only a few. These answers attest to the enormous role learners’ motivation plays according to the teachers. This belief exerts, however, a considerable pressure on the teachers: 38% of the entries mentioned above for motivation referred to the teachers, i.e. learners’ motivation as the **teachers’ accomplishment**, something that teachers must stimulate in their learners, with expressions such as: Interesse wecken, interessante Themen, Lerner anregen, Lernatmosphäre, etc.

These results imply that there is a common attitude towards learners’ motivation, which teachers seem to consider something indispensable for learning, independently of its source, whether it is something that learners must have or may receive from the teacher. In addition, they seem to suggest that there is a sort of common understanding of ‘teacher-centredness’.

The results also suggest that the tendency of the teachers to feel responsible for their learners is common to both subgroups. Adopting a term proposed by Finkel & Monk (1983), I would like to label this tendency the “Atlas’ complex”, which refers precisely to those teachers who assume full responsibility for what happens in the classroom. Finkel & Monk explain very well the blend of cognitive and social aspects that, like invisible forces, operate on teachers and learners, forcing teachers to be in the dominating position of the “middle”, without ultimately being able to “make things happen for their students”. Finkel & Monk (*ibid.* 96) find a powerful metaphor for these forces in “the Atlas’ complex”, which they describe as a pervasive state of mind:

The Atlas complex is a state of mind that keeps teachers fixed in the center of their classroom, supporting the entire burden of responsibility for the course on their own shoulders. This state of mind is hardened by the expectations that surround teachers and by the impact of the experience that results from them.

Teachers subjected to the Atlas’ complex are bound to act as experts and as a consequence their learners are receptive and passive receptacles, “settling back into their seats to take in the teacher's illuminating words” (*ibid.* 85). According to Finkel & Monk (*ibid.* 85-86), the ultimate consequence is that it then becomes the responsibility of the teachers to provide their

¹⁷⁹ Question 9: “One of the most important things in learning L2 is ...”

learners with “motivation, insight, clear explanations, even intellectual curiosity” and furthermore with “a sense of purpose”.

The teachers in the study do not seem to be an exception in this respect. The Atlas’ complex resonates in their words, as teacher B282 exemplarily demonstrates; she feels in charge of what learners “take up”:

[Interview B282: 219] I still think you’re the one to supply, to try and make them aware of, to also break down of course what you have to teach into portions and transfer that they can take up...teach at a level that it is useful to them. And also to entertain them in part.

No one in either of the subgroups seemed to be immune against this custodial attitude, which makes teachers feel responsible for arousing learning curiosity in their students, as teacher A54, who was trying to discover for herself the value of online learning suggests:

[Interview A54: 209] how to figure out that those [*online exercises*] are still of a very high quality and not just kind of test quality that is not conducive to learning, that doesn’t teach you to learn. So I’m experimenting with what sort of input materials online can trigger learning curiosity, so that the students can go out and start exploring and finding the sorts of things that they want, and that’s something, an area that I’ve needed.

The difficulty for the teachers of freeing themselves from the Atlas’ complex is very clearly expressed by teacher P73, who tells about situations when she feels ineffective in her classroom because her learners work autonomously and emphasises her belief that it is in her teacher role that she **must** do something:

[Interview P73: 181-2] für mich ist es noch schwer, wenn ich nichts im Unterricht mache, z.B. wenn sie [die Lerner] Übungen machen und sie müssen selber was machen, ... aber nach einer Weile, sag ich mir „Was mach ich hier“ und dann fang ich zu sprechen an oder zu korrigieren, das ist hier in mir drin, dass der Lehrer etwas machen **muss**: machen, sprechen, korrigieren, etwas anschreiben [*emphasis in her voice*] und es ist hier drinnen, obwohl ich bewusst weiß, dass, je mehr du weg bist, desto besser lernen sie, aber [*laughs; makes gestures to represent her impatience in these situations*]....

The teachers in the two subgroups do however vary in the degree to which they permit their ‘teacher-centredness’ to permeate their actions, while still leaving space to promote learners’ autonomy, thus retreating from their Atlas’ role. In their steadfast conviction that it is implicit in the teachers’ role to relieve learners as much as possible, there is still a vein of autonomy being promoted in the first subgroup of teachers, who explicitly mention their interest in promoting learners’ autonomy.

When I talked with teacher P73, during the interview she told me that she was about to design one of her classes in a totally new way, structured around the concept of task-based learning. She was trying to launch a non-profit organisation with her students, something really authentic as she defined it, and decidedly nothing fictitious “weil ich denke, fiktiv mache wir

genug im Unterricht!¹⁸⁰”, the rationale behind this being a mix of intrinsic motivation and action competence:

[Interview P73: 188] jetzt mache ich etwas, das wirklich von drinnen kommt, aus ihnen selber, ok, wenn wir 100 Euro zusammen schaffen, dann sind diese 100 Euro echt!

She is aware not only of the difficulty of stepping out – as a teacher – of the centre, which she calls “die Hauptrolle”, but also of the source of this awareness:

[Interview P73: 193-6] Q.: How different from now did you see your teacher’s role in the language classroom at the beginning of your career?

In part, nicht total. Ich versuche, es klappt nicht immer, die Hauptrolle im Unterricht zu haben, ich versuche es, ich versuche es.

Q.: Und war das früher auch so, oder ist es was Neues?

Neu, und solche Seminare haben mir dabei geholfen, das zu erkennen. Sonst wär ich nicht auf die Idee gekommen, dass ich nicht immer die Hauptperson im Unterricht bin [laughs].

To give another example, teacher A54 very often mentions what she does for her students. With a strategy similar to the one she deploys for herself (focusing on small tasks), she supports her learners through “breaking down” the learning task for them (occurrences are highlighted¹⁸¹):

[Interview A54: 104] I have **broken it down** into smaller goals, so small wins. So what would you like to do in the next lessons, and then what we do is a 360 feedback after that, and trying to **break it down** into smaller goals I find is quite helpful.

[Interview A54: 105] what I can **break down** is that I say: “Okay my student has a certain goal, and has certain expectations, certain blocks, to learning”, and that we talk about those at the beginning. I always do that with them at the beginning. It’s kind of an orientation phase, and that we then define what our intermediate goals are going to be, the small steps, and that we then, you know, check those

[Interview A54: 171] so it’s up to the teacher to **break it down** so that they can process it and still be relaxed. So it’s breaking down the tasks into bite sizes that are effective, that’s definitely behind any preparation I would do.

She herself gives the key to interpreting the gains that, in her opinion, this strategy can have for her learners. Her strategy seems to comprise many functions: cognitive, because it simplifies the learning process (“bite sizes that are effective”, “so that they can process it”), motivational, because it turns materials into “wins”, and affective, because it allows the learners to relax and to be successful (“effective”). What she does apparently seems to confirm the Atlas’ complex, but when teacher A54 tries to appraise how language teachers influence learning, she shows that she also is aware of their limits and that ultimately the

¹⁸⁰ [Interview P73: 80].

¹⁸¹ For reasons of length, I do not report all the examples of her strategy, only a selection of them.

learning rests on the learners:

[Interview A54: 173-5] so we can simplify their learning process by breaking it down for them, but I don't know if we really influence their way of learning. We show them tools, we show them methods, we show them games, we show them shortcuts. We can point out to them, we can say "Look at you, you're a visual learner, look at the way you're doing, you've got to do something more visual." You can analyze their learning styles and give them a bit of feedback on that, so you can support them in their way. So yes, you can support their learning, but it's always a question of degrees, I don't imagine *[laughs]* that we're really in charge of their learning.

Q.: Why?

Obviously because they have to do it on their own, I can't learn for them. And so the motivation is the most important thing. They have to be motivated and they have to have a couple of methods that they've found to work for them.

The impression is that the teachers in subgroup 1 are trying to do "the splits", i.e. to manage a new teaching role for themselves that straddles the span between irreconcilable positions. Teacher N51 also seems to be aware of the strong influence language teachers can have on learners, but at the same time of the necessity for the teachers to offer instruments (she calls them "strategies") that promote autonomy in their learners:

[Interview N51: 227] Q.: How do teachers influence students' learning?

The learning. In various ways: first and foremost by presenting the language in a way that it facilitates the learning. Then giving them instruments, learning strategies, and so making them more aware of how to go further, even beyond notions, and then giving them a certain self-confidence, that means the capacity to cope with frustration in certain moments, so that they know that they are able to go further, I think¹⁸².

In her words teacher N51 exemplifies how the teachers in subgroup 1 view the competence of learning: as a transversal competence, which involves the learners at 360°, at different levels: cognitive (notions), meta-cognitive (strategies and awareness) and affective (self-confidence). Catering for these aspects in the learners, according to teacher N51 results in the existential competence of *savoir être*¹⁸³, i.e. in the functional ability that complements the competence of *savoir faire* towards the realisation of one's own life projects.

Overall, the teachers in both subgroups seem to be sensitive and tend to relieve the learning load for their students. The teachers in subgroup 1, however, also seem to be aware of the importance of promoting autonomy in the learners, either in letting them arrange authentic

¹⁸² L'apprendimento. In vari modi: prima di tutto presentando la lingua in modo tale da rendere più facile l'apprendimento, poi dando loro strumenti, strategie di apprendimento, quindi anche renderli consapevoli di come fare per avvicinarsi, anche al di là proprio della nozione, e poi dando loro anche una certa fiducia in se stessi, volendo, quindi capacità anche di sopportare frustrazioni, in certi momenti, sapendo però di essere in grado di proseguire, trovo.

¹⁸³ I am quoting here the competences mentioned in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_en.pdf

tasks for themselves (teacher P73) or raising the learners' awareness as a fundamental tenet of learning (teacher A54 and N51). This awareness is not without conflicts and contradictions: the teachers demonstrate that their understanding of the teaching-learning arena very often requires them to find a very delicate balance between opposite roles.

The distinction that became apparent in the attitudes of the teachers towards learners' learning points in general to a gap between the advocacy to promote learners' autonomy and teachers' beliefs about teachers' roles and responsibility. However, the teachers in subgroup 1 were more conscious of the necessity to promote their learners' autonomy, a process that demands the teachers accompany their students on their way towards the complex objective of autonomy and reflects the belief that learners must be active contributors to their own development. They also seem to be willing to achieve a transferal of this awareness in their classrooms, giving their students the opportunity to take on responsibility themselves.

In these terms, there is a relationship between the teachers' attitudes towards learning as proved for the teachers of subgroup 1, regarding their more pronounced tendency to promote autonomy in their learners, and their self-responsibility as learning professionals. This relationship was not manifest in the teachers of subgroup 2.

This section has evidenced one set of differences, regarding the attitudes of the teachers in the two subgroups. In the next section, the divergence of the teachers will be further examined in relation to their awareness of specific aspects of their professional learning.

4.4.2 Awareness of the 'professional self'

In this section the emphasis will be on exploring whether and how the teachers differ with respect to their need for support in professional development, and to their perceptions of that development.

4.4.2.1 Need for support in professional development

When asked whether they think they have needed to be supported over the years in their professional development as language teachers, all of them in both subgroups responded affirmatively. They did not differ in this respect and seemed to recognise that teachers' support is necessary.

The reasons for continual support are diverse, two of them are quoted below, one sounding more obvious than the other. Both, however, were observed across the subgroups. The first more obvious aspect resonates in the teachers' yearning to keep abreast of innovations, as teacher A54 clearly states:

[Interview A54: 236] professionalism for language teachers means for me, yeah, keeping up with changes, in what the clients need, keeping up with changes in society, not just in teaching methodology but also in society.

The second aspect that the teachers mention regarding their need to be supported in their professional development is represented by the tendency to forget, with expressions such as “man vergisst es einfach”. The teachers thus articulate the difficulty of retaining so much information or knowledge:

[Interview I312: 62] when you attend seminars for a while you tend to forget that you have incorporated something new

Interestingly, this problem is not discussed in the literature on teacher development, although it even seems to affect basic things like the timing, i.e. the way the teachers break down and sequence the materials in short segments in order to keep the level of attention and motivation high:

[Interview A54: 107-108] Q.: Do you think teachers need support or training in professional development training over the years?

Yes, I do, I think we need it. And the interesting thing is that we need to review things, I'm sure, because many things we forget. For example that you need to break things down into blocks of five minutes and ten minutes, and you know, ... you forget it! Because you grow comfortable with the learning group, and they feel comfortable with the way things are going, and you get a little lax, yeah? [laughs]

One of her expectations attending the *KommUNikation* workshops was to help herself bringing basics back to mind:

[Interview A54: 71] I'd have to go back and remember the lessons that I learned, ... I might have forgotten some of the very valuable things that I learned. I'd have to get back into it and reactivate them.

