Abstract

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning approach aims to develop a scientific approach to teaching, inviting higher education teachers to adopt a systematic way of examining their practice. It is known that international research determinants encompass both scientific and non-scientific factors such as language, history or economy. An original format for the professional development of teacher trainers is presented through international networked meetings across three countries. The purpose of this study is to document how the network of international academics is being organised to support the development of its participants. Preliminary findings show that carefully planned out activities support the development of skills and also address professional identity issues. Engagement, reflection and collaboration are key to success in this endeavour.

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Professional development of teacher trainers:
Setting the stage for international networked meetings

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Titre : Un réseau international pour le développement professionnel des enseignants: premiers jalons.

Résumé : Le Scholarship of Teaching and Learning vise à développer une approche scientifique de l’enseignement, notamment par l’ adoption de méthodes d’investigation systématiques des pratiques enseignantes. On sait par ailleurs que les déterminants de la coopération scientifique englobent des facteurs extra scientifiques tels que, par exemple, la langue, l'histoire ou l'économie. Un format original pour soutenir le développement professionnel des formateurs d'enseignants dans le cadre d'un projet international est mis en place. Il s’agit d’un réseau d’acteurs de la formation des
enseignants de trois pays, en vue de soutenir le développement professionnel de chacun d’eux. Les résultats préliminaires montrent qu’un développement de compétences et une réflexion sur l’identité professionnelle ont bien lieu. L'engagement, la réflexion et la collaboration sont clés pour la réussite de ce projet.

Mots clés : Développement professionnel des enseignants; Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; Réseau; Communauté internationale d'enseignants-chercheurs universitaires.

Summary: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning approach aims to develop a scientific approach to teaching, inviting higher education teachers to adopt a systematic way of examining their practice. It is known that international research determinants encompass both scientific and non-scientific factors such as language, history or economy. An original format for the professional development of teacher trainers is presented through international networked meetings across three countries. The purpose of this study is to document how the network of international academics is being organised to support the development of its participants. Preliminary findings show that carefully planned out activities support the development of skills and also address professional identity issues. Engagement, reflection and collaboration are key to success in this endeavour.

Keywords: Teacher professional development; Scholarship of teaching and learning; Networked meetings; International community of academics.

1. Introduction: Situating teaching and professional development

Within the framework of teacher evaluation, Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein (1985) describe teaching at once as a labour, a craft, a profession and an art. The labour aspect is related to implementing an instructional programme as designed by policy makers – e.g. respecting content, performance objectives and evaluation standards. The craft aspect involves utilising a repertoire of techniques and knowing the background rules of these techniques – for instance how and when to use self-directed learning. Regarding the conception of teaching as a profession, the authors mention the importance of mastering a body of theoretical knowledge alongside these techniques – all sorts of knowledge associated with different learning philosophies and domains, such as cognitive load theory. Finally, intuition and creativity are necessary to adapt and adopt techniques and this aspect falls under the conception of teaching as an art (Wise et al., 1985, pp. 65-66).

The higher education teaching profession is in constant flux and nowadays embraces the idea of scholarship of teaching and learning that emerged in the 1990s with Boyer (1990). Helping teachers to approach teaching from a scholarly perspective is part of the socio-historical responsibility of professional development (Williams, 2008).

Boud and Hager (2012, p. 27) advocate for defining 21st century professional development by situating it in the practices of professionals, a perspective that seems to echo the variation of teaching put forward by Wise et al. (1985). Boud and Hager (2012, p. 22) view practice in the continuity of theory as “a way of conceptualising any human activity”. A practice is situated – historically, socially, economically, politically, etc. – and is in constant flux. When the practice evolves, the
practitioner also has to evolve, adapt and learn. Thus, for instance, when reforms are decided at the political level, teachers are trained to absorb and implement changes and this occurs at the labour level. Depending on the pace of change and on many external factors, it can lead to tensions in terms of competence development (Bachmann, 2018; Coulet, 2011) and in terms of professional identity (Beckers, 2007; Dubar, 2000). Professional development tries to address both issues through formal training but also suggests informal learning situations. Professional development is organised based on institutional initiatives but also depends on personal initiatives (Avalos, 2011). It is, for instance, common today to participate in communities of practice, be it in forms of workplace learning, by accessing expert knowledge from peers or through self-directed learning (Evers, Kreijns, & Van der Heijden, 2016).

