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*Inga Ratniece*

## COLLABORATION WITH STUDENTS – TRAINEE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

### Introduction

Latvian higher education and its study process have to meet the state needs and scientific interaction of the components: society–individual–education in accordance with educational regularities changing and developing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The definition of “sustainable development” was first declared in the report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987 (Our common future, Brundtland, UN, 1987). It claimed that “sustainable development” is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The issue of sustainable development has become very crucial at the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development, the largest-ever meetings of world leaders created a plan of sustainable development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Spanning from 2005 to 2014, this resolution seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Education for sustainable development aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions. Here we will look more closely at the learning process and teacher’s role in the education for sustainable development.

Education process plays a very crucial role in successful education for sustainable development and, therefore, provides the most essential starting point for the future process of education. We need to consider many factors in comprehension process of education for sustainable development. First of all, the learning process should be **student-teacher collaboration oriented** – based on the teacher trainers and the students experience and aspirations, assisted by active equity in cooperation and collaboration. Secondly, it should be based on the processes of learning. And thirdly, it should be focused on taking action and appreciation to develop critical thinking and self-awareness of sustainability. Finally, the learning process should be also oriented towards the community to make the students assume the existing problems surrounding them in their everyday lives. It is very essential to build a learning process based on real situations known and common to students because

the successful process of education for sustainable development depends both on students and their entering positive collaboration with teachers.

The process of education cannot be successful without the teacher in it and the teacher plays a major role in the process of education for sustainable development. To perceive and comprehend the process of education for sustainable development the teacher has to pursue an open and flexible approach towards teaching. She/he should have an open mind for assessing new information and student opinions. The teacher should be the main facilitator for productive discourse in class and s/he needs to have talent to involve students and to develop their attitudes, knowledge, skills and experience to take informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

In the process of education of trainee teachers for entering the world of qualified professionals, it is very essential to think more of the ways and paths they can involve the main aims of the education for sustainable development in the learning process and teachers should think more how they can successfully involve the students in the processes of extended life-long education for sustainable development.

### **Problem of research**

Trainee teachers and academic staff widespread sustainable development (SD) and equity issues more professionally if they actively participate in international cooperation projects involving sustainable development and equity issues by collaboration of teacher trainers and teacher trainees (Ratniece 2008).

### **Research study**

The research spotlight is to establish what knowledge, skills, experiences, personal traits and competences teachers have to possess to collaborate in the study process based on collaboration in English language teaching/learning process of the future English as foreign language teachers. The research encompasses an Erasmus sub-programme named EquiTiFoLa, promoted by 12 higher education institutions in the academic year of 2009/2010. It forwarded the following: to improve the quality and to increase the volume of student and teaching staff mobility throughout Europe, so as to contribute to the achievement by 2012 of at least 3 million individual participants in student mobility under the Erasmus programme and its predecessor programmes; to improve the quality and to increase the volume of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe; to improve the quality and to increase the volume of cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises; to facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and training at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others; to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning in the ESD framework.

The 12 higher education institutions from the European Union and even beyond (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, Romania, Norway, the UK and Turkey), which decided to contribute to European Priorities on Erasmus Intensive Programmes (IP), set out in the 2009 Call for Proposals by: focusing on subject areas for which shorter programmes

give a particular added value; giving evidence of full recognition and credits to the activities by the participating institutions; presenting a strong multidisciplinary approach; using ICT tools and services to support the preparation and follow-up of IP, thus, contributing to the creation of a sustainable learning community in the subject area concerned.

In addition, the consortium of teachers agreed to involve the participating students – trainee teachers into maintaining collaboration and team spirit throughout the whole Project procedure and, especially, during the activities of the Intensive Programme (Ratniece 2009).

Human pedagogy theory (Gudjons 1998; Špona 2001) claims school as an influential force in the mutual relationship of social culture, social economy and politics. Therefore, teacher training should enhance the conditions for the quality development of community: positive attitude, “students’ joy to learn and teachers’ wish to work in a creative manner” (Špona 2008).