Overall, the teachers do not vary with regard to this aspect of professionalism: they want to nurture their professional selves and be protected it against “forgetting”. Attending teachers’ workshops seems to represent one possible way of combatting this tendency, and this result also implicitly attests to the teachers’ attempts to monitor themselves. The need for support that the teachers feel equals the help needed which we commonly refer to as ‘scaffolding’ (Vygotsky 1978) and which is regarded as “notwendige Hilfe zum Weiterkommen” (Klippel & Doff 2009: 182).

In the next section, another aspect of development will be addressed in order to explore whether the teachers vary in their perceptions of it.

4.4.2.2 Perceptions of development in teaching

As far as the teachers’ awareness of their own development is concerned, almost all the teachers seem to perceive changes in their teaching. Almost all of them can see their own

development very clearly.

The clearest change that emerges from their accounts consists primarily in an increase in confidence. Teacher P73 reports being able to deviate from her lesson plan in contrast to the past, both because she can react better to unplanned situations at hand (the faces of the students) and because she has developed more sense of what is appropriate in each situation:

[Interview P73: 155-6] Q.: Is there any development you have noticed in your teaching over the years?
Ja... also z.B. kann ich besser improvisieren. Es ist auch manchmal wichtig, improvisieren zu können. Nicht weil du die Fotokopie vergessen hast, ich meine es in dem Sinn, dass ich ... früher hatte ich meinen Plan für den Unterricht, und jetzt habe ich ein besseres Gefühl, ob etwas nicht geht. ...weil ich die Gesichter von den Leute sehe und denke „ok, heute lassen wir die Grammatik“ Das kann ich viel besser. Früher war ich mehr... weil ich selber nicht so sicher war und dann habe ich mich an das gehalten, was ich gehabt habe. Jetzt kann ich besser ... Improvisation – dieses Wort klingt manchmal nicht so schön, aber man muss auch manchmal improvisieren können, oder verändern, oder sich an die Situation anpassen.

As a result of increased confidence, she is able to anticipate learners' needs or problems or not to panic when she experiences a clash of opinions, for example when learners' have demands that are "inappropriate" in her opinion because they are counterproductive for learning:

[Interview P73: 161-4] Q.: Also, inwiefern hast du dich verändert?
Sehr viel, muss ich sagen... und auch vom Unterrichten her... wenn ich an den Anfang und an jetzt denke, dann ist alles anders.
Q.: Was ist die wichtigste Veränderung deiner Meinung nach?
Veränderung ist diese Flexibilität, ich kann einem Deutschen sagen, wo seine Schwierigkeiten liegen, ..., und auch dieses „sicher sein“, wenn man sagt: „das weiss ich jetzt nicht, sage ich nächstes Mal“, diese Souveränität. Manchmal fragen sie auch nach Regeln und dann sage ich „nein, ich kenne auch keine für über dieses Thema, nein, du brauchst keine Regel“, dass sie auch spüren, dass man sich nicht immer auf alles konzentrieren muss. Aber früher hatte ich schon Panik „Ähm, Gott,... keine Ahnung!“... klar, man sieht auch, was auf die Dauer für die Studenten wichtig ist.

Teacher I312 also clearly perceives changes in terms of more confidence and of its positive consequences for her teaching:

[Interview I312: 114-6] Yes, very much. It has. I have become more confident, and through this confidence I can, I find it easier to recognize where people are, where they stand, and then I can address that. Very much.
[Interview I312: 71] I have found that I have a strength, I can motivate people and support people and this is something I have developed over the years.
[Interview I312: 78] this feeling that you're afraid that someone is going to question what you say and in the beginning I was very afraid that people would say "No, this is different than what I learned in school, what you're saying is wrong" because I'm German, and I learned to deal with this, it did happen that people contradicted me ...

She is also able to detect changes in her teacher role, moving from an authoritative to a cooperative teacher:

[Interview I312: 130-1] Q.: How different from now did you see your teacher's role in the language classroom at the beginning of your career?

It was quite different because I thought I was boss and now I'm much more cooperative.

A similar development towards the promotion of autonomy in the learners is realised by teacher A54:

[Interview A54: 162-5] Q.: Has your way of teaching changed with the time?

Yes

Q.: In which sense?

Yes, uhm, I'm now a specialist in about four different areas and I teach completely differently in each of those areas. I'm a coach in one to one, so I can play a role, I can slip into a role of someone else, and I can also be a coach..., and that's something I couldn't do eight years ago. That takes a lot of training. ... I've become much more task oriented and I let my classes do much more on their own now than I used to. I've become a much more "hands-off" teacher now than I was at the beginning, too hands off as it turns out, because I'm so into learner autonomy that they don't call me anymore, you know? [laughs] But I'm much more into learner autonomy than I was when I first started out, so...

This example shows that being an autonomous teacher, a "hands-off-teacher" as she calls it, is indeed a process, something that must be learned and is an indication of more advanced stages of teacher development. Teacher A54 is also aware of the constant flow of changes required over time:

[Interview A54: 220-226; emphasis added] Also my students are younger than they were, you know, ... They used to be older than me, now I'm, they're younger, so I am adapting, all the time.

EG: Mm mm, OK

So, let's say that it's not a, it's not as cut and dried, you know, they're many little details now I'm also teaching for example Bio-technology courses mm so it's English for special purposes.

Q.: Where?

One of my companies is a bio-tech company. So I need to be on top of things in bio-technology, you know, and that's something I didn't have to be when I started out.

In a similar vein teacher N51 is aware that her teaching has changed considerably:

[Interview N51: 211-3] Yes, very much. I would say yes, I hope, otherwise ... if not, it would be a big trouble! Surely it has changed a lot.

Q.: And how?

Well, the first thing is the one I had most difficulties with at the beginning, it was the ability to evaluate the grade of difficulty of my teaching in relation to the learners, I mean, my lessons tended to be too difficult, to demand too much, now I am more able to graduate difficulties. This was for me a fundamental concern in all these years¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ Dire di sì, spero, perché se no sarebbe un guaio, sicuramente è cambiato molto.

E come?

Beh, il primo è il punto in cui avevo più difficoltà all'inizio: era valutare la difficoltà del mio insegnamento in rapporto ai corsisti insomma, cioè io tendevo sempre a fare una lezione troppo difficile, a richiedere troppo, quindi adesso sono più in grado di, diciamo, graduare le difficoltà. Questo è stato l'aspetto fondamentale per me in tutti questi anni.

[Interview N51: 139-40] Q.: How has your teacher thinking developed over the years?

Well, [*pause to think*] how can I say, clearly I moved from a kind of typical school-teaching towards a more interactive and communicative one¹⁸⁵.

Overall, all the teachers are aware of many changes, mainly of an increase of confidence and of their capacity to feel at ease with the situation, to accomodate and adapt to their learners' needs, except for teacher B282, who does not perceive a clear change in her development.

[Interview B282: 166] Q.: Is there any development you have noticed in your teaching over the years? Has your way of teaching changed over time?

I wouldn't say very much.

This may correspond to her perceptions, however, the impression is that she did develop, she is indeed able to anticipate her students' difficulties, which she could not do before:

[Interview B282: 168] Right now with a text, English translation, English into German, I can usually tell you mostly beforehand which will be the difficult bits for them. What they can confuse them with. Which I wasn't quite so experienced in doing at the beginning. ... And to, of course, have a routine. What comes into it, what makes things more difficult.

Q.: Is it a development in being able to anticipate, to understand the students?

Yes. And to, of course, have a routine.

Later in the interview, in a certain sense she keeps denying any change. Although she does display signs of professional development, nonetheless, she prefers to remain true to herself or to her belief about her teacher role:

[Interview B282: 218-9] Q.: How different from now did you see your teacher's role in the language classroom at the beginning of your career?

No no, I don't think I've changed that. I still think you're the one to supply, to try and make them aware of, to also break down of course what you have to teach into portions and transfer that they can take up...teach at a level that it is useful to them. And also to entertain them in part.

The following table (Table 4.7) sums up the developments that the teachers could identify:

¹⁸⁵ Mah, ... come si può dire, chiaramente sono passata da un insegnamento di tipo scolastico a un tipo più interattivo e comunicativo.

Teachers	Perceived aspects of professional development
Subgroup 1	
A54	Expertise Different teacher role Continuous adaptations
N51	Refining/revising her own teaching Confidence Different teacher role
P73	Confidence, flexibility Poise, self-assurance Different teacher role
Subgroup 2	
B282	No perception of changes
I312	Confidence Different teacher role

Table 4.7: Aspects of development perceived by the teachers

Regarding the factors that the teachers perceived as promoting changes, all the teachers mentioned their experience in the classroom. Two teachers from both subgroups are representatively quoted here:

[Interview P73: 154] Normalerweise sind es Fehler von den Studenten, also, wenn ich sehe, dass sie etwas nicht kapieren, dass sie oder wenn sie sagen „ich lern nicht weiter, ich will aufhören“ dann bin ich sofort „däng, ich muss etwas machen“, also ihre Probleme, nicht meine.

[Interview I312: 133] When I wasn't happy when something, when I noticed that things didn't work.

Teacher N51 can identify other factors, including discussions with colleagues or workshops, which accord well with her extended conception of learning (s. Chapter 4.3.1.2):

[Interview N51: 208] There are various factors: first the discussion, for example with colleagues, the workshops. And some times for example also the needs of some students, I mean, the problems that I encounter and that require a solution¹⁸⁶.

Teacher A54 confirms her position as a “special learner”, showing a multi-faceted awareness of other aspects, such as significant persons, “gurus”:

[Interview A54: 304] Another thing that could promote change in my teaching is if a teacher that I admire or a teacher trainer that I admire says something, because I don't have that rich foundation in teaching philosophies and so on, if somebody tells me something I'm relatively willing to try it out and to believe it for a while, so I might experiment a little bit after a workshop.

¹⁸⁶ Sono diversi i fattori: intanto la discussione, per esempio con le colleghe, i workshops. E certe volte ad esempio anche le esigenze di certi corsisti, non so, per esempio, i problemi che mi vengono posti e che quindi mi richiedono una risoluzione.

[Interview A54: 31] and sometimes a guru, you know, just thinking “Oh, he said that, I’m going to see if that works for me too”.

Her awareness of factors promoting change in her teaching extends further to the one aspect that she values more than anything:

[Interview A54: 80] The most valuable thing for me personally was probably the project that I did, because you always learn most from projects, so doing this peer analysis, what the project was about, in an essay writing course, and I asked the students to evaluate their learning process when they did peer evaluation, and their feedback was very interesting for me and gave me, motivated me to continue on that path.

This quotation confirms what has become a dominant characteristic so far regarding teacher A54, namely her high sense of responsibility and autonomy with respect to her own learning. Doing things herself turns out to be the most effective path for her to grow in her profession, because it corresponds to her own learning needs.

The last aspect that emerged from the teachers’ accounts relates to the limitations they perceived as hindering factors in their professional development.

The teachers in subgroup 1 could not think of any limitation as a hindrance, at least none that was self-inflicted. Teacher A54 was the only one who appeared to be very sensitive to one limitation, “money”, which emphasises the difficult situation language teachers as free-lancers do have to face. She expresses her discomfort with her situation several times:

[Interview A54: 118] Also professional-wise just surviving, the money aspect, because free-lancers are just not, well, you know, how it is, you don’t have the same sort of social benefits that someone who is employed has, and we don’t have the same social benefits as someone who is really self-employed and has his own business.

[Interview A54: 53] Yes, money! *[laughs]* Money is the most important thing. If somebody would give me some money, I would take a sabbatical and really dive in! Money is the biggest constraint, there is also the constraint of – *[reformulating]* as a freelancer you build client relations and you have to keep them up. So you have to be available for them, but we are now in the financial crisis, so my good clients don’t have any money, so they are not calling me, - *[laughs]* - So now it would be perfect, if I had, you know, if I had twenty thousand Euros saved up in some place, a little pot of gold in some place, now it would be the perfect time, to take a year off and just do research, this would be interesting.

[Interview A54: 179] There are different things, first of all we kind of need to have a perspective for ourselves, a life perspective, because we’re kind of at the bottom of the earning scale, you know.

The financial aspect is not the only deterrent in professional development, other aspects of affective nature (families and emotions) point out the dramatic sense of professionalism she has. We could call it a 360° view of ‘teacherness’, a view which takes into account all the many facets that together produce the whole picture:

[Interview A54: 119] Another big challenge for foreign language teachers are the families that are living abroad, taking care of the old parents, and staying in touch with family relations, and building our foreign language community, raising our children in a foreign country, these sorts of things, just living between two cultures is...Because we're whole people [laughs] we're whole people, we're not just a teacher, so this holistic aspect of becoming older as a foreign language teacher is just as important I think as the qualification side. And it might cause people who get older to find other jobs again, you know, to leave the teaching profession.

The teachers in subgroup 2 perceive “time” (as the consequence of an effort) as a concrete limitation on their development:

[Interview I312: 55] I've used film, but Lernstationen I couldn't use because it's too much work, you know and when we teach people we have them for ninety minutes, and that's not really enough time.