Within this study, we are presenting an alternative approach, which is partly institutional and partly relies on personal engagement. The original format of international cooperation among scholars alternates face-to-face meetings with periods of long-distance work. A group of about 25 academics, involved in teacher training and originating from Albania, Kosovo and Switzerland, are brought together in five face-to-face networked meetings that take place twice a year in spring and autumn. In between these face-to-face encounters, the Mahara e-portfolio platform supports informal interactions. While the face-to-face component is carefully planned with meaningful activities, like class visits, the online component is more flexible and participants are asked to dedicate about three full days of work on two activities. The first involves working on one’s teaching methods with a peer from the same country, and the second is international and consists of researching a topic of interest within a group of three members from different countries. The tangible outcome of the project takes the form of a joint publication that reports on the group studies and reflections conducted throughout the three years.

The purpose of this case study is to record how the group of international academics is organising itself to support the professional development of each of its individual participants. We present preliminary findings from the first eight months of the project.

2. International community of academics

2.1. International aspects

International research and its determinants encompass broader purposes than strict scientific ones: they include factors related to language, geography, geopolitics, economy, culture, politics or the military domain (Gaillard & Bouabid, 2017, p. 15) and happen at various levels. At the individual researcher level, indicators address co-publications of authors from different countries and the geographical spread of collaborating countries, and drivers are related to accessing – data, research fields, technology, market, funding, know-how, and infrastructure; sharing – costs and risks, competences, and finding solutions to complex issues; influencing – regulations and standards; and improving impact and visibility of one’s research (Edler & Flanagan, 2009, pp. 7-8). At the institutional level, accessing and utilising excellent and complementary knowledge, securing funding, reputation and visibility of the organisation predominate (Edler & Flanagan, 2009, p. 18). At the policy level, drivers to stimulate internationalisation strategies relate to the expected scientific benefits in terms of excellence, innovation, contribution and access (p. 24). Policy makers support mobility to encourage brain meeting and circulation (Edler & Flanagan, 2009, p. 23) because
mobility has been shown to affect the individual researcher, the research performing organisations that are directly concerned by the researcher’s mobility and the national research systems of all of the countries involved. Trainer and researcher mobility can thus be considered a development and a cooperation tool that enhances new research issues and methods (Gaillard & Gaillard, 2017, p. 211). This is particularly true in terms of knowledge acquisition, transversal skills, intercultural skills, autonomy, or self-awareness development (European Commission, 2013). Supporting the face-to-face meetings with a long-distance component extends and reinforces the network in ways inspired from blended learning (Dziuban, Graham, Moskal, Norberg, & Sicilia, 2018).

2.2. Community aspects

Teacher training and professional development in a context of networked peer learning is based on the theory of networked learning and community of practice. While the first targets relationships, interactions and connections, the second focuses on shared identity with the collective intention of stewarding a domain of knowledge (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011, p. 9). The first one is considered a learning partnership while the second is considered a pool of resources. For both social structures, keywords include connections, interactions and learning, and the key concept is value creation (p. 7). Value is to be understood as a set of five cycles: i) immediate value – what happened and personal experiences; ii) potential value, knowledge capital – what has been produced; iii) applied value – changes in personal practices; iv) realised value – what aspects of one’s performance are affected by the social structure; v) reframing value – reflecting and changing the understanding of what matters (Wenger et al., 2011, pp. 19-23).

By placing the community of practice in the realm of a social theory of learning, Wenger (1998) takes into account the different dimensions that come into play, namely theories of social structure, theories of situated experience, theories of practice and theories of identity. Learning is about engagement and touches upon meaning, practice, identity and flexible involvement in the community.

3. Pedagogical underpinnings

To achieve its goals in terms of professional development, the project draws on competence-oriented education and the scholarship of teaching and learning approach, which both heavily rely on collaborative learning and reflective practice.

