

Implementing a co-teaching model for improving schools

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Introduction

Over the last few years the school improvement literature has suggested the development of collaborations between teachers and the creation of collaborative cultures for better functioning of schools and more effective learning (e.g. Hargreaves, 1992; Hopkins, Ainscow & West, 1994; Hopkins, 2001). In addition, the literature discusses methods and techniques that offer more possibilities for collaboration of teachers working towards higher levels of student learning.

In our contemporary era it is widely recognized that teaching is a complex process that contains a whole mix of activities, and that means that teaching quality is depended on many and often multifaceted and inherently conflicting factors. One often-discussed innovative method within the last few years is co-teaching. With the term co-teaching we mean that two teachers are jointly responsible for a class, plan instruction together, share teaching duties and design collectively all teaching aids (Papandreou, 1993).

In this study we present the implementation of a model of co-teaching and through its practical implementation and the accompanying collection of data from other teachers who use this method, we try to describe the way this method functions. We also attempt to discover the methods inherent enhancement strengths, and problems associated with the method generally, and its initial implementation problems specifically.

We will now investigate this method of co-teaching through the literature, and then present the methodology we followed for carrying out this research. After that, we describe the model of co-teaching we used, and finally we analyse of our data to present certain perspectives and findings that emerged from our observations.

Co-teaching method

Teaching constitutes one of the basic functions of schools and has an important role in the materialization and realization of the different goals of education (Matsaggouras, 2003). Schools are the places where teaching takes place for the purpose of changing the thoughts, emotions, and acts (or behaviour) of those who are educated (Charalambopoulos, 1993).

During teaching certain factors have significant roles. These factors are related to teachers, students and the subject matter. As we have already noted with the term co-teaching we mean that two teachers are jointly responsible for a class and plan teaching together, plan instruction together, share teaching duties and design collectively all teaching aids. Actually, co-teaching requires the continuous collaboration of two teachers in order to achieve the goals and aims of their combined and synergetic teaching.

Goetz (2000), however, claims that teaching is more effective when it is materialized through a team of three teachers because decisions are made and implemented more quickly than in the case of a “duet” or a “dyad” of teachers working together. Goetz also claims that when we have teams of “quartet” teachers (that is working in groups of four) it is difficult for decision making. Conversely when they are only two co-teachers working together, Goetz considers

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that they are like two individuals who just work independently apparently in a team (actually a dyad) but without a team spirit.

Nevertheless, the model of co-teaching that is implemented in most schools and especially in pre-primary schools utilizes dyads of teachers involved in co-teaching. Moreover, the model of collaboration between dyadic teachers is the most feasible to be implemented, given the high financial cost of any increase of the number of co-teachers in each class. For these reasons our attention is focused on co-teaching that takes place using the dyadic co-teacher model.

During co-teaching the teachers involved can assume different roles. One of them, for example, can present the lesson, and the other one can “assist” closely for completing the whole presentation visually, or for putting forth questions for the purpose of assisting the processing and presentation of the lesson (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). In this way students can consolidate the lesson better. Flanagan (2001) suggests that during co-teaching children can be divided into two smaller heterogeneous groups and each teacher can teach one group each at a time. In this case, the content of teaching can be the same or different.

Another potential of co-teaching is simultaneous teaching. In this form teaching takes place by both teachers in parallel who change roles according to the procession they want to follow in the lesson. They can, for example, schedule in advance their activities and know exactly what each one (teacher) will do. When two teachers work together for a long time scheduling can become more flexible and role exchange freer, a fact that can make lessons more interesting for students.

According to the literature that deals with the flexibility of role change during co-teaching, students can take advantage (even unconsciously) of the continually changing novelty which promotes learning (e.g. Papandreou, 1993; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1995; Price et al., 2001).

In flexible teaching roles, of co-teaching, teachers have the ease to teach those subject areas that they feel stronger in and can have prompt and contextualized feedback on those areas they feel weaker. Two brains, Papandreou (2003) claims, can lead to better ideas than one brain. Furthermore, there is the possibility of a snow-balling effect, that is expanding the different ideas in co-teaching classrooms occurs naturally as one teacher’s ideas can be built on by the other teacher, and in this way students are taught in a richer learning environment.

This productive interaction makes teaching more effective and at the same time helps teachers themselves to improve their practice. By observing each other teachers get ideas and integrate them into their own practice. This fact gradually leads to improving teacher’s teaching approaches. Actually, the interaction between the teachers, functions as a stimulus for reflection and many researchers consider this process as a form of teacher development (e.g. Day, 1999).