[Interview B282: 47] Q.: Are there any limitations, disadvantages obstacles etc. that prevent you from professional development?

Well time, personal situation.

[Interview B282: 118-9] Setting goals for my own teacher development...yes, yes it can [be useful] ... if you've got the time.

Other factors that function as limitations to development relate to personal characteristics of the teachers, such as the reservations of teacher B282¹⁸⁷, or, for teacher I312, the inability to pursue her goal to publish, together with her lack of appropriate strategies to come to terms with it:

[Interview I312: 67] we would like to take this work and make a book. But this is such a daunting task. I don't know how I'm going to go about doing that.

[Interview I312: 78] You can't imagine how afraid I am of publishing because this is something where the material is over there, stacks of papers like this that my students and my trainers did, but I don't really know where to start. And I always have something else to do.

(Interestingly, the teachers do not mention here one factor that seems to hinder them in their development, namely, the tendency to forget relevant information over the time, which they themselves mentioned in the previous section).

The following table (Table 4.8) sums up the factors the teachers perceive as promoting change and as hindrances:

¹⁸⁷[Interview B282: 140] You know some things just look very wonderful and then you think: “Would I have x, y or z...”

Teachers	Factors promoting professional development	Factors hindering professional development
Subgroup 1		
A54	Carrying out personal projects = own learning needs Problems encountered in teaching = experience Experimenting new ideas = own learning needs Gurus = significant others	Financial aspects Familial/intercultural matters
N51	Discussions with colleagues Workshops Learners' needs	none
P73	Problems encountered in teaching = experience Discussions with colleagues	none
Subgroup 2		
B282	Learners	Effort/Time = Reservation-attitude
I312	Problems encountered in teaching = experience	Effort/Time = Lack of coping strategies

Table 4.8: Factors that the teachers perceive as promoting or hindering change.

The two subgroups do not greatly differ in their awareness of professional aspects such as the need for support in their professional development. Although they are similar in this respect, they differ in the perceptions of their own teaching development. Overall, they all seem to have developed self-confidence. Two teachers stood out as two extreme poles, teacher B282 with no perception of development vs. the multilayered perception of development by teacher A54. Further, the teachers vary in their attributions, i.e. in the factors that they perceive as hindrances or limitations to their development.

4.4.3 Motivation

In this section the motivational orientation of the teachers is the subject of analysis. Motivation is important in any learning and can be seen as the energy that provides “direction for behaviour” (Schunk et al. 2010: 4; 176). A differentiation will be established between the teachers' motivation in the learning mode (motivation to attend the workshops) and in the teaching mode (motivation to teach), under the assumption that this aspect may provide indications about the processes at the basis of their goal-directed activity.

4.4.3.1 Motivation to attend workshops

The teachers do not differ considerably in their motivation to attend the workshops. They found similar words to express their reasons for participating, and were quite homogenous. In short, they all seemed to attend workshops for their professional development. Two teachers stand here as representatives of both subgroups:

[Interview N51: 105] For my personal development, because I was not satisfied with the workshops on offer by the publishing houses, which usually are purely practical¹⁸⁸.

[Interview B282: 63] Well yes, for the curriculum vitae... for a lot of good reasons...well for my professional development.

They pursue the same goal with the same motive: professional growth. Except for the qualification expressed by teacher B282¹⁸⁹, all of them think that their expectations were met.

Despite the similarity, the teachers in subgroup 1, elaborate in a slightly different way on their incentives for attending the workshops of the project *KommUNIkation*. They all seem to approach them “strategically” and “proactively”, i.e. with specific questions that make them alert to finding the corresponding answers. Teacher A54, for example, attended them because

[Interview A54: 70] I hoped to get impulses in classroom management, in course planning, in new methodologies. I hoped to get an answer to questions why some of the teaching methods I learned [...], why those weren't really appropriate for teaching with, you know, academic students. I hoped to get a handle on teaching English for Special Purposes, I needed to figure out how to evaluate [...] So, that was something that I was interested in.

[Interview A54: 23] I was teaching large classes between 25 and 30 which is perhaps not so big for the whole university, but for me it was very big and I had to get a handle on how to organize the learning process. Also they were much smarter and quicker than most of my other students at companies who didn't want to learn as much, didn't want to be challenged as much, so, to find a balance between this hunger for learning and a methodology that allowed them to relax and to process their learning in a positive way. That was something that I was looking for. And I did find it at *KommUNIkation*.

The consequence of being aware of their own gaps and of the need for resolutions for the teachers of subgroup 1 becomes clear when they elaborate on the impact of some teachers' workshops on them, represented here by teacher N51:

[Interview N51: 131] Usually the ones [*workshops*] that have major weight are those which fill in those gaps that you begin to feel, as with the videos, to make an example¹⁹⁰.

The teachers seem to set a task for themselves before attending the workshops, which functions like a while-listening activity, keeping them, as learners, actively on task and focused. This has the advantage of preventing them from being flooded with information

¹⁸⁸ Per lo sviluppo personale mio, perché ero insoddisfatta del tipo workshop che offrono le case editrici, per esempio, che generalmente sono puramente pratici.

Che aspettative avevi?

Mi aspettavo qualcosa di diverso sicuramente rispetto ai precedenti.

¹⁸⁹ [Interview B282: 67-9] Q.: Do you think the expectations were met?

Yes, yes. In part. No workshop can ever just meet your own situation.

¹⁹⁰ Di solito quelli che hanno maggior peso sono quelli che vanno a riempire delle lacune che tu incominci a sentire, come quello dei video per esempio.

(which eventually may ‘fade’ with time, expressed in the problem of ‘forgetting’ which the teachers reported previously). This proactive characteristic was absent in the teachers of the second subgroup.

4.4.3.2 Motivation to teach

It is not unrealistic to assume that everything teachers undertake for their professional development aims at improving their teaching. Nonetheless, it is interesting to discover what they perceive as their inner incentives for it. The rationale for asking what repays them in their teaching activity was exactly to uncover what direction their motivation takes, as an energising element of learning.

The analysis of the teachers’ verbalisations on their reasons to teach produced more obvious differences than their reasons to attend workshops. The teachers confirm in general that a positive basic attitude towards human contacts is an important prerequisite for teachers¹⁹¹. Nonetheless, similarly to the split with regard to their goals for professional development, here the two subgroups of teachers also diverge. The prominent aspect about the nature of their motivation is represented by the distinction between intrinsic *versus* extrinsic motivation.

The unexpected result was discovering that all three teachers in the first subgroup associated the rewards of teaching with themselves. In response to the question about what the most rewarding¹⁹² aspect of teaching is for them, two teachers in subgroup 1 considered their own learning most important.

[Interview A54: 186-89] Q.: What is the most rewarding aspect of teaching for you?

The learning, of course. What I learn.

Q.: You learn?

Yes, ... What I learn about other people. The sharing aspect, this is ... I’ve met the most incredible people through my teaching profession, and its just, it’s the learning, it’s that you never stop. ... and that’s, that’s really exciting. So it’s something, it’s a culture. It’s a learning culture, and you’re a part of that ...

Teacher N51 answers in a similar vein:

¹⁹¹ Together with subject knowledge and didactical-pedagogical knowledge, as Klippel & Doff (2009: 209) point out.

¹⁹² Reward is meant here as incentive, and is not related to the concept of “reinforcement” proposed in behavioral theories, which view motivation “as an increased ... level of responding to stimuli brought about by reinforcement (reward)” (Schunk et al. 2010: 4).

[Interview N51: 241] There are some aspects: the first is the creativity, then the human contact and the fact that I not only teach, but also learn¹⁹³.

whereas teacher P73 emphasises that the real reward for her is first and foremost her ‘joy’. She elaborates on it this way:

[Interview P73: 197-8] Q.: What is the most rewarding aspect of teaching for you?
Erst meine eigene Freude, dass ich etwas mache. Ich kann sagen, das bringt mir Freude, [pause to think] ... und ja klar, auch wenn man sieht, dass sie lernen. [...] Wegen Geld ist es nicht [laughs]. Und auch, ich brauche eine Arbeit, wo ich Kontakt mit Leuten habe, ich könnte nicht im Büro arbeiten oder so.

Among the aspects that teacher P73 mentions, the fundamental one is expressed first and refers to herself. Her own “joy” seems to be the fuel for her actions. This remark points further to her sense of accomplishment (“dass ich was mache”), to her strong sense of mission, confirmed also later in the interview¹⁹⁴, which she concludes by stressing her enjoying being a teacher.

Overall, the teachers in subgroup 1 are similar in finding in themselves what rewards them for their teaching. In contrast, the teachers in subgroup 2 relate the most rewarding aspect of teaching to their learners:

[Interview I312: 133] When people get it. When they understand something and they can use it.

Overall, these results seem to suggest that the difference between the two subgroups of teachers is in the direction of their emotional return: in the first subgroup the reward for teaching is distinct from their learners’ learning, a sort of metaphorical ‘backwash effect’ of teaching on the teachers, whereas in the second subgroup its effects fall on their learners. It is this divergence in the motivational orientation of the teachers that seems to correspond to the well known distinction in the literature between intrinsic *versus* extrinsic motivation (Schunk et al. 2010; Deci & Ryan 1993).

Summary

The analysis of individual factors indicated a few similarities and some critical differences. The teachers proved to be similar in their awareness of the need to receive support for their professional development. They were also similar in their perceptions: they all do develop,

¹⁹³ Ci sono alcuni aspetti: uno è la creatività, il contatto umano, e il fatto che io non solo insegno, ma anche imparo.

¹⁹⁴ „Ich genieße es, Lehrer zu sein - und nicht Spanischlehrer - etwas zu vermitteln, das ich weiß, etwas weiterzugeben“ [Interview P73: 202].

confidence being the prominent dimension.

Striking differences reside in their attitudes towards learning: the teachers in the first subgroup tend to assume responsibility for their own development, seem to be in a 'challenging mode' and attempt to foster autonomy in their learners, whereas the teachers of subgroup 2 conversely are less aware of the importance of promoting autonomy in their learners, tend to delegate to others the responsibility of their development, and seem to be in a 'judgemental mode', with the ensuing effort-avoidance behaviour.

Another major difference was evidenced in the enhanced awareness of the teachers in subgroup 1 in overseeing their development. Two opposite tendencies stand out, with teacher A54 (subgroup 1) being very detailed and aware of many aspects of her professional development, whereas teacher B282 (subgroup 2) seemed almost to deny her development.

The teachers differed as well in their perception of the factors that could hinder their professional development. The divergence consisted in subgroup 1 seeing no hindrances *versus* subgroup 2 considering time and effort a problem for their development.

When considering the teachers' motivation, once again similarities and differences could be observed. While their motivation to attend the workshops was of the same nature (their professional development was their motive), their motivation to teach proved to be different: whereas in subgroup 1 it coincided with their own learning goals (their need for professional growth), in subgroup 2 it was attributed to their learners.

After thus having explored the awareness of the 'professional self' and the attitudinal and motivational processes of the teachers, these individual factors will be related in the next section to their learning behaviour (goals and strategies) to complete the outline of their professional profiles.

4.5 Teachers' professional profiles

In this last part of the study, all the results will first be summarized to indicate the relationships that became apparent in the analysis of the data between the teachers' goals, their ways of realising them (i.e. learning behaviour) and various critical individual factors. Different profiles will then be proposed to schematise patterns and relationships.

The data suggest two professional profiles with the following characteristics which centre around the 'professional self', as an expression of the agency of the teachers, their behaviour, interpreted as the way they arrange their learning environment, and their attitudinal orientation. They were named the 'Learners' and the 'Developers' (cf. Figure 4.4) because they surprisingly correspond to Vygotsky's (1978: 83-91) distinction between learning and

development (cf. Chapter 1.2). At the basis of this seminal distinction there is the process of internalisation that requires great effort on the part of the learners. This best characterises the teachers' differences in this study.

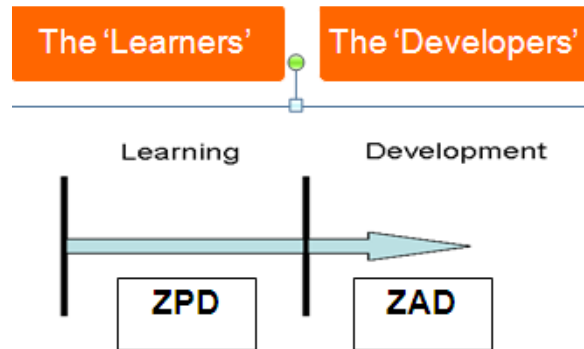


Figure 4.4: Two professional profiles: 'Learners' and 'Developers', based on Vygotsky's (1978: 90) distinction "Learning and development"

1. The developers

The teachers with a “developer”-profile display a high capacity of ‘professional self’ - revision.