3.1. Competence-oriented education

Advocacy for competence-oriented education has grown considerably in higher education over the last few years. Universities and colleges (and mandatory education) now consider competence-oriented education a viable option for improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Competence-oriented education is a learner-focused approach to teaching and learning and has at its core emphasis on achievement. Operationally, it focuses on incremental progress toward larger more sophisticated outcomes. It works naturally with independent study and with the instructor in the role of facilitator. It combines an intentional and transparent approach to curricular design with an academic model in which the time it takes to demonstrate competences varies and the expectations about learning are kept constant. Students acquire and demonstrate their knowledge and skills by engaging in learning exercises, activities and experiences that align with clearly defined
programmatic outcomes (Gervais, 2016). It represents a shift away from content-centered teaching. Competence-oriented education is captured in the phrase “a shift from teaching to learning” (Webler, 2004, p. 24) which in practice means “for teachers to no longer focus on teaching. Rather optimising student learning becomes the centre of attention” (Bachmann, 2018, p. 20). Learning research also supports this change in perspective (Snowman & McCown, 2015).

3.2. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (Boyer, 1990) aims to develop a scholarly approach to teaching, inviting higher education teachers to examine teaching from a scholarly, rigorous, systematic perspective. The SoTL is a research approach that seeks to enhance the status of the teaching profession in higher education and to develop the teaching skills of higher education teachers. To achieve this, teachers are encouraged to conduct applied research on their teaching methods, focusing on its effectiveness and learners' learning. Engaging with this process supports them: i) in developing expertise in their teaching practice, and ii) in interacting with peers and experts, through the dissemination of their findings in specialised scientific journals, for instance. As a matter of fact, teaching and learning in higher education are inextricably linked, so the SoTL is as much about learning as it is about teaching (Shulman, 1999). Although the processes of teaching and learning are quite complicated, the aim of teaching, according to (Ramsden 1992 cited by Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, & Prosser, 2000, p. 156) is simple: “it is to make student learning possible”. The aim of scholarly teaching is not complicated either and consists of making “transparent how we have made learning possible” (Trigwell et al., 2000, p. 156).

3.3. Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is defined as both a pedagogical method and a psychological process and involves four elements: i) a situation where participants need to work together; ii) interactions among participants; iii) processes that participants need to develop; and iv) group performance. The first element requires symmetry – of action, knowledge, and status –, shared goals and a degree of horizontal division of labour. The second element involves interactivity – i.e. the degree of influence of the peer’s cognitive process, synchronicity – the scaffolding of mutual modeling, and negotiability. Negotiability requires at the same time grounding and a space for misunderstanding that allows metacognitive and task negotiation activities to occur. The third element addresses a set of processes to be developed in order to build a common image that integrates all individual representations, paying attention to cognitive load and productive socio-cognitive conflict. The fourth element is centered on the development of some generic ability to collaborate or to develop group performance (Dillenbourg, 1999). In addition, collaborative learning can only succeed if all participants get really involved, show motivation and “feel safe, take risks and share ideas” (Dillenbourg, Järvelä, & Fischer, 2009, p. 14). To encourage participation, incentives, in light of expectancy theory, make contributions indispensable (Jermann, 2004, pp. 15-19), with scenarios structured around the uniqueness of each individual contribution, for instance.

3.4. Reflective practice

Reflection refers to reflecting upon learning processes, experiences, actions and decisions during the learning experience (Boud, 2001), leading to expert performance (Chi, 2006). From the perspective that “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (…) and results from the
combination of grasping experience and transforming it” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41), reflection takes center stage. The four-stage cycle of experiential learning – starting with concrete experience, moving to reflective observation, then to abstract conceptualization, and finally leading to active experimentation and a new cycle – attests to this. Examining how one has functioned during a learning experience involves the learner in active exploration. The outcome is a new or enhanced understanding either of content or process, or both. This reflexive exercise can be supported with different sorts of writing (Varner & Peck, 2003).

4. The context

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned the Zurich University of Teacher Education with the implementation of two international academic networks from 2017 to 2020: Learning Cultures in Universities (LECU) and the Swiss-North African Academic Network (SINAN). While LECU participants come from Albania, Kosovo and Switzerland, SINAN focuses on Tunisia, Egypt and Switzerland. With LECU, the first face-to-face workshop took place in March 2018 in Zurich (Switzerland) and the second took place in Tirana and ElBasan (Albania) in October 2018. The remaining ones will alternate between Kosovo and Albania each spring and autumn till five workshops have taken place.