However, for having positive results co-teaching requires close collaboration and consensus from the participating teachers (Price et al., 2001). Hargreaves & Fullan (1992) point out that when two teachers collaborate, are unified and are governed by a similar vision, they have the power to deal better the different problems that arise. This will happen because between the teachers here will be a spirit of collegiality and cooperation. The collegial collaboration, therefore, has a significant role to play regarding the effectiveness and successfulness of teaching, especially in the cases of co-teaching. Collegiality in this context, Piyiaki (2001) argues, is established on mutual respect for the mutual help that one teacher offers to the other for carrying out a lesson.

We can have better results in co-teaching when the teachers involved are mutually responsible. Despite the fact that it is difficult to accomplish with all teachers, it is a necessity

for those teachers who teach in the same classroom to share not only knowledge and ability but also ignorance and mistakes. They should be able to observe each other and to accept criticism, recognizing possible weaknesses (Price et al., 2001).

In the classes where co-teaching takes place, teachers can share responsibilities to solve more effectively the different emerging problems and to work with more thoroughness. This distribution of responsibilities can lead to the decrease of teachers' stress (see Kyriakou & Sutcliffe, 1978).

Over the last few years co-teaching has been promoted in schools that try to develop inclusive practices (Ainscow, 1999; Angelides, 2004; Gately & Gately, 2001; Symeonidou, 2002). In this case 'special' and 'regular' teachers co-teach for the purpose of providing equal participation for the teaching and learning to *all* children.

Co-teaching can have some dangers as well. Papandreou (1993) points out that confrontation of the teachers involved may be a problem. Many teachers are unable to solve the different problems that may arise. These problems may accumulate and be pent up, and at some point emotional release can dismantle the co-teaching effort to be unworkable (Shafer, 2000). Also as co-teachers are in the same classroom for the whole day and they deal with the same activities, the compatibility the teachers' personal characters are of major importance for co-teaching. It is desirable for teachers who work together in this way to have characters that are able to harmoniously coexist and complement each other, not characters that assert themselves and dominate in rivalry to colleagues (Goetz, 2000). Another possible problem that can be created is that teachers may lose their contact with children, because their time with children decreases due to the sharing of teaching with another teacher (Shafer, 2000).

Methodology

The theoretical and epistemological background of our study followed the interpretive model of research that is based on the three basic premises of symbolic interactionism, as these have been developed by Blumer (1969).

The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meanings of such things derive from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with things he/she encounters.

The research took place in a pre-primary school on the western outskirts of Nicosia city. Co-teaching is used in all classes of this school. In the school studied, there are 150 children aged three to six years old, divided according to their age (25 children in each class). Therefore, there were six classes and twelve teachers - therefore two teachers for each class. All teachers were young, 22 to 30 years of age. The class used for this research had children of 5 - 6 years old. Two children were foreigners and did not speak Greek, and another two were categorized as having special needs. In the academic year that this research took place, one of us (S. S.) worked in the pre-primary school as a teacher. She co-taught with Miranda (pseudonym).

For collecting the data, the researcher (S. Socratous) kept a research diary (Burgess, 1982) for eight months in which she recorded her experiences from the function of co-teaching in her class. She recorded daily comments around her lessons, her collaboration with her colleague in the class and their relation, their planning, their relations with parents and the head teacher, the reactions of students, the emerging problems and the ways they were solved as well as her anxieties, and fears regarding her research and teaching. In the afternoon she added her emotions and thoughts next to her observations.

Besides the research diary the researcher conducted twelve two-hour observations in another three classes of the same school (four in each class) where she observed and recorded the way that co-teaching functioned in these other classes. For doing those observations she followed an observation protocol. This protocol was related to the practice of the teachers involved, the ways they presented their lessons and the reactions of students.

The researcher conducted interviews with the six teachers that taught in those classes. The interviews' length was around one hour each. The topic of discussion of these interviews was the experiences of teachers from co-teaching in general and the discussion of certain events she recorded during observation in particular. She also conducted a series of interviews with the colleagues who co-taught in the same classes. One of the interviews was conducted in the presence of two researchers (S. S. and P. A.). These interviews had again, as a general theme, the experiences of the teacher from co-teaching, but most of the questions had as a starting point certain events that happened in the classroom. All interviews were tape-recorded.