Awareness of the ‘professional self’ – The teachers have a highly developed awareness of for their own learning concerns. They have individual long-term, and demanding, professional goals that require them to go beyond routines. One critical result is that the activities they engage in and their efforts are in line with their goals. They maintain a focused attention on their goals and on the various tasks to pursue them, are attentive to their positive emotional well-being as teachers and to their cognitive needs. As a result of their awareness of their need for continuous professional learning, they adopt and develop appropriate strategies that lead them to their goals. As a consequence, they enter a cycle of change¹⁹⁵ (“little change and refocusing”, as teacher A54 expresses it), which ultimately rewards them for their efforts. Finally, through the strategies chosen, they seem to avoid a loss of job satisfaction and thus ultimately protect and achieve their affective goals (‘being happy as a teacher’ or ‘growing old as a teacher’). By overseeing their professional development, the teachers take charge of their own learning procedures. The ‘professional self’ of these teachers is consequently well developed.

Learning environment – These teachers arrange a rich learning environment for themselves.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. to this regard also Pennington 1995.

This is manifest in the variety of activities they engage in and in the wide range of strategies they use to help themselves. They are in a ‘challenging and collaborative mode’ and exhibit an overall balance of cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective dimensions, which are the dimensions that characterise learners’ active behaviour, according to Lemos (1999: 479). As a result, their practice becomes a site for inquiry, as advocated by many researchers (Darling-Hammond 1999; Cochran-Smith & Demers 2010, Wilson & Berne 1999, to quote only a few).

Attitudes and motivation – Attitudes have been considered to be strong predictors of motivation (Oxford 1990: 141) and have been even emphasised as “without a doubt the single most important factor in a learner’s success” (Savignon 2002: 12). The results in this study attest to the role that the attitudes of these teachers play and demonstrated that attitudes have a conative function, directing efforts and indicating what is to be done. The analysis of individual factors suggests that the attitudes of these teachers towards their own professional development were in accordance with their goals: they commit to their goals, face the difficulties and show self-responsibility towards their own learning. Their motivation to teach resulted in a backwash effect, as energy that was self-directed and coincided with their goals of professional growth. Applying to them what Corno (1993: 15) vividly says for learners, these teachers are the ones who really cross the “metaphorical Rubicon”.

2. The learners

The teachers with this profile continue to learn, however in a non-systematic way.

Awareness of the ‘professional self’– They are less attentive to all the relevant dimensions involved in their own professional learning. Their ‘professional self’ was indeed active as a radar, being aware of needs, fears and limitations, but, at the time of the interview, they seemed to be unable to change their situation¹⁹⁶. These teachers do not display a wide range of strategies and do not seem to have the right tools (strategies) at their disposal. Contrary to the ‘developer’-colleagues, they lack the strategies appropriate for them to realise their goals. Overall, they do not seem to be completely in charge of their own learning. Their ‘professional self’ could be more intensively developed.

¹⁹⁶ It is important to note that I assume that teachers do evolve with time. The results resemble snapshots and as such indicate what their situation was at the moment of the interview. They do not give any indication about how the teachers developed afterwards.

Learning environment – The teachers with this professional profile articulate their need of a “safe” learning environment. Although they have long-term professional goals, they nevertheless appreciate routines and are rather in a ‘maintenance’¹⁹⁷ and judgmental mode’. Their personal contribution to their own development is limited, their learning environment is consequently more secure, but less challenging than for the previous subgroup, and requires less effort on their behalf. They seem to rely on less demanding strategies that are not effective in the attempt to reduce the complexity of the teacher development task.

Attitudes and motivation – The attitudes of these teachers towards their own professional development did not accord with their lifelong learning goals: this group displayed a delegating behaviour towards their own learning, expecting either external support or “tailored support” – in the form of supervisors, handouts or instructions (‘recipes’, cf. Chapter 4.2.1.1) – for their specific teaching needs and situations. These teachers reproduced “traditional” learners’ behaviours, which describe teachers as the managers of learning, who make all the necessary decisions, and learners as relying on the teachers as experts. This may undermine the extent to which learning is self-directed. Indeed, when relevant learning decisions are delegated externally, the risk is that the responsibility of the learners is severely restricted¹⁹⁸ (Holec 1981: 4). In this regard, it may be worth noting what Weinert et al. (1989 quoted in Bokaerts 1999: 450) state about learners’ overreliance on external support as a form of external regulation which compensate for low meta-cognitive awareness. Ultimately, these results seem to confirm that beliefs are always at work, because these teachers have “internalise[d] the idea that learning means ‘being taught’” (Holec 1987: 153). If we apply Holec’s conclusion about language learners to this group of teachers, then they are not bad learners, but rather they “have limited chances of developing *without being taught*, which is a learning handicap” (*ibid.* 154).

In the following list of characteristics, the + sign stands for critical elements that are present and the – sign stands for elements that are lacking:

¹⁹⁷ I am adapting Schunk et al.’s (2010: 181-2) term of “maintenance” style.

¹⁹⁸ In addition, Holec (1987: 152) considers self-direction with cooperation as a limited form of self-direction, which however does not exclude that it may trigger changes in the learners.

Sub-group 1	Sub-group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + aware of professional goals + effective procedures for realising their goals + monitoring - self-evaluation competence + attention to emotional-professional well-being + learning attitude: self-responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + awareness of professional goals - effective procedures for realising their goals + monitoring - self-evaluation competence - attention to emotional-professional well-being - learning attitude: self-responsible

Overall, the first subgroup of teachers (A54, N51 and P73) seems to be aware and to cater for their own professional learning in a targeted way. They reveal that professionalism needs attention and awareness at all levels (goals, planning, realising, and monitoring) and includes a consciousness of one's own emotional well-being as teachers and individuals. Their goals (specifically for teachers A54 and P73) and their considerable use of social-affective strategies indicate that they are very much aware of the affective and social dimension of professional development. In this subgroup a compatibility is evident among all the aspects under analysis: the goals match the expenditure of efforts (activities and strategies) and the learning attitudes. For these teachers the cycle of professional development goes beyond reaching the professional goal, as it extends to the affective sphere. The strategies and the attitudes of teachers in subgroup 1 indicate that the competence in developing as a language instructor is a transversal one that involves the profiles of these teachers in all their dimensions.

This overall compatibility is lacking in the teachers of subgroup 2. They are indeed aware of their professional development goals, but much less of effective procedures (organisational strategies) for realising them. They do seem to monitor, as teacher B282 does, who is aware of “not having got as far as I would like to get”, and as teacher I312 does, who is aware of her fear of publishing, as she herself points out. However, they lack the necessary strategies to improve the situation (teacher I312: “but I don't really know where to start”). In their attitudinal orientation towards learning, they also differ with the tendency to assume responsibility for one's own development exhibited in the teachers of subgroup 1, and instead delegate to others the responsibility for their development. The result among the teachers of subgroup 2 is effort-avoidance behaviour in facing all the challenges involved in the task of professional development as a lifelong learning task. For them there is no evidence of the crucial integration of affective, motivational and volitional aspects discussed in the review with respect to the acquisition of competence (cf. Chapter 2). Overall, this second subgroup indicates that the teachers do not have a holistic approach to their own professional learning,

and cannot cater for all cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective dimensions that are relevant for professional growth, as the colleagues of the first subgroup demonstrate. These results are summarised in the following Figure 4.5, which maintains the cardinal elements of autonomy [Goals, Activities (=defining what), Strategies (=defining how) and Monitoring&Evaluation]¹⁹⁹ and shows the different outcomes²⁰⁰:

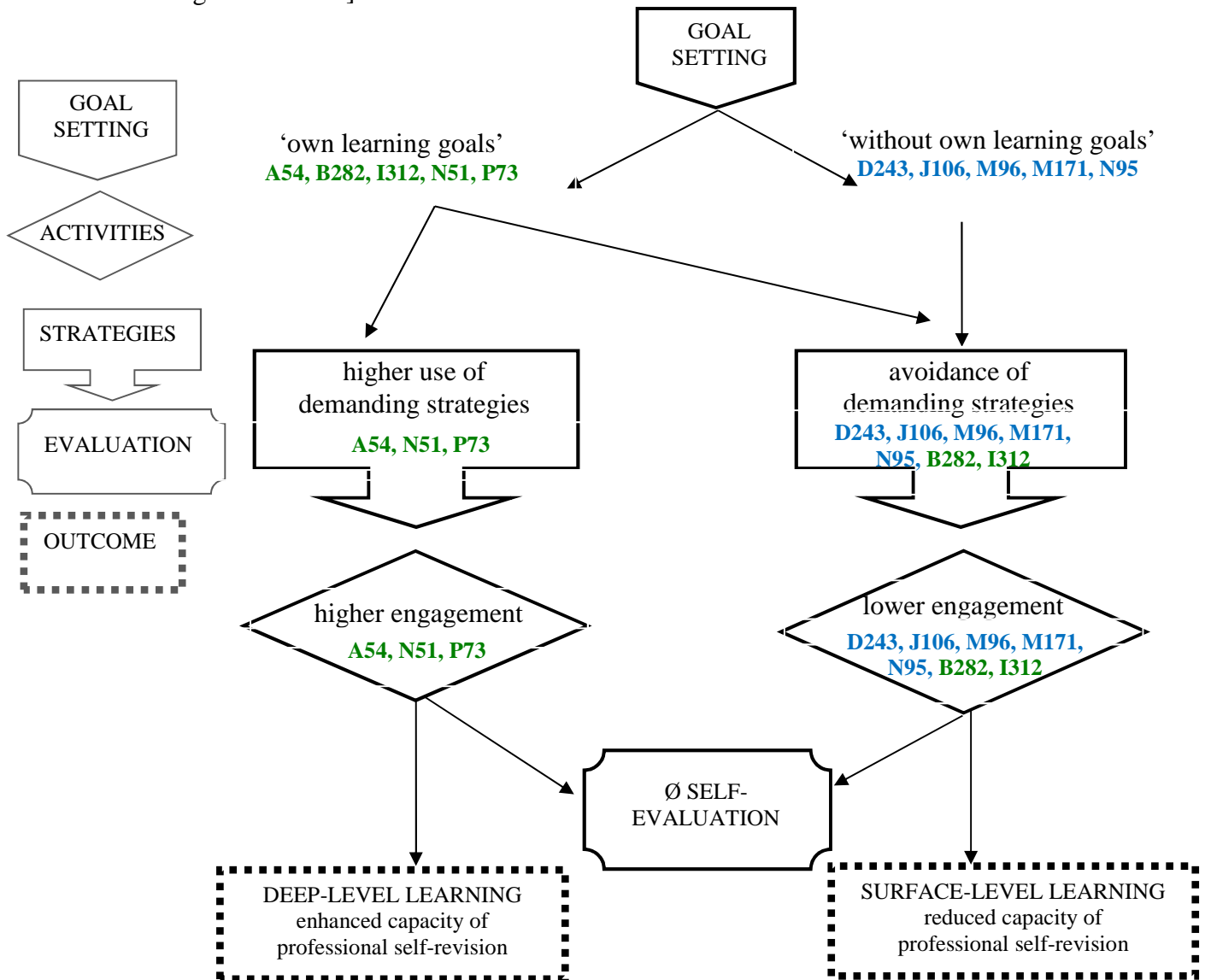


Figure 4.5 - The relationships between goals, use of strategies, engagement in activities and outcomes as retrieved from the data.

As these results show, the answer to the overarching research question “How do teachers approach their own professional development?” is that they differ in critical ways in their approaches. Firstly, being aware of their ‘learning role’, with their own professional goals, being distinct from their learners, proved to be an insufficient pre-requisite for subsequent

¹⁹⁹ The symbols used to represent the elements of “autonomous learning” are shown on the left. The teachers of group 1 appear in green. Their distribution shows the split proved for this group.

²⁰⁰ As based on teachers’ self-reports.

consistent behaviour. Secondly, the professional profiles indicate that some teachers, like the ones in the first subgroup, adopted a concerted approach, with a correspondence between teachers's goals, teachers' attitudes towards their own professional development and the strategies they developed.

4.6 Reflecting the research approach

The chosen explorative approach for investigating teachers' procedures in their development process turned out to be an adequate decision. A main concern on the part of the researcher has been to find out how teachers approach their professional development and whether some relevant aspect could be identified as an essential component in the competences of the teachers. Because direct observation of professional development competence is impossible and there are no direct data available on teachers' strategies and decisions, using qualitative interviews as a method and asking the teachers for their personal accounts was one way to generate this kind of data (Mason 2002: 66). It was exactly their views and personal understanding that the researcher wished to explore. A substantiation of teachers' thinking through classroom observations would not have had a validating function, since watching people teaching inevitably involves personal interpretation of the events observed and would by no means be objective (Hahn 2012: personal communication). Teaching appears to be an observable phenomenon, however, it would be misleading to assume that all underlying processes could be observable, too (cf. Richards 1998: 141). Furthermore, the qualitative approach proved to be a precise instrument: not only the attitudes, but more significantly, the 'systems of relevance' (Schutz 1970: 321) of the teachers emerged during the interviews. Overall, the methods used (questionnaire and interviews) were appropriate for this study,

Regarding the *pre-post* questionnaires distributed after the workshops, questions can be raised about the causal logic of "teaching = learning" and about the limits of learning conditions: as studies on developmental stages in language learning teach us, time is an important factor in learning and not all learning is immediately evident.