The aim of the networks is to discuss and exchange innovative teaching and learning practices among academics in teacher education institutions. More precisely, they aim to conduct collaborative discussions about some of the most pressing challenges in the actual higher education teaching and learning context. Throughout the four years, it is also expected that the project will contribute to further developing the participants’ intercultural and teaching skills necessary to advance professionally in higher education institutions. Each project brings together eight stakeholders from three different countries: participants are a selected group of academics and professionals of teacher education working mainly in Faculties of Educational Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education, and also sometimes for ministries.

The structure of the networked meetings seeks to support educational reflection and transcultural learning by offering opportunities for professional development. The meetings include school visits, universities classroom visits, and workshops. Their goal is to compare international insights about teaching theories around competence-oriented education, and to exchange participants’ teaching philosophies and practices, and their universities’ approaches to teaching and learning in the international context. Each participant writes his or her own individual electronic portfolio.

Between these face-to-face encounters, participants engage in activities to help them develop a scholarly approach to teaching. They engage in peer coaching to analyze each others’ teaching practices. The aim of this pair work, pedagogically speaking, is to develop a SoTL approach to teaching. Two participants from the same country agree on a topic of common interest that they will develop in their teaching practice. They discuss how to plan it out and after mutual class observation, they elaborate on their respective teaching methods. For example, one pair topic consists of developing a teaching and learning environment in the subject area of sustainable development that supports students with deep learning. Participants also work on a scientific project as a trio. This involves participants from different countries and consists of a small research project of their choice. For example, one trio is investigating how teachers in the three countries of the project understand
and practice critical thinking. Pedagogically speaking, the trio work is also conducted from a SoTL perspective. The difference between the duo and the trio work is that the pairs work on the same institution or country, and the trios work on three different countries. In both cases, the framework helps further develop the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education (Healey, 2000) in the discipline of teacher education by: i) enhancing the teaching quality with peer teaching review (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005); ii) improving teaching with peers’ mutual feedback (Brinko, 1993); iii) providing consultation with the means of critical friends (Handal, 1999); and iv) undertaking a critical reflective approach to teaching (Brookfield, 1995).

5. Research question and methodology

The main research question of this study is: How does the group of LECU participants organise itself to support the on-going professional development of its individual participants?

This qualitative research utilises observations from the discussions and interactions conducted during the face-to-face networked meetings. To a limited extent, we use the vignette technique (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 182) at different group levels, with the purpose of presenting the group of participants from multiple, multicultural and multi-institutional perspectives.

Criterion sampling, or studying "all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238), is selected as the sampling method. The criteria set related to participation and participants’ production. More precisely, LECU participants are selected if they participate in all face-to-face networked meetings, complete the duo and trio work and agree to participate in the study by signing an ethical consent form.

6. Findings

6.1. How are teacher-training curricula organised in each of the participating countries?

Based on the presentations and discussions during the first two workshops, the Swiss participants explain that in Switzerland there is no ministry of education; each canton has its ministry of education and they all meet in the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK). The ministry of each canton decides who will be granted a licence to teach a study programme. For example, the decision says it must be a 5 ECTS course addressing sociology of education – subject matter content is specified but competences are not. Participants from Kosovo say that in Kosovo there is a ministry of education that designs the national curricula. In addition, there is an accreditation agency, which is run exclusively by international experts, that grants licences. Each department designs its programme, which is presented to the council of the faculty, then to the senate of the university, then to the accreditation agency. Teaching education standards specific to Kosovo have been pending for many years and in the meantime they rely on EU standards. In Albania, according to the Albanian participants, there is a ministry of education too. In pre-service education, and with the objective of addressing a quality issue throughout the country, they are in the process of unifying 80% of the learning outcomes, leaving 20% to contextual decisions. The ministry of education is in charge of coordinating this task. In continuing education, local departments design their teacher-training programmes and there is an obligation to get credits from the training agencies that offer training.
6.2. Who are the participants?

The participants from Albania include four teachers involved in the teaching of one or several of the following topics: psychology of child development, inclusive education, learning through playing, teaching methodology, information technology in teaching, research methods, special education, foundations of pedagogy, gender studies, and sociology of education. In addition, there is one participant from an institution in charge of drafting curricula for all stages of education and teacher training.