Contemporary school and university, as “organized” by the state or individuals, are institutions with multiform structure for complex and systematic implementation of students’ balanced development and socialisation functions in interaction: students → teachers → parents → society to reach the needed level of professional competencies. This means that the limelight of the education institution includes the internal and external contacts. Usually the state shifts focus on the internal life of school instead of external contacts which should be changed accordingly. As student’s need to belong to a community of equals increases, amid the communities of equals students implement the act of learning, thus, acquiring the experience of working together, being helpful, responsive and responsible, acquiring the skills of cooperation and organizing work during lessons and beyond. The learning environment at school should be constructed as educational, influencing the person in positive manner. In a class environment, “mutual friendly relation between the students and teachers is one of the most significant factors for the development of personality” (Špona 2006) ready to encounter and adopt ESD ideas. Unfortunately, there is little or no ESD education provided to trainee teachers during studies at higher education institutions, therefore, “no skilful teachers enter the classes. As a result, school practice in the group of adolescents learning in forms 5–9 reveals current socio-pedagogical problems” (Špona 2008). These are two aspects of contemporary life that have become miserable and menacing and which cannot be tackled without educators.

Foreign language teacher training programmes in Latvia, as well as the contents of the subject English as a foreign language (EFL) are based on the classical traditions, with rather little consideration of the latest developments, especially of employing students’ multiple intelligence, culture and creativity to motivate and encourage the language teaching/learning, methodology and benevolent environment creation for the students at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ratniece 2010a).

Most significant to further debate and reflection on the ideas expressed by UNESCO international commission “Education for the 21st century” claiming education throughout life being based upon four pillars: **learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be**. Since publishing the report in 1996 UNESCO force has been involved in follow-up activities to the report,

publishing background studies and holding seminars on issues related to the report for educators from all over the world. Thus, Latvian teacher trainers have joined in education for sustainable development to involve their students – the future teachers.

Education takes place throughout life in many forms, formal and non-formal, none should be exclusive. Nowadays we need to consider education in a more all-encompassing fashion. Likewise the four pillars cannot stand alone. Without all the four pillars education for sustainable development would not be the same. (UNESCO Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Izglītība divdesmit pirmajam gadsimtam], [www.iac.edu.lv/pk/merki.htm](http://www.iac.edu.lv/pk/merki.htm)).

The ideas generated by the analysis of the pedagogical, psychological, theoretical and practical sources, have led RTTEMA academic staff and students to participation in the abovementioned Erasmus project started as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) project, then empowered their academic staff and students by participating in its most recent development – EquiTIFoLa (Equity in Teaching Foreign Languages) with the purpose to sum up new information on the diverse significance of the EFL for the contemporary students. The ideas, knowledge, skills and experience gained by participation in the project's stages and the involvement in IP are being introduced into the training of the potential EFL teachers for the compulsory primary education schools (Forms 3–9) accomplished by RTTEMA. Participation in the Erasmus project stages has already promoted the inclusion of creative attitude and relevant issues into teaching of the course in academic writing. New type of essays such as team essay (written by a student team) have been introduced into the course due to experiences gained by participating in Cultifola in 2008 (Ratniece 2008) and ICT and video project-based instruction (Ratniece 2010b).

The academic year of 2009/2010 brought into studies at RTTEMA issues of equity and ESD as EquiTIFoLa addressed the issues and aimed to produce teaching materials which foster social and ecological sensitivity in students aged 10–18 in content and language integrated (CLIL) lessons.

Also during IP teachers and teacher trainees worked together in international groups, discussed updated, global pedagogical issues, and prepared lesson plans based on common criteria. They planned how to pilot their materials in schools and reflected on their experiences. A CD was produced and disseminated to CLIL schools in Europe containing the input of IP, the lesson plans, the teaching materials and the reflections on the lessons taught with video footage, designed with the intention to widespread among teacher trainees in all countries participating in the project. With every year preparatory and follow-up project activities are enhanced by a forum provided by an Internet-based Learning Management System on a higher level as well (Ratniece 2010c).

Equity and other global issues were designed to be approached in a multi-disciplinary sense: the incorporation of education for sustainable development into different subjects of the school curricula contributed to the development of social and civic competences required for lifelong learning. EquiTIFoLa participants experimented with task-based CLIL lessons with elements from keyboarding skills, communications and arts.

EquiTIFoLa drew on previous project outcomes dealing with Multiple Intelligences, Culture and Creativity as well. The core of the consortium relied on 5 years of cooperation accumulating wealth of experiences in teamwork, which they shared with the participating teacher trainees. Thus, the trainee teachers developed and empowered their knowledge, skills and gained experience on sustainable development promotion for their future pedagogical mission.

Encouraging students to do their best in everything that was required of them, and that they required of themselves, should be the crucial reason why to become a teacher trainer or a teacher.