As concerns the follow-up interviews, the questions that required some retrospection again suggest caution, since this procedure implies "interpretation of the past through the lens of the present" (Mason 2002: 31). The same is true for the questions about the teachers' awareness of their development process, as not all cognitive operations are available for conscious inspection and depend also on their verbalisation.

Listening to the teachers, and asking them about their reasons behind their accounts

constituted an enriching procedure. The interviews are in this respect a legitimate way to proceed for a researcher and produce ways of generating data that provide access to what the teachers mean. As Mason (2002: 63) stresses, this method strongly depends on the people's capacity to conceptualize, to interact, and to verbalise. She warns therefore against simplicistically seeing interviews as "a direct reflection of understandings 'already existing' outside of the interview interaction".

In the conviction that knowledge is contextual, the researcher made every attempt to ensure that the interview itself was interactional and directed to social experiences through concrete questions that focused on the relevant contexts so that situated knowledge could be produced (Mason 2002: 64). Moreover the core features of interviewing (cf. Mason 2002: 62) were considered: maintaining a relatively informal style and assuring an interactional and flexible exchange that would allow unexpected themes to develop, since meanings are created in an interaction which is a co-production of researcher and interviewees. Because interviews are always social interactions, it is inappropriate to see social interaction as a 'bias' (*ibid.* 65) and it is better to try to understand the complexities of the interaction and to develop a sense of how context and situation function, than to pretend that key dimensions can be controlled.

The open-ended nature of the questions in the questionnaire surely made the process of data analysis more complex than a standardised questionnaire would have done, however, it proved useful and yielded more information. The benefit of having greater expression and richness in open-ended questions may be countered by the unwillingness of the respondents to write, by different degrees of disposition and by different attitudes. Some questions turned out to be complex and their wording was possibly confusing for the participants. Some questions, like questions number 11 or 17 (respectively: Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen? War genügend Theorie da, um das eigene Lehrerwissen zu systematisieren?) could have been perceived as suggestive questioning, assuming that the teachers had experienced some sort of gains from the workshops or that theoretical issues had a function in teacher development. Although the researcher did expect the teachers to answer in a free and responsible way and despite the fact that the participants were not a situation characterised by a direct relationship of authority, the design of these questions may reflect a conceptualisation of learning and of theory that can not be assumed.

Significantly, also regarding the interviews, the most useful questions were those which required some thinking on the part of the teachers, such as the ones about their goals or the difficulties they perceived, to cite only a few.

The tentative operationalisation of the hypothesised competence from the perspective of “autonomy” proved to be appropriate in that it helped to reveal some aspects that had received little attention thus far. However, more aspects are in need of investigation, such as: Are there any clearly definable stages of professional development? Is it possible to identify which strategies are typically associated with which stage? What other relevant components constitute the Professional Development Competence of language teachers? Moreover, as an indirect measure or instrument of unobservable processes the procedure needs refinement in future research.

4.6.1 Limitations of the study

The overall generalisation of the results of this study is limited for different reasons.

The sample – Overall, given the limited number of teachers participating in the interviews (=10), it is difficult to make claims about the generalisations of the results of this study. In addition, the extent to which we can make wider claims is limited because all the participants were teachers who voluntarily attended the teacher development programme *KommUNikation*. This is therefore a sample of teachers who can be assumed to have a high level of motivation and to be open to new ideas, and can not be generalised.

The instruments – As an indirect measure of inner processes, the interviews can inevitably only be approximate. Furthermore, the validity of verbalisations is also a relevant issue. The entire procedure is based on the verbalisations of the teachers, in the open-ended questions of the questionnaires as well as in the interviews. Berliner (1986 quoted in Pope 1993: 28) warns about the reliance on articulate people as misleading and compares them with the case of his mother who “whilst being [...] able to voice her thoughts about planning to cook and [...] decisions while cooking, was nevertheless a terrible cook”. Appel (2000: 285) also warns against verbalisations “als Abbild handlungssteuender Kognitionen“. He provided evidence of some discrepancies between what teachers say and what they really do. Nevertheless, verbalisations can be windows to beliefs, values, or knowledge. On the other hand, observing the teachers during classroom instruction would be partial and insufficient as an indicator of their learning processes.

Overall, some of the strategies identified in this study might sound more general, and are applicable to other teachers as well. With different research instruments more specific strategies could possibly emerge and could produce other factors that may be more specific to L2 teachers or yield other strategies not mentioned by teachers in this study. More research is thus needed to investigate specific language teacher professional development strategies.

The language – Despite all attempts to conduct the interviews in a smooth way, the language by which the interviews had to be conducted did pose a problem. The use of a lingua franca was not always a self-evident matter. The difficulty of which language to choose with the teachers so that they could express their views about complex abstract matters, such as one's own professional development cannot be underestimated. Although the teachers all live and work in Germany and are proficient in German, German remains a foreign language for the participants, including the researcher. Using English as a Lingua Franca posed the same problem. The participants only shared foreign languages for the purpose of communication. What the teachers expressed was highly interpretative and therefore contingent upon personal meanings and cultural understandings on the one hand, and additionally on their proficiency in the L2 (German or English) on the other. This might have affected the interpretation²⁰¹ of single concepts, such as goals. However, in these cases the teachers asked the researcher what she meant by the word and the words were then clarified. This reduced the doubt that they might have not understood the meaning of concepts or questions. Besides, one could maintain that even in their own first language individuals may interpret words differently. Indeed, in one case the teacher and the researcher shared their first language, but the teacher still asked for clarification about some questions, for example about what was meant by "goals". Speaking the same L1 in itself does not eliminate for researchers the problem of different individual interpretations of concepts and the fundamental problem of interpersonal communication, which is even increased when using a foreign language.

In two cases it was difficult to carry out the interviews in a language which was not the mother tongue for both researcher and the interviewees. The resort to English as a Lingua Franca was not unproblematic: Teacher B282, although proficient in English, gave an overall impression of struggling with English as the medium of communication. For teacher N95, it was difficult to understand the questions in English and they were then formulated in German. She also answered in German.

The participants – A note of caution is indispensable. It is important to point out that people, and thus their individual characteristics, vary over time, so the description presented here is intended as a snapshot of a professional position which very likely may no longer prevail. It may depend on the lives or professional phases the teachers are going through, among other

²⁰¹ Certainly, cultural differences in the way the teachers may have interpreted questions and concepts cannot be excluded for the present research project. Besides, culture influences the use of strategies as well, as Oxford (2011: 71) remind us. However, although cultural differences are an interesting issue that can be further researched, this is not the focus of the present study.

factors. If we recall Woods's (1996: 257) warning that teachers are in a constant state of flux, we can also say that: "The teachers in the study no longer exist". Furthermore, the participants helped to reconstruct the processes involved in professional development and the underlying symbolic meanings the teachers attributed to it, which are unavoidably partial and related to their subjective situations. For these reasons, investigations of other groups of teachers operating in different contexts are required to complete the perspective of this study. Further research is needed to substantiate these results and their consistency with other follow-up studies, in order to make a relatively strong case for the adoption of the proposed perspective on teacher professional development.

5 Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis discussed above, this chapter attempts to answer the research questions by summarising the major issues that characterise the forms of personal contributions when the teachers approach the task of their own development and their impact on the development process. By addressing major results that emerged in the data analysis, the chapter examines the theoretical and practical implications of the study and indicates the possible areas still in need of further investigation.

Structure of the chapter:

- 5.1 Summing up
- 5.2 Implications for teacher education
- 5.3 Suggestions for further research

5.1 Summing up

The most relevant findings will be reviewed in this section, emphasising how decisive the teachers' personal contribution to their professional development is due to the dimensions that became prominent during the analysis. Among the significant features that became apparent in the discussion of the results, the following were selected: professional awareness, teachers' goals, culture of learning and cooperation, the context and 'Professional Development Competence'.

Professional awareness – The study suggests that the reflective work of becoming aware of the many aspects of the “professional self” (Bauer 2000) is a process influenced by attitudes, beliefs, and strategic behaviour. With development, all the teachers may become more aware of themselves as learning professionals. They nonetheless vary in the scope of their awareness. For the majority of them an increase in self-confidence was evidenced. What distinguished the ‘developers’ from the ‘learners’ was their enhanced awareness of many other dimensions related to their learning, such as their goals, their attitudes towards their own professional development and their meta-cognition (their use of meta-cognitive strategies and their development of meta-cognitive knowledge). To fully understand what this accomplishment entails, what Maslow (1970: 99) asserts in this regard should be noted: “to be able to recognize one’s own needs, to know what one really wants, is a considerable psychological achievement”. As a side-effect, the development of self-awareness may also produce a need for positive regard, manifest in the search for acceptance, as teacher A54

clearly indicates with her need to have a peer group with whom to share good teaching. Some other aspects were highlighted as critical differences among the teachers, such as the value that they placed on theory²⁰². Only three of the teachers could appreciate in full the contribution of theoretical impulses to their development. This resonates with other research findings, which attest to the limited effect of theory. Singh & Shifflette (1996: 155) report, for example, that only one teacher out of fourteen found reading educational journals to be valuable. Borg (2010: 421) came to a similar conclusion with respect to teachers' engagement with theory (not to mention teachers' engagement *in* theory²⁰³). He found that despite its undeniable potential for teachers' growth, research engagement still remains restricted to a minority of teachers in the field of language teaching.

Teachers' goals

Goals are assumed to play a prominent role in learning (Bokaerts 1999; Lemos 1999). The relevance of goals and goal setting as a key motivational process (Schunk et al. 2010: 174) was confirmed in this study for the teachers in subgroup 1, who were the only participants to consistently display goal-directed behaviour. However, Corno's (1993: 15) claim that once the learners "move from planning and goal-setting to the implementation of plans, they cross a metaphorical Rubicon", protecting and committing to their intentions, did not always hold true. As the teachers in subgroup 2 suggest, being aware of their own development goals did not help influence the way they pursued them. These teachers were not able to sustain their learning intentions effectively. Also Lipowsky's (2010) assumptions that goals influence perceptions of relevance in the teachers was therefore only partially confirmed by the teachers in subgroup 1 and proved to be insufficient for the second subgroup.

With respect to the orientation of their goals, the teachers differed along the "maintenance-change" dimension (Schunk et al. 2010: 182). A "change style" seems to apply for the first subgroup of teachers, who actively sought challenges and welcomed new learning opportunities. Conversely, a 'maintenance style' characterises the teachers in the second subgroup, who retained their general goals and, although not satisfied with their achievement, were not able to improve upon it: ultimately, they appeared to accept the situation.

Whereas half of the teachers in the present study could see their professional development goals as distinct from their students' learning, for the other half, **the goals of the learners**

²⁰² The consequences of these results will be addressed in the Chapter 5.3 "Suggestions for further research".

²⁰³ Borg explains that the former refers to teachers who read and use research, as opposed to engagement "in" theory, which refers to teachers doing it.

became their goals; they seemed to identify themselves with them. On one hand, this result confirms what has been reported in the literature, that “good teachers” (as I take the participants in this study to be) care about their learners. The goal of learners’ learning is self-evident: it corresponds to the intuitive expectation that teachers want the learning of their students to be successful. Teachers’ interest in their learners is documented in the literature; Day (1999: 14) refers to the “connectedness of teachers and learners”. According to Guskey (1986: 6), “[f]or the vast majority of teachers, becoming a better teacher means enhancing the learning outcomes of their students”. He points out that the reason why teachers “take on extra work and other personal costs of attempting change is the belief that they will become better teachers and *their students will benefit*” (*ibid.* 6, quoting McLaughlin & Marsh 1978; italics in the original). Quoting Harootunian & Yargar (1980) Guskey claims, in addition, that “most teachers define their success in terms of their pupils’ behaviors and activities, rather than in terms of themselves or other criteria” (*ibid.* 6). In this study this was confirmed only for half of the teachers. This conclusion also indicates that the concept of “learner-centredness”, which is evident in textbooks and has recurred frequently during the last decades – has reached the teachers.

On the other hand, however, the teachers’ “learner-centredness” in the present study could also be considered initially as “overinterpretation” on the side of the teachers: being learner-centred would then mean relinquishing the teachers’ personal role. Overall, this also suggests that in these cases the goals are dictated by their “customers” rather than by themselves. In the context of the study, this in turn is related to the ‘livelihood’ concern of the freelance teachers. Further, making the learners’ goals their own could also be interpreted as a lack of awareness of their own learning needs. This does not necessarily mean that the teachers’ own professional development aims are not important (or that they do not set goals for themselves), it is possible that these teachers are not aware that this aspect is part of the teaching development process.