Two of the participants from Kosovo are former teachers now working at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and involved in curriculum development. Four are teachers in one or several of the following areas: psychology, educational psychology, pedagogy, child education, protection and policies, and mathematics. Two of these four teachers also work as consultants for the MEST, and one of them for an NGO that operates teacher-training programmes recognized by MEST.

In Switzerland, there is one teacher from a university of applied sciences and six teachers from one of the numerous universities of teacher education. They teach in one or several of the following areas: educational theories, research methodology, migration and education, intercultural communication, ownership issues in development projects, didactics, geography, inclusive education, education and society, nutrition, learning psychology, developmental psychology and quality of teaching, and development of study programmes.

6.3. What do participants do? Example of the trio work

During the first workshop, participants had many occasions to socialise during breaks, dinners, walking to class visits or visiting the city. To form the trios, which must include participants from three different countries, a creative exercise was organised on the last day of the workshop. Participants first had to sketch who they are professionally speaking in ten minutes. This resulted in them being amused, surprised or reflexive. Then they met some of the other participants through a sort of “speed-dating” session.

To give you an example, we will follow Participant-15 in this “speed-dating” exercise. How did the 3-minute encounter between Participant-15 and Participant-14 happen? They started with a big laugh and a “hand clap”. They joked saying “Let’s see where our interests can meet!” They obviously already knew each quite well and talked about several things before coming back to the exercise. When Participant-15 met Participant-10, the latter said he knew what the former was doing (i.e., special education) and explained how needs are not addressed even if they had a MA in special education in his institution. Participant-15 asked whether the MA is aimed at students who have a BA. The answer was yes, but Participant-10 also explained that he was pushing for every teacher to know the basics and asked whether Participant-15 had suggestions on how to further move in that direction. Participant-15 replied that he would not suggest anything because they did not have a perfect solution; his team was constantly fighting to know if special education must be addressed at the organisational level in his institution. Participant-15 then went on to meet Participant-2. The latter explained that he was working on civic education curricula, and the former said that he had participated in a project about raising political consciousness. Participant-2 showed great interest and asked whether there had been any publications. Finally, Participant-15 met Participant-8. They used...
a language other than English, the official language of the project, joked and looked for a third partner. They already knew each other and did not get involved in the exercise.

After this formally organised “getting to know each other” session, participants were asked to actually form the trios by first getting grouped by country. While participants were moving, some of them already organized their trios. This was the case for Participant-8 who asked, speaking loudly across the room, whether Participant-15 wanted to join. She answered yes and then Participant-8 asked Participant-1 if he wanted to join the two, specifying that Participant-15 was in special education. Participant-1 agreed and they wrote down their three names.

In terms of actual task assignments related to the trio work, between the first and the second face-to-face meeting, the trio had to meet virtually to discuss the topic they would address. While this trio did not manage to work much in between face-to-face encounters, during the second meeting, they decided to work on the topic of critical thinking and how some teachers in their respective institutions understand and practice it.

6.4. In-class face-to-face activity: two examples

First example: the topic discussed is competence-oriented teaching and learning. In a big group of two trios, participants are invited to discuss the challenges of shifting to and implementing a competence-oriented programme. To give you an example, we will describe the work of the trio we presented above – Participant-8, Participant-15, Participant-1 – and another trio comprising Participant-6, Participant-16 and Participant-10. They spent some time trying to determine their understanding of what a programme is – the concept. Once they agreed that a programme was the entire Bachelor or Master study programme, Participant-1 said that developing a curriculum in a competence-oriented approach meant that the first things to be identified are the competences (and not the goals). Participant-6 took the book edited by Bachmann (2018) that all participants received during the second workshop. Participant-8 said that the accreditation agency develops templates – which contains sections like history of the college, the goal of the programme, courses, syllabuses, etc. – and that is done for all programmes. Participant-16 said that her understanding related to what is needed for students once they are on the market, thus the importance to set goals. Competences, programmes, courses, etc. ensue from this backwards design process. Participant-1 said that it was important to plan for the future and make assumptions regarding the competences that future teachers will need. The EU suggests eight competences but each country needs to reflect on how these relate to the context and the work situation. Participant-16 asked whether we should develop the competences expected by the EU or those that are needed by teachers because it is important to know that they are different and do not necessarily converge. Participant-15 expanded on this issue, underlining the fact that there is a gap between normative approaches and what happens in reality. He added that in Switzerland, in reality, what matters is who gets how many ECTS. Participant-10 said that it is a matter of understanding how these normative competences are translated into teaching reality and explained that that was the challenge and the difficult part. To wrap up, the plenary discussion showed that other groups discussed the topic adopting a comparative approach, comparing what happens in their respective countries. For instance, they compared length of programmes and time spent in “practice” as a novice teacher. They underlined this normative approach, saying that the documents were really good but the reality, how teachers teach – can be very different. Participant-7 explained that cultures of learning are a topic that has to do with
methodology and he would like the discussion to shift to the cultural reasons underpinning the development of a given study programme.