For analysing the data we followed the two suggested stages of Erickson (1986): inductive and deductive. When we organized our data we read them three times in order to understand the phenomenon and the social context we were studying. We then formulated certain assertions which stated relations and observations from the studied data. We then examined our data in detail in order to find specific indications that supported or reject the assertions we formulated.

Description of the co-teaching model

(Written by S. S)

We had already decided that in the first week we would meet at planned times and in that week to set the times we would meet in the consecutive weeks of the project. The weekly planning was always done in collaboration with Miranda. We first determined the lessons that each one would teach and the role of the other during these lessons. We then determined the lessons we would do together, and the role each one would have during teaching. After that, we discussed the curriculum and possible ways of presentation, paying particular attention to differentiating it wherever it was needed, and according to the needs of students, having in mind *all* children. At the next stage we determined the activities we would use and the visual aids we would present.

All the work was always divided equally and this fact encouraged both of us. It is my belief, and also Miranda's belief (as it appeared in the interviews I had with her) that the 'sharing' was done fairly and there was no case that we had any difference of opinion for this issue.

In some cases when one of us had a problem and could not teach the other took over to stand in. For example:

In the morning when I went to school I did not feel well. I had a problem with my health. I had already planned to do the lesson of the morning discussion. Children were on a circle ready for the lesson. However, Miranda, without asking me, went in front of the class and was ready to begin the lesson. I told her that it was my lesson but she pleaded with me to let her teach since I did not look very well ... Miranda taught all lessons that day ... While we were leaving the school she told me that she would teach all lessons the next day as well because I looked sick and I wouldn't be able to prepare them.

Research Diary 17 March 2004

Almost always teaching was a mutual activity. More specifically, we exploited the fact that we were two and we organized our lessons in such a way as to participate both in the lesson, sometimes by playing parts. For example, when we taught the lesson 'To the bookshop' I played the role of the bookseller and Miranda the role of the child who went to buy books. In

this way lessons were done in pleasant ways for children and our goals were achieved much more easily.

Our collaboration, especially during teaching, was something we enjoyed very much. Sometimes it was necessary to play different parts for the needs of our lessons. In one lesson we would teach the different parts through the fairy tale 'The Black Hen'. While, I was teaching suddenly Miranda came in masked as a 'black hen'. When I first saw her I began laughing and then she started to laugh too. We tried, though, not to show it to the children but we both enjoyed the lesson very much.

My relationship with Miranda was very good. At the beginning we had a clearly professional relationship. As time passed our relationship became closer. We became good friends and learned to coexist in the classroom without any conflicts. Although we sometimes had certain disagreements, we solved them through dialogue. During the whole academic year we had perfect collaboration, mutual help and support.

Of course, the existence of two teachers in one class can give rise to some problems. Many times problems arose quite unexpectedly. For example, Miranda described such an incident in her interview on 4/4/2004:

It annoyed me very much the incident that happened with the father of Maria (a pupil). You should remember that incident because we discussed afterwards. That morning Maria entered the classroom with her father. We were both there preparing the first lesson of the day. Then, I approached them to get Maria. Her father, though, told me: 'No, don't get Maria, the other teacher will do. Maria likes her more'. That moment, really, I felt very bad. I felt disadvantaged, assaulted and sad, and I was furious against you. However, after we discussed it I felt better and I understood that these facts are natural when there are two teachers in the same class.

Such incidents, although they sound common or unimpressive, can ruin the good relation that should exist between the teachers that co-teach in the same class.

Children seemed to enjoy co-teaching. The good thing is that generally the children loved both teachers and they learned very quickly, and they were proud about it; that their teachers were unusually two, and not one which is more typical.

The function of co-teaching

Studying our data we formulated three substantiated assumptions: First, through co-teaching creativity is encouraged. Second, the creativity of teachers that emerged through co-teaching stimulated children's interest and made lessons more effective. Third, co-teaching helps teachers go deeper into the subject matter of the lesson, to pay more attention to even little details, and as result to provide more equal opportunities for the teaching and learning to all children.

Of course, these assumptions overlap, are interrelated, and difficult to separate. The following divisions are for us to make sense of the data and to assist the reader understand the various arguments and findings of our research.