We can entertain another feasible explanation for the lack of goal perception in some of the teachers: what could apply to these teachers is what Woods (1996: 20) argues for language learners: namely, that they delegate to a second party the management of their own professional learning, thereby displaying a ‘traditional’ learning behaviour, and expecting teachers’ trainers to assume the responsibility for teachers’ learning.

Lastly, the link between setting goals and their realisation is not self-evident. One analytical result of this study suggested that even an awareness of their own professional aims, in contrast to those of their learners, provided neither a sufficient sense of developmental direction, nor an individually internalised guideline for future professional improvement.

Although personal goals are considered a manifest indicator of autonomy (Huttunen 1999: 97), this was not supported in this study. The teachers in subgroup 2 did set professional objectives, this alone, however, was no guarantee of pursuing them.

Culture of learning and cooperation

The ways the teachers chose to realise their goals were interpreted as the ways they arranged for themselves in their own “zone of proximal development”. It is in this area that critical differences were identified with respect to the teachers’ personal contribution and control over their learning. Some teachers did not seem to cross over the threshold of less-demanding tasks (Hartig & Klieme 2006 quoted in Jung 2010: 203). Furthermore, some strategies did play a key role. Very high demanding cognitive strategies such as C6 FRAMING, or meta-cognitive strategies like M6 EXECUTION STRATEGY are examples of strategies that turned out to be decisive in sustaining the development process, the former by adding complexity through theoretical issues relevant in language teaching and learning, the latter by reducing complexity through breaking down the tasks at hand into manageable steps. Social-affective strategies proved to be decisive as well, in that they allowed the teachers to protect an important but neglected dimension of professional development, the affective area. This result resonates with DiPardo & Potter’s (2003: 324) appeal to avoid considering teaching as merely cognitive and ignoring the emotional involvement of the teachers. The social-affective strategies used by the teachers in subgroup 1 indicate how much emotional work is involved in professional development and how important it is to have a holistic approach to development. At the same time, these strategies point to “emotionality as an untapped vein in the work of teachers” (DiPardo & Potter 2003: 339): the majority of the teachers displayed a low use of these strategies and did not seem to be aware of the impact of this dimension on professional learning.

These strategies also emphasise the **need** for professional development to go beyond the individual boundaries, extending to collaborative learning efforts with colleagues, and that this is indispensable for their professional growth. This result supports the findings by Singh & Shifflette (1996: 157), who concluded that “peers” and “awareness” are two major factors that contribute to teacher professional development. It also reflects the critical features that according to Wilson & Berne (1999: 183) distinguished advanced stages of development, namely, seeing the need for social learning and considering the practice as a site of inquiry. Autonomy, in the context of professional development, does not mean “going it alone” (Campbell 2009: 22), but refers to the ability to design one’s own learning environment in ways that support continuous professional development. However, the majority of the

teachers in this study seem to go their ways alone. Only the teachers in subgroup 1 chose the “collaborative” mode, looking for social connections that sustained them in their professional development task. The significance of collaborative learning is therefore another major result of the present study. In line with Singh & Shifflette (1996: 157), this study demonstrates that all teachers enjoy sharing ideas with one another or seeing colleagues in practice. Nevertheless, collaborative learning proved to be an effective way to learn and an appropriate strategy for tackling the daunting task of professional development only when it was exploited purposely, as in the case of the teachers in subgroup 1. Otherwise, spontaneous forms of contact with other colleagues did not appear to support that forms of collective participation which Garet et al. (2001: 922) claim are necessary for teachers’ professional growth. To be sure, more opportunity to discuss and share ideas and needs may help contribute to a shared professional culture and to developing common understandings of goals, methods and forms of participation, which in turn could increase teachers’ capacities to develop themselves as educators. These forms would help ensure that teacher professional competence becomes “individually situated” (Day 1999: 57).

What is still missing, as Loewenberg & Cohen (1999: 25) lament, are pedagogical forms of professional development, that would make the complex challenges of teachers’ learning more perceptible. This pedagogical support is also advocated in this study as a necessary path for future research to take and the pursuit of effective professional development.

Two kinds of attitudes towards professional learning emerged from the analysis. Although sharing the common wish to keep abreast of the professional debate, the teachers in subgroup 2 ultimately relied primarily on their teaching experiences and less on the incorporation of new theories or new methods, while the first subgroup displayed an unprejudiced stance towards innovation. These teachers do not corroborate Wilson & Berne’s (1999: 198-9) assertion that teachers do not expect to change when attending professional development programmes. Whereas the teachers in subgroup 1 also seemed to be looking for challenges and reported experimenting and trying out new approaches in their teaching, during the interviews they never mentioned the effort involved. For the second subgroup, the effort required to introduce innovations was a foreground concern. This recalls Bokaert’s (1999: 453) claim regarding naïve models about effort allocation. She warns that some learners “interpret effort as a sign of task difficulty”. The pessimistic expectations may then hinder skill acquisition and self-confidence. Moreover, effort is closely related to motivation. As Schunk et al. (2010: 17-8) point out, despite the disagreement in the literature about the nature of motivation, there is agreement about effort as one indicator of motivation. Accordingly, learners who choose to engage in a task and expend effort are more likely to achieve higher

levels of competence. This seems to be supported in this study for the teachers of subgroup 1. The teachers with a 'developer'-profile indicate that they need to reflect on a wide range of things for their professional development: they obviously need to reflect on their teaching and their learners, but also on themselves as learners, on their learning process, constantly monitoring it in order "not to forget", and, more significantly, on their own well-being – which is not self-evident for the other teachers, while constantly adjusting their goals to the rapidly changing social and educational demands. These reflective skills proved that "learning to learn" is a quite complex process for the teachers of this study.

One surprising result concerns the teachers' beliefs: some core beliefs did emerge, associated to the use of L2 or the role of the teacher in the language classroom. However, in regard to the participants in this study they were not a hindrance to innovation as long as a) the teachers were aware of them, and b) their learning attitudes motivated them to challenge their own beliefs, leading them to engage in a variety of activities that introduced them into a broader professional discourse and allowed for openness to new experiences. Beliefs, on the other hand, had an impact on the remaining teachers, creating an internalised teacher role, (cf. teacher B282, whose beliefs influenced the way she perceives her development and led her to almost deny it) and influencing the expectation of who should supervise learning (cf. teacher I312 and B282, who both expect help from the outside, from experts, handouts or "recipes"). In these cases, beliefs were indeed an impediment. Similarly to Appel's (2000: 278) findings, innovation then appears to be ultimately welcome only when it does not cost much investment in time and effort. Smith's (1996: 208) conclusions that theoretical ideas are adopted when they correlate with teachers' beliefs, as well as Tillema's (1994: 613) claim that "the greater the difference between training content and teacher beliefs, the less learning took place" were not confirmed for the teachers of subgroup 1, who on the contrary, were looking for challenging perspectives.

Overall, the learning behaviour of the 'developers' appeared to be the result of a negotiation not only with oneself, but also with one's own needs and goals, but it was also extended to include colleagues and epistemological demands (lifelong expectations on the part of society), whereas the negotiation process of the teachers with a 'learner'-profile took place only with oneself alone. This internal negotiation accords with Lantolf & Thorne's (2006) remark about the crucial process of internalisation at the core of learning:

[I]nternalization is a negotiated process that reorganizes the relationship of the individual to her or his social environment and generally carries it into future performance (2006: 203 referring to Winegar 1997)

From this perspective, professional development took either the shape of a solo performance (emblematic of this attitude is teacher D243, who mentions the loneliness of teachers several times) or of a participation in an orchestra²⁰⁴ (as the need for a support and a study group expressed by the teachers of subgroup 1 suggests).

More importantly, the ‘developers’ indicate that their learning process is not haphazard. Forethought, planning and monitoring are what make their learning a process, and not just a collection of exercises (Holec 1987: 147). This crucial feature distinguishes these teachers from all the others²⁰⁵.

The context – This research project confirms that a great deal of teachers’ development occurs on a private basis and “through private experience” (Tickle 1994: 198). If this is the case for the freelance teachers operating in the context of '**autonomous professional development**', then this study offers a fragmented picture of professional development. As the *KommUNikation* workshops were an institutional initiative, the significance of the context was indirectly supported in this study, whereas the claim that workshops are inadequate as a form of activity meant to foster professional development (cf. Chapter 2.5; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999; Brumfit 1995: 32) was not confirmed. The project *KommUNikation* instead proved to be a good opportunity for professional development. The teachers in the present study appreciated them enormously and reported many gains, ranging from concrete approaches (such as learning methods and new ideas for teaching) to more abstract benefits, such as becoming more and more aware of themselves as professional learners. At the very least, the teachers managed to reinforce their self-confidence. In contrast to what is maintained in the literature (cf. Hargreaves 1995: 13), the teachers in this study did not reject one-shot workshops, and were grateful for the professional development activities on offer at the local level. This should suggest the necessity of caution when simplifying condemnations of the format of professional development activities. It is rather the local context that seems to be a determinant. For the teachers in this research project (mainly ‘housewife teachers’, to quote A54, who with all their family obligations are still striving to acquire and develop professional competence), in a context in which professional development activities are hardly available, the workshops definitely represented a “convenient store”, that provided a meaningful learning opportunity for them.

²⁰⁴ I am adapting a term used by Oxford (2011: 18).

²⁰⁵ Forethought and a targeted use of strategies have been proposed as determining differences also in Zimmerman & Kitsantas (2005: 518).

Nevertheless, there is still much to be done if a context is to provide the teachers with the support they need. In terms of recognition, incentives, reward, better pay, or attributing more value to the teachers' job, for example, the context in this study lacks a coordinated support. The culture of teacher professional development should be a shared endeavour, but the analysis of the teachers' goals seems to point to a discontinuity between the system (institutions) and the individual teachers. The latter do not see a connection between their perspectives and official rewards or professional career chances. The former does not place any demands on the teachers. They coexist in parallel, with a minimum of profit on the part of each. Enhancing this connection would actually result in a better system. The results of this study certainly suggest a possible path for future research.

In terms of expectations, i.e. what institutions demand from the teachers, the context for the teachers in the study is perceivable in a very loose form – as recommendations, suggestions or just workshop offerings – or not perceivable at all. In only one case, was it obviously mandatory: teacher A54 was the only one who was expected to attend teacher conferences, such as IATEFL, by the publishing house she works for.

I agree with Diaz-Maggioli (2004: 11) who argues for the importance of context support: “the influence of school cultures cannot be overstated, they can either hinder or improve teaching”. Pointing out the negative reactions of the teachers to innovative implementations, such as those demanding “teaching for communication”, Savignon (2002: 5; 17) also argues for the need to support teachers. Balboni (2001) convincingly considers any form of teacher support as vital for the development of the teachers as the teaching courses themselves. The fact that not all the teachers perceive the need to exploit the resources available does not imply that these resources should not be there.

However, although the context is an important component in teacher professional development, in this study it does not seem to be the critical element. In fact, if the recommendations are virtually addressed to everyone, why do some of the teachers respond to the call while others do not? The support on the part of the institutions for which the teachers work is only one important element in the „zone of proximal development“, but the teachers' personal contribution to their development task turned out to be central. Overall, what the present study shows is that even if the institutional contribution can be missing, the responsibility for one's own professional development should nevertheless still exist.

Professional Development Competence

In the attempt to make the professional learning process more discernible, the study suggests that the teachers' personal contribution to the professional development task is crucial. The

results confirm that professional development is a complex, effortful and sensitive endeavour on the part of the teachers, whose personal investment constitutes an important factor in the multifaceted picture of language learning.

The claim that teacher professional development is a competence in its own right seems to be confirmed as well. The teachers with the “developer”-profile suggest that teachers face a very complex and demanding task and that the process of improving as a teacher requires a multidimensional approach. It requires them to be well-equipped with very specific strategies and appropriate attitudes. The study results also substantiate what Pennington (1995: 705) claims about teacher professional development: “Because it means challenging, ultimately deconstructing, and then reconstructing ingrained practice and long-held beliefs [...], lasting change in teaching practice is not easy to accomplish”.

This study clearly indicates the need for a change towards a more comprehensive conception of teacher professional competence, that explicitly addresses the learning process of the teachers (cf. Chapter 2.2.2; Stern & Streissler (2007: 3). It also shows that developing the ability to perceive oneself as a learning professional involves an individual process which may depend on individual characteristics and may be enhanced by educational programmes and formal training, if the necessary learning attitudes of the teachers exist.