Second example: Through metaphors, participants were invited to reflect on their professional identity. The workshop leader suggested ten metaphors – e.g. actor to an audience, bus driver to passengers, gardener to plants, carer to the vulnerable, sheepdog to sheep, website to surfers – and asks participants to choose the one(s) that fit best to how they relate to their students and discuss it within their partners.

Participant-15 said the bus driver could do it if the driver was providing jokes. Participant-17 said the question was about how much to care and where to stop if they chose the caring metaphor. The actor-audience metaphor also fitted because of wanting to have the reward of the performance. Participant-6 said that the sheepdog metaphor fitted also because students can go as far as they are safe. They both said that they also felt like sales person. Students feel the conflict, the negotiation aspect and think “why should I buy this?” Participant-15 said they were selling insights. Participant-6 underlined that a buyer should be a happier person in the end if he had bought a product he wanted. Participant-15 added that customers needed something and if teachers were selling something students need, that is fine, otherwise it was problematic. Participant-17 said that the preacher metaphor had something about conviction in it, which was good, but then where did the ideological stuff stop? Time ran out for this activity and Participant-1, who had been silent throughout the activity, said that in all these metaphors the teacher was in the centre and that annoyed him deeply. In plenary, some participants shared their choices and discussions.

7. Discussion

Networked meetings are designed in such a way to empower individual participants. Professional development is built in terms of advancing competence and identity as the previously described activities show. The more participants engage in activities, the more they take out of this intercultural experience (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). The variation of motivational sources for actively engaging in individual and group activities also influences the outcome in terms of professional development. According to the preliminary qualitative findings and the results gathered through a survey submitted after the second face-to-face meeting, participants demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation. Participation motives like being able to know other international university teaching experiences or learning new skills and practices to improve one’s teaching far overpass extrinsic motives like engaging in an international network for career and promotion purposes.

The composition of each national group somehow reflects the particularities of each country’s configuration in terms of teacher training. In other words, each group is composed in such a way as to represent the main bodies involved in teacher training, and there is no strict equivalence between groups. The goal is to bring together the important players in each country in terms of teacher training, and to represent the variation. The first months of the project seem to indicate that gathering together participants working at the political and institutional levels offers a fruitful opportunity to discuss training-related issues together. It also benefits professional development at the individual level. For instance, in the abovementioned example, participants reported a discrepancy between normative documents and how teaching is enacted in practice. In general, the workshop leaders have tried to anchor an issue in reality and lay the groundwork for creating solutions. To elaborate on the
discrepancy between the norm and the reality of practice, participants were invited to discuss the possibilities of implementing competence-oriented education and, in parallel, they were prompted to engage in related activities – writing learning outcomes in this case. The discussion then benefitted from the feedback and theoretical knowledge of experts.

To follow up on the composition of the group, some participants already knew each other from previous similar projects and can build on this relationship, particularly in terms of transcultural skills. According to Participant-15, the result from previous projects resides in i) being closer to this part of the world (i.e. Kosovo and Albania); ii) improving one’s ability to decipher the culture, interactions, etc. as the years go by; and iii) increasing the understanding of each participant’s perspective (e.g. political, scientific).

In conclusion, we would like to say that from the observation of the first two face-to-face networked meetings, it appears that carefully setting the stage and planning out meaningful activities contributes to the success of this original format of international professional development. The future will tell if the project can achieve its expected outcomes in terms of transcultural professional development in a perspective of scholarship of teaching and learning. It will also tell if expertise is enhanced in order to improve the quality of teaching (Stigler & Miller, 2018). Finally, it will tell if the basis for a robust network that can disseminate capacities and practices has been set.

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