Creativity is encouraged

Through the analysis of our data it seemed that the interaction between teachers that takes place during co-teaching encouraged creativity. This interaction seemed to have positive results in terms of improving teacher practice. The existence of two teachers in the same classroom obliged the one to observe the practice of the other one and vice versa. This fact seemed to help teachers reflect on their practice, to improve some of their weaknesses and to learn new methods and techniques for approaching children. Generally, most teachers faced the existence of a second teacher in the classroom as a challenge for learning and professional

development. This fact seemed to be spotted by the teachers who participated in this research. Miranda said to S.S in one interview:

The fact that we were two teachers in the classroom for me continually functioned as a challenge for improvement and for further learning. I always tried to reflect on what happened in the classroom and to think what I did well and what I could improve further ... many times I caught myself imitating something you did during a lesson which I had considered was a good practice that I could implement as well ... In addition, the preparation time was for me a period for learning. The exchange of ideas challenged intellectually to search for new more creative ideas. I wouldn't have done it if I had been the only teacher in the classroom.

As both teachers, in co-teaching, had active roles, this appeared to help them both reflect-in-action (in real time) and to enhance the on-the-spot creativeness of the lessons' presentation.

Helen, a teacher from the other classes of the school pointed out that:

When I teach a lesson by myself I usually don't get out of what I have planned. When I am in a co-teaching environment, the way I work with my colleague is different. During co-teaching we very often create a discussion between us, and this fact challenges both of us to think differently and creatively. She says something, I make comments on it, she adds something more, or she makes a further question, and in total we get something that neither me nor she had planned or expected.

The following vignette supports this assumption, especially regarding creativity. It describes the interaction of S. S with Miranda during a lesson.

Vignette 1: To the florist

(Narrated by S. S.)

That day our topic was the florists. Our goal was for children to learn about the job of florists, to connect it with the goods they sell, and to learn the transaction process. Because we did not have the chance to visit a real florist, we both decided to create our own for the purposes of the lesson. We brought together different plants and flowers and we put them in a small room. Miranda would act as a florist and I would bring the children to visit her. When all children were there, Miranda talked to us about the job of florists, the sort of plants and flowers she sells and explained what her customers buy. After she told us all about the different flowers she had, I asked her if she had any chrysanthemums. She replied that chrysanthemums blossom from October until December and since the lesson took place at the end of March she did not have any. A boy interrupted and said that his mother had chrysanthemums at home. It was one kind, as he explained, that blossom later. Miranda then asked him if he could bring some to put in our florist. She immediately then told children that the next day she would organize an art lesson where they could paint chrysanthemums. She had the idea to bring a postcard with the chrysanthemums of Van Gough in the class and ask children to paint them. She really brought them and the lesson seemed to impress the children very much.

In the above vignette we can see the two teachers organized a lesson collaboratively where the one impersonated a florist and the other went with children to visit the florist. When the lesson began, the teacher who impersonated the florist talked generally to children about the job of florists and explained the different kinds of plants and flowers she had. The other teacher, without having planned anything in advance or without having tried to create a discussion, asked the florist if she had chrysanthemums, a kind of a flower she knew that was not available during that period of the year. She also knew that most of the children knew about chrysanthemums because they had them at home. Then, the teacher-florist explained why she did not have chrysanthemums, but a child got involved in the discussion and qualified what the teacher had said. The florist-teacher then candidly and immediately connected chrysanthemums with the paintings of Van Gough. The impromptu suggestion to

paint chrysanthemums in the next day's lesson, set up an activity that was very successful with continuity, built on the previous activity.

It appears from the above analysis that the existence of two teachers and their interaction that takes place challenges them to become more creative and more explorative resulting in more interesting lessons, with follow-up lessons in continuity. These findings are similar to the findings of other researchers who argue that co-teaching promotes the creativity of both teachers (e.g. Gately & Gately, 2001). As a result the quality and quantity of learning as well as the satisfaction of teachers increase (e.g. Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004).

Interest from children - Effectiveness

The second assumption from our data was that the creativity of teachers that emerged through co-teaching sparked the interest of children and made lessons more effective. Teachers playing parts and discussing between themselves was something that children experienced with enthusiasm. Miranda in one of her interviews commented upon this issue:

Children like the dialogue we have between us. They see the way of communication between two people; they perceive it as a theatrical performance ... they consider us as actors and enjoy it very much.

The interest that children showed in co-teaching seemed to help them understand better the subject of the lesson. Alexia, one of the teachers of the school stated that:

I have worked alone in the class for six years and for the last two years I have been co-teaching a class. I think that co-teaching is not only more interesting for children but also more effective. From my experience I can say with certainty that certain lessons that take place in a co-teaching class have better results than the same lessons taught by one teacher.