Adopting the perspective of “teachers as autonomous learners” proved to be useful in many ways. Initially, it showed that, as regards learners’ development, in the case of teachers there is an apparent rationale underlying the approaches and the strategies they choose. Secondly, it proved helpful in understanding that the new teacher’s role advocated in the research on autonomy²⁰⁶ does not automatically follow the new learner’s role established in learner-centred approaches. Although this is not contested here, this study demonstrates that, in many cases, teachers may encounter enormous difficulties (for example when engaging with theoretical issues). The new teacher’s role addressed by Wenden (1998) can not be generally assumed; it needs to be nurtured and supported. Thirdly, adopting this specific perspective confirmed two elements, claimed by Freeman (1989) to be essential in accounting for teacher development, namely, dynamism and awareness. In this study they surfaced in the teachers’ responsibility for their own professional development, in their attitudes towards it and in their awareness of individual professional learning needs.

Lastly and most significantly, adopting the perspective of teachers as learners showed how complex the development of the teachers can be. The teachers face many challenges, at the

²⁰⁶ Wenden (1998: 22) states that the new role implies teachers “who are able, motivated and informed”.

personal level (financial, intercultural, and time issues, as well as family situations can be hindrances), at the institutional level (in the restricted support they usually receive on the part of the institutions they work for) and at the professional level (in organising and developing appropriate plans and strategies). Professional growth entails a great deal of hard work on oneself, often as the result of tacit assumptions in the many demands and expectations placed on teachers and expressed in the literature on teacher development.

5.2 Implications for Teacher Education

This section discusses the implications of the results from a theoretical and a practical point of view. Firstly, some consequences are addressed in the attempt to further our understanding of how teachers learn and develop. Secondly, in the hope that this study contributes to bridging the gap between research and practice, some suggestions will be provided to help improve the forms of personal contributions and the support teachers need for their professional development.

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

Professional Development Competence is in essence the competence to negotiate with oneself and the environment what is to be done for one's own professional growth. The study indicates that teachers' development programmes do contribute to teacher development, and at the same time the results seem to indicate that when Professional Development Competence is set in motion, it is associated with higher levels of professional awareness and a greater use of strategies. Two aspects – the necessity of supporting development initiatives and the enhancement of professional awareness – will be addressed in the following.

The necessity of supporting the teachers

One first consideration has to be made with regard to the deceptive dichotomy between autonomous development and support for teachers. The fact that the teachers in this study react to initiatives of teacher development in different ways, should not lead us to conclude that the initiatives are not useful. When drawing a parallel to language learning, it can be claimed for teachers what Little (1997: 229) has pointed out for learners: “children get their verb endings right when they are developmentally ready to do so, not when parents decide they should”. In agreeing with Little then, the implication is that “developmental learning requires not only the constant stimulus of interaction with others, but also guidance and supervision” (*ibid.* 229) – in this sense teachers' autonomy does not mean isolation (cf. also Campbell et al. 2009: 22). Although teachers as learners may follow individual paths in the

course development, this does not exclude the necessity to support them. On the contrary, Vygotsky (1978) shows that assistance is an essential component in the concept of the „zone of proximal development“. In order to be able to develop without assistance, the learners need the interaction with others: Vygotsky’s „zone of proximal development“ implies that development is bound to either more capable peers or experts (*ibid.* 86). As Moon (1999: 97) does, we can argue that no one can be forced to reflect, but it is possible to create conditions that can induce reflection. Similarly, Johnson (2009: 93) accentuates the interrelationship of the teachers and the context, which means that “L2 teacher education programs have an obligation to inform L2 teachers of and provide them with the tools to actively and continually scrutinize the macro-structures²⁰⁷ that are ever present in the contexts in which they [...] work”.

The support provided to language teachers can take many forms. Sustaining teachers in their engagement with theory seems to be a relevant issue. As teacher P73 noted, being introduced to all those pedagogical theories at the beginning of her career was too much; they would make more sense now that she has more experience. Her remarks point to the problem in teacher education referred to as “front loading” (Freeman 1994 quoted in Freeman 2002: 11), which consists of equipping the teachers “in advance, at the start of their careers, for all they will need to know and be able to do throughout their teaching lives”. Although teacher P73’s words may indicate that the early provision of theoretical knowledge may not be appropriate, nonetheless she and the other teachers in subgroup 1, with their statements about theory, confirm that teachers’ engagement with scientific concepts has had an impact on them and was crucial because it can lead to the development of “what is already ripening” (Johnson 2009: 23).

Moreover, the study underlines the social aspects of professional development. Teachers as learners seem to prefer having an interactive learning environment. The sharing and the exchange with colleagues is a beneficial feature, and development policies should make use of the opportunity to invest in teachers and to create forms of teacher support that promote the collaboration among them. Day (1999: 174) emphasises the relevance of teachers’ professional networks as powerful sites of teacher learning. Sustaining the teachers on the institutional level with different forms of activities would validate professional development and the teachers could choose the form that best suits their learning style. Whether they prefer to delegate responsibility to supervisors or whether they prefer individual research or

²⁰⁷ These macro-structures refer to the ensemble of policies and practices related to language learning and teaching (Johnson 2009: 93-4).

collaborative initiatives, would not matter – the variety of activities on offer would make a difference. Moreover, from one external suggestion a teacher may develop a flow experience or an intrinsic motivation to engage in new practical experimentations. Finally, recalling the considerations of the teachers in this study about their underpaid financial situations, it is clear that other forms of support from the context, in terms of recognition and incentives, would be extremely welcome and would enhance their sense of the profession.

The evaluation of teachers' competences surely constitutes a central concern for educational policies in order to meet the new epistemological demands of lifelong learning. Recalling what Freeman (1989: 42) claimed, when arguing that the impact of teacher development on the teachers may be internal and not directly accessible, one implication would then be that an evaluation of competence is best if internal. Similarly, Reynolds & Salters (1995: 353) pose the problem of external assessment when they emphasise that competence can not be measured through observation of behaviour or checklists to tick off. This again suggests that self-assessing is a more adequate form of evaluation in teacher development.

In this sense, some forms of support are possible, to avoid that what is not evaluated remains completely inaccessible to teachers. Current educational efforts in language teachers' professional development promote more holistic forms of assessment of teachers' competence, such as self-evaluation in teachers' portfolios. However, the teachers in this study have shown that self-assessment was their major weakness. Even for teacher A54, who displayed a high degree of professional awareness, her doubt about whether she possessed the necessary competence to self-evaluate should lead us to find ways of promoting this complex competence.

Teachers' Portfolios

A portfolio represents one possible tool useful in sustaining teachers' developmental enterprise²⁰⁸. Questioning ourselves about how we – as teachers – know what we know, or why we do what we do, would in fact provide the basis for one of the major appeals in the debate about teacher education – namely, that professional inquiry become an integral method in professional thinking (Cochran-Smith & Demers 2010; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen 1999).

In light of current belt-tightening educational policies, the portfolio is one form of teacher support with many positive characteristics. The most significant will be highlighted here:

- It supports self-awareness, facilitating a reflective stance and responsibility for learning

²⁰⁸In addition to initiatives at the institutional level (such as teachers' workshops, teachers' programmes etc.)

(Kohonen 2001: 15-6). As such, it is a way of promoting the negotiation with oneself and the culture of teaching while still maintaining a private character.

- It links important dimensions of professional development, such as reflection, self-responsibility, awareness and appraisal of one's own development process
- It makes the development process more tangible – it explicitates processes, strategies and attitudes that are involved in the development process, making them more accessible to the teachers.

Sensitising the teachers to their personal contribution and making professional development competence more preceivable to them may represent a significant chance for teachers to become more aware of their “professional self” as a ‘work in progress’. This would support them in viewing their profession as one which requires a culture of responsibility as well as a developmental attitude, abandoning the “thinking that you are a teacher and full stop”-attitude (to quote teacher A54). In short: raising awareness of the ‘professional self’ should become the focus of attention for the teachers.

5.2.2 Practical implications for teachers’ portfolios

Because autonomous learning can not be imposed, we can only contribute to creating the conditions that support it, sustaining teachers in their self-evaluation, which ended up being one of the weakest area of professional development in this study, and promoting awareness for the relevance of their personal contribution to their own development. Portfolios represent in this respect a powerful instrument for teachers’ self-evaluation.

The choice was made here to acknowledge existing reflective work dedicated to the improvement of language teacher education, and one official document was selected: the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL, 2007). As stated in its introduction, the Portfolio is a document which aims at encouraging students engaged in initial teacher education not only to **reflect on** their didactic knowledge and the skills necessary to teach languages, but also to help them to **assess** their own didactic competences. The main part of the portfolio consists of a self-assessment section, containing ‘can-do’ descriptors “of competences related to language teaching which [...] may be regarded as a set of core competences which language teachers should strive to attain” (EPOSTL 2007: 5). The descriptors are intended to enable the teachers to **monitor their progress** and to facilitate reflection and **self-assessment** (*ibid.* 5).

Two considerations are made here: first, the competences highlighted above in bold refer to those metacognitive competences, which in the present study were associated with the teachers of subgroup 1 and can not be assumed as default in all teachers. Secondly, a careful

examination of the descriptors discloses that the descriptors rely on the core assumptions of autonomous learning, strategy awareness, and awareness of life-long learning, which again can not be taken for granted. The implication advanced here is that the training of these competences on which all these demands rely is absent in the portfolios: they should thus figure under teachers' competences and no longer remain tacit.

New descriptors could be developed that revolve around the relevant concepts which emerged in this study:

- Self-awareness: Mapping oneself, one's own goals, aspirations and beliefs; mapping one's own knowledge in relation to the field and the context
- Self-actualisation: exploiting internal and external resources; developing effective strategies to approach the task of professional development; developing a sense of the consequences regarding one's own development
- Self-evaluation: developing criteria for monitoring and evaluating one's own progress

If completed with additional descriptors as the ones suggested above, the existing portfolio may enhance professional self-awareness, addressing all those specific aspects involved in the competence of professional development, and turning them into possible targets of change and with the possibility of teachers being able to act upon themselves.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

This study has been a first step in an attempt to further our understanding of the "unstudied problem" (Freeman 1996: 374) of how teachers contribute to their own development. It provided the groundwork for the many 'hidden' aspects and assumptions that relate to teacher learning. Some questions, however, still remain open. In the following, it is suggested that further research is needed to substantiate the approach of this study.

The present study has drawn attention to the complexity of the process of teacher professional development. It has indicated crucial aspects involved in the task of developing as a language teacher and has proposed that a competence in its own right is also involved in the task of professional development. The investigation was a departure point from which the possible elements of this competence could then be determined. Further investigation is needed to explore other aspects which did not emerge in this study and to discover more about the acquisition of this core professional competence. Additional research is also needed to deepen our knowledge about the specific strategies that seem to determine teachers' development processes in order to promote teachers' awareness of them.

In this study the results of the reactions of some of the teachers to theory should not be

ignored as argument to dismiss theoretical concerns: even if only a minority of the teachers succeeds in being able to appreciate theory, this would indicate instead the necessity of finding viable forms of mediating theory in ways that make it more accessible. Similarly, Borg (2010: 416) addresses the need for research to be “translated” for teachers. If we want teachers to incorporate theory and research in their learning process, then one of the challenges in the field of teacher education is surely that of making them more accessible to begin with²⁰⁹.

Although the main thrust of this study accentuates the personal contribution of teachers to professional development, nevertheless, the support of the institutions is also relevant to avoid leaving the teachers alone in their enterprise. To conclude with what the authors of the TALIS’ report implicitly propose:

“Teachers matter” seems to be the number one truism in educational discourse. Yet, surprisingly, when it comes to explaining how teachers matter, the evidence-based picture is far less clear. (OECD 2010: 20)

In this study, taking the perspective of teachers as professional learners demonstrated one of the many ways of looking at teacher professional competence. Other perspectives are still needed in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of teacher professional development. If teachers do matter, then we are called upon to create the means for making innovation and professional development in education happen.

²⁰⁹ To draw a parallel to language learning, similar attempts have been made to impact on grammar instruction, such as input processing oriented approaches, cf. VanPatten 1996.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pre-Post Questionnaires used in the workshops

Questionnaire

Vorname – Name: _____ Welche Fremdsprache(n) unterrichten Sie?

Muttersprache: _____

Ausbildung: _____ Welche Art von Kursen?

Ihre Fremdsprachenkenntnisse _____

(bitte auch Niveau angeben): _____ Ihr Department / Institut:

Seit wann unterrichten Sie? _____

Haben Sie schon an an Lehrerfortbildungen teilgenommen? *ja – nein*

Worüber? (bitte Stichworte auflisten)

Vor dem Workshop

1. Was weiß ich schon über das heutige Thema?

.....

.....

2. Warum ist das Thema für mich wichtig?

.....

3. Welche Erkenntnisse wünsche ich mir zu gewinnen?

.....

4. Woran werde ich erkennen, dass ich etwas gelernt habe?

.....

5. Wie groß ist meine Bereitschaft, die Anregungen vom Workshop in meiner
Unterrichtspraxis umzusetzen?

.....

6. Womit könnte ich heute Schwierigkeiten haben?

.....