The following vignette supports the assumption that co-teaching sparks the interest of children and makes lessons more effective:

Vignette 2: Eating manners

(Narrated by S.S)

Around the end of January we had observed that our students cause a lot of disruption during lunchtime, they talked and threw food on the floor. Despite the fact that we had commented orally on their behaviour a number of times, the situation carried on. Thus, knowing the interest of our students in co-teaching and particularly when we played parts, we decided to do something relevant to the problem. We dressed as little girls and went into the class holding a sandwich and an orange-juice each. The one little girl that Miranda imitated was Eleni, a very careful girl who did not talk while she was eating, did not drop anything on the floor and put the papers from her sandwich in her plate. The other girl that I imitated was Marigoula, a girl that talked with her mouth full of food, dropped papers on the floor and poured her orange-juice on her clothes. Children followed with a great interest the whole show. Suddenly, they began shout at Marigoula not to drop papers on the floor and not to talk while she was eating.

In this vignette we can see the two teachers organize a co-teaching lesson to teach the children how they should behave when they eat. Previously they failed to impress the children with the traditional teaching method. Children seemed to be attentive to the lesson and at one point they participated actively in order to discourage the one little girl to drop food and papers on the floor. Interestingly, the pupils internalized the practice and values their teachers taught had them the previous days but which they had, by their behaviour, refused to follow. From what the two teachers said later on, it seemed that from that day on children were significantly improved regarding their behaviour during lunchtime.

Vignette 3: The insects

(S. S. in one class of her school observed this vignette)

The topic of the lesson was insects and it would be presented through a puppet show. The heroes of the story were four: the bee, the grasshopper, the fly and the gnat. Each teacher held two puppets. At the beginning the bee with the grasshopper appeared, and they were both held by the same teacher, and began talking. In a while they called the fly to come to them but the second teacher who held the fly was absentminded and the fly did not appear. The children began to call the fly; the teacher after a short delay presented it, together with the gnat, and a discussion with the other insects began, outside the planned script, about the reasons of her delay. The fact that there were four insects on the scene caused a great interest to children who watched the discussion with baited breath, participating actively to the story. After the end of the puppet show a discussion on the insects followed. Children participated in the discussion and it seemed that all had something to say; a fact that reveals the great impact of the active discussion during the puppet show on children's learning. After the end of the lesson both teachers argued that a large factor in the successfulness of the lesson was the co-teaching method, because it gave them the right to create a discussion that children liked, and in this way, the pupils learned the insects and their characteristics easily.

In the above vignette we can see the two teachers organize a puppet show lesson to teach the about four insects and their characteristics. The fact that there were four insects on the scene with different voices impresses children. It would difficult to achieve this if there was only one teacher in the class because she could not operate all four puppets together, and it would be very difficult to imitate four different voices. A little delay of one teacher to present the fly gave the reason for the teachers to become innovatively creative, to escape from the planned script, and to create an improvisational funny story that children watched with a lot of interest. Of course, someone would say that whatever happened could be planned to be successful. However, what we want to point out with this vignette is that co-teaching gives the advantage to teachers to interact and to exploit whatever unexpected incident may occur during teaching. This leads to even further dynamic interaction, among the teachers, and even potentially for the children to take part, and the children like all this and so the lessons are made more interesting and effective.

In the school effectiveness and school improvement literature collaboration between teachers at all levels is pointed out as well as the development of collaborative cultures for achieving school improvement (e.g. Hopkins et al., 1994; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Hopkins et al. (1997) go a step further and support the argument that we can have better results regarding improvement and effectiveness if lessons become more interesting to catch children's attention.

Better planning, going deeper and paying attention to details

The third assumption that emerged through the analysis of our data is that co-teaching helped teachers to go deeper into their subject matter, to pay attention to even little details and thus provide equal opportunities for teaching and learning of all children. This fact was recorded many times in the research diary that S. S. kept, and at the same time the teachers who participated in the research highlighted it also. Ioanna, for example, noted that:

For the last two years I have been in co-teaching class where I have the chance to collaborate with another colleague has offered me a lot. ... Because we are two we share the preparation, thus we can go deeper into the subject matter we will teach the next day. When I had a class by myself I did not have the time to get prepared the way I wanted. Now I study more every activity, I try to go to the class and be perfectly prepared and I try to predict from the previous night possible points that my students may have difficulties with so I can be ready to help them as much as possible. Now, I enjoy what I do much more than previously when I didn't have the time I wanted for preparation. ... The time I have at home seems to be productive because my better preparation has an impact on my students' learning.

Miranda goes further than these arguments and states that:

The existence of another teacher in the classroom has helped me to decrease the stress I had previously. I was stressed if I would have enough with my preparation for the lessons. Now, the work is shared and thus I have got more time, a fact that helps me to be better organized and to feel more comfortable.

It seems therefore that teachers who teach in co-teaching classes have the chance to be better prepared for their teaching. This could be considered as natural since there are two teachers in each class. In the school improvement literature good preparation is considered as one of the basic conditions for teaching development (Hopkins et al., 1997; see also Angelides et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Miranda points out that:

I think co-teaching helps both of us to pay attention to even small details; we do not let anything go without paying the necessary attention. During teaching, many incidents occur that many times we do not spot or even if we spot them we do not pay the necessary attention when we are alone in the class. When we are two we have got the necessary time to analyse each incident, to talk individually to each child involved, to offer personal support wherever needed and generally to be close to the events at the time they occur in order to be able to deal with them.

The fact that in co-teaching, teachers have the chance to pay attention to details and that this attention can help the learning of all children was noted by S.S in her research diary:

The collaboration with Miranda helped both of us to spot even the little detail and to deal with it. We spot even the smallest weakness of our students and we help them to overcome it. ... [For example,] one of our students had a small problem with his vision and he could not see very well the pictures and the visual aids we used in the class. As a result he did not participate in the lessons. As one of us was always very close to children we spotted that while this student did not participate when he had to observe pictures from a distance, when we approached him individually he spotted the points we were asking him about the pictures. When we became aware of the problem we informed the parents who took the child for an eye test and was prescribed spectacles ... From that point on his participation in lessons was very good.

Angelides (2005) points out that schools and teachers failed to spot and pay the necessary attention to certain details and this has a significant impact on their efforts to provide equal opportunities for the teaching and learning of all children. Then he argues that if we manage to give the necessary attention, and examine carefully certain little details it can help towards the provision of more inclusive education. The development of the ability to spot and pay attention to little and seemingly insignificant details can then be translated into more inclusive education.

Final comments

In this study we presented the implementation of a model of co-teaching. Through documentation of the practical implementation and through the collection of data from teachers, who use this method, we try to describe the way the model functions, and to discover its enhancement effectiveness and problems, plus make suggestions for improvement for use in the pre-primary classroom.

Regarding the first part, the description of the co-teaching model we offer, can give an initial base for schools and teachers who are interested to implement similar teaching methods. It

can also help those teachers who already use co-teaching to reflect on their practice for the purpose of improvement.

Regarding the second part, that was actually the biggest part of our data analysis, we have presented some perspectives that emerged through our data. Of course, there are perspectives that did not appear in our data, but through another study they can be presented. At this stage, it is important to point out that our findings come from only one school and we do not claim that they are valid for other cases of co-teaching. Notwithstanding any generalization has to be made carefully. Whatever we have seen to happen in “our” school might be a result of the head-teacher’s philosophy and the culture that developed around her.

Regarding the third part and the problems of co-teaching we did not manage to collect very rich data. We spotted some problems, especially minor relationship problems but not fundamentally threatening problems. We refer to some examples in the description of the model but through our data there are no substantially emerging themes related to the problems of co-teaching. This fact could be attributed to the possible good functioning of co-teaching in that school, to the few problems that appeared in the relationship of S.S with Miranda and to the possibility that other teachers hide whatever problems appeared in their classes.

Generally, we could say that our data analysis indicates co-teaching is very positive and with good results all round. Papandreou (1993) states that two brains lead to better teaching because their ideas are more. The abilities of teachers are unified and this collective style of teaching gives teachers the possibility to use their skills and knowledge in the best possible way (Petroulaki, 1991). Teachers consult each other and thus they promote professional dialogue, a behaviour that helps the discovery of different ideas to have a successful teaching (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). In this way, and according to the findings we have, creativity is encouraged which stimulates the interest of children, and as result better outcomes are arrived at. In addition, as teachers have more time and can build on their colleague’s ideas, they are enabled to go deeper into their subject, and teachers can plan their lessons better and can pay attention to small details.

Co-teaching, finally, can gradually help the development of more collaborative cultures in schools and then overflow to collaborative communities of practice and learning (Wenger, 1998). In communities of practice teachers are organized into a network where they share their experiences with their colleagues, interact more often between them and their classroom activities are not ‘personal matters’ but part of the community.

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