7. Was war gut an der Weise, wie ich Fremdsprachen gelernt habe?

.....

8. Was war weniger gut?

.....

9. Einer der wichtigsten Sachen im Sprachen lernen ist ...

.....

Nach dem Workshop

10. Weiß ich jetzt deutlich mehr über das heutige Thema?
.....
11. Welche Erkenntnisse habe ich gewonnen?
.....
12. Woran erkenne ich, dass ich etwas gelernt habe?
.....
13. Was war für mich heute in diesem Workshop besonders wichtig?
.....
14. Wie groß ist jetzt meine Bereitschaft, die Anregungen vom Workshop in meiner
Unterrichtspraxis umzusetzen?
.....
15. Habe ich heute die mir vorher gedachten Schwierigkeiten gehabt? Oder andere?
Wie habe ich versucht, sie zu bewältigen?
.....
16. War der Inhalt praxisnahe? Kann ich ihn in meiner Lehrtätigkeit gebrauchen?
.....
17. War genügend Theorie da, um das eigene Lehrerwissen zu systematisieren?
.....
18. Woran werde ich sicher/höchst wahrscheinlich weiter arbeiten?
.....
19. Was werde ich sehr wahrscheinlich nicht umsetzen können? Woran liegt es?
.....
20. Andere Kommentare:

Appendix 2 – Final guidelines for the Interview questions

(5 sections)

General, warm-up

Language taught
kind of courses and students
hours per week
current position
years of teaching

Teacher Training

specific training in teaching a foreign language before teaching
other training/ seminars since *KommUNIkation*
kind of support for professional development available
acknowledgment by the institutions
learning gains from teacher training in general

***KommUNIkation*-workshops**

reasons to attend them
expectations attending them
learning gains and beneficial features from *KommUNIkation*-programme
using the content in practice

Teacher Development

currently doing ...
goals for professional development (different from the beginning ones?)
what helps most for development
what is easier / difficult
learning preference (practical or theoretical training, usw)

Teaching

factors that promote change in your teaching
any development noticed in teaching
biggest challenge today for or demands on language teachers
the sources of your ideas about teaching
teaching materials or textbooks
comfortable teaching method or philosophy
most rewarding aspect of teaching

Appendix 3 – Versions of the interview structure

Semi-structured guideline for the pilot interviews

Pilot 1

General questions, warm up
Any benefit from Teacher Training (TT)
most important elements in TT
how should in-service training be structured to be useful
any divergence experienced in a training situation
limits of in-service training
identifying change in teaching
source of teaching ideas
role of teacher, impact on students/learning
rewarding aspect

Pilot 2

General questions, warm up	
teacher training	example of training for language teachers that you found particularly interesting
	kind of support for professional development available now
	wished structure, theory or content/topics
	any divergence experienced in a training situation
	impact of TT on teaching
teaching	identifying any change in teaching /thinking
	characteristic element in their teaching
	source of teaching ideas
	role of teacher, impact on students/learning
	rewarding aspect

Appendix 4 – Declaration of consent; Information form; Consent form

Declaration of consent - Einverständniserklärung Dissertationsprojekt von Elena Gallo *Language Teachers' Development*

If you would like to participate in the interview, please complete and sign below:

Wenn Sie an dem Interview teilnehmen möchten, bitte die Punkte ankreuzen und unten unterschreiben:

**Please check box
Bitte ankreuzen**

1.	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above research study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and had these answered satisfactorily. <i>Ich bestätige, dass ich die Informationen bezüglich des Projektes auf dem beigefügten Blatt gelesen habe und Gelegenheit hatte, mich mit ihnen auseinanderzusetzen und Fragen zu stellen, und dass diese zufriedenstellend beantwortet wurden.</i>	
2.	I understand that my participation in the research study is voluntary, that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. <i>Meine Teilnahme ist freiwillig, ich kann jederzeit davon zurücktreten, ohne einen Grund anzugeben.</i>	
3.	I understand that the researcher will hold all data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study. <i>Alle persönlichen Daten auf dem Fragebogen und in dem Interview werden anonymisiert und vertraulich behandelt. Es werden alle Anstrengungen unternommen, um die Anonymität der Teilnehmer zu gewährleisten</i>	
4.	I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. <i>Mein Interview wird aufgenommen und transkribiert.</i>	
5.	I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in written manuscripts resulting from the research, including the dissertation and any subsequent academic papers. <i>Ich gebe meine Zustimmung, im Rahmen der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in schriftlicher Form ohne Nennung meines Namens zitiert zu werden, insbesondere in der Dissertation und in eventuell daraus folgenden akademischen Arbeiten.</i>	

I agree to the recording of the interview and understand and that my data will be used only for academic purposes and in anonymous form.

Hiermit bestätige ich, dass ich mit der digitalen Aufnahme meines Interviews einverstanden bin und verstehe, dass meine Daten ausschließlich für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet und in jedem Falle anonymisiert werden.

München, date:

München, den

Respondent
Befragte

Researcher
ForscherIn

Signature
Unterschrift

The following consent form has been adapted from the Research Ethics Information Guide, available at http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/education/SOE_Ethics.pdf

Information form

Liebe Kollegin,

im Rahmen einer Forschung über "Professionelle Entwicklung von FremdsprachenlehrerInnen" möchte ich Ihnen einige Fragen stellen, die mir helfen, dieses Thema zu analysieren und daraus Verbesserungen für die Lehreraus- und -weiterbildung zu entwickeln.

Ich danke Ihnen deswegen, wenn Sie an diesem Projekt teilnehmen. Ihre Meinung und die Erkenntnisse, die Sie in ihrer professionellen Entwicklung gewonnen haben, sind sehr wertvoll.

Ihre Daten werden vertraulich behandelt, nur und ausschließlich zu dem oben genannten Zweck verwendet und bleiben in der LMU München bzw. bei mir aufbewahrt.

Vielen Dank für Ihren Beitrag und Ihre Unterstützung,

Elena Gallo

Title of the study: Language Teaching Professional Development.

What is the aim of the study?

I am interested in the competences required by language teachers to approach their professional development. My aim in this research study is to explore language teachers' understandings of themselves as professionals, their perceived development needs and the role of professional development activities, such as *KommUNikation*, the one in which you participated.

Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you choose to take part, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

What would I like you to do and why am I asking you?

I would like to interview you individually at a mutually convenient time (of approximately one hour). The individual interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. I am contacting the teachers, who participated to the *KommUNikations*-workshops because they can provide invaluable insights for this research.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be uploaded to my personal computer at my home, to which no-one else has access. A transcript will be printed and used for analysis, which will also be carried out at my home. When the study will be done, all documents relating to the research will be stored in a locked cabinet.

How is confidentiality maintained?

I would like to assure you that all data will be treated confidentially at all times. No one will have access to the data. Where data is directly quoted in the dissertation or in any subsequent publications that use the data gathered in these interviews, names will be changed to ensure anonymity at all times.

How will the data be used?

The primary use of the data is for my dissertation. The results of the research might be subsequently used by me for contributions to conferences or academic journals.

Contact for further information

If you would like to discuss the project further, ask any questions or clarify any points concerning my research, please email me at elena.gallo@lmu.de; Sprachenzentrum der LMU, Schellingstr. 3, VG, 80799 Munich. Tel. 089 2180-6051.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Language Teaching Professional Development.

Name of Researcher: Elena Gallo

- I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way.
- I understand that the researchers will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study and I give permission for the researchers to hold relevant personal data.
- I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Subject Signature _____

Date _____

Name of Person Taking

Consent Signature _____

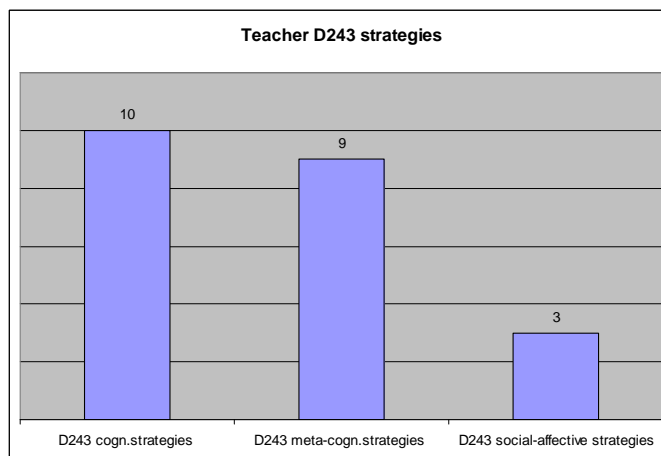
Date _____

Name of Researcher Signature _____

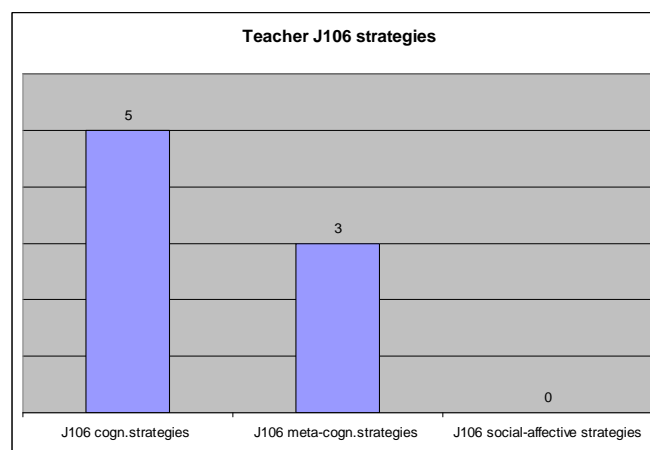
Date _____

One copy for the subject; one copy for the researcher.

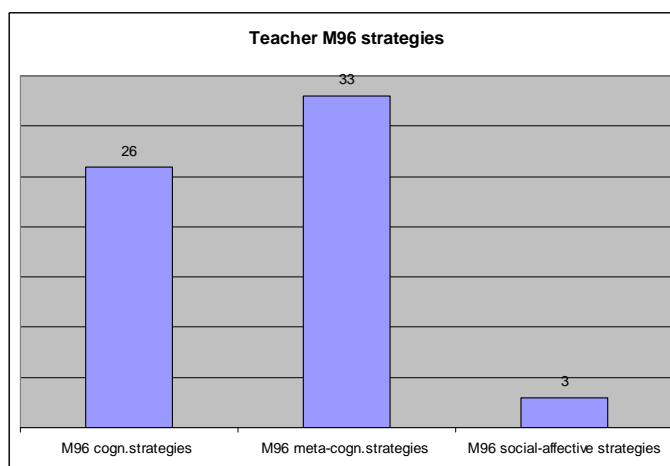
Appendix 5 – Strategies used by the teachers of group 2



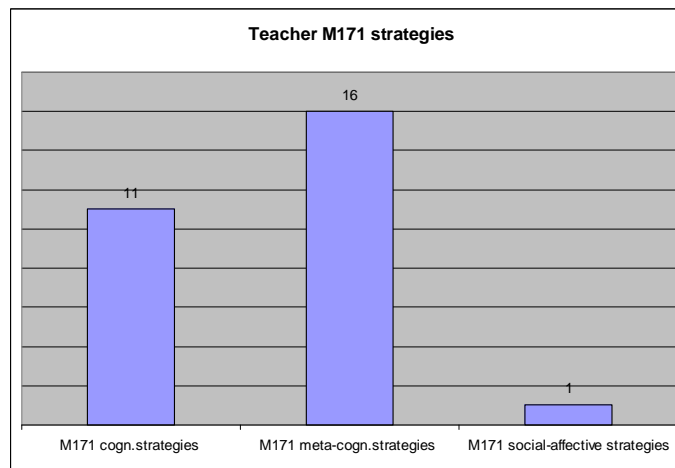
Strategies of teacher D243



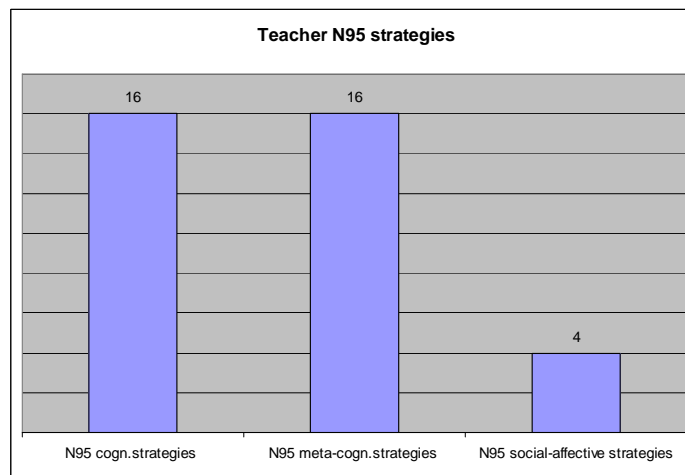
Strategies of teacher J106



Strategies of teacher M96



Strategies of teacher M171



Strategies of teacher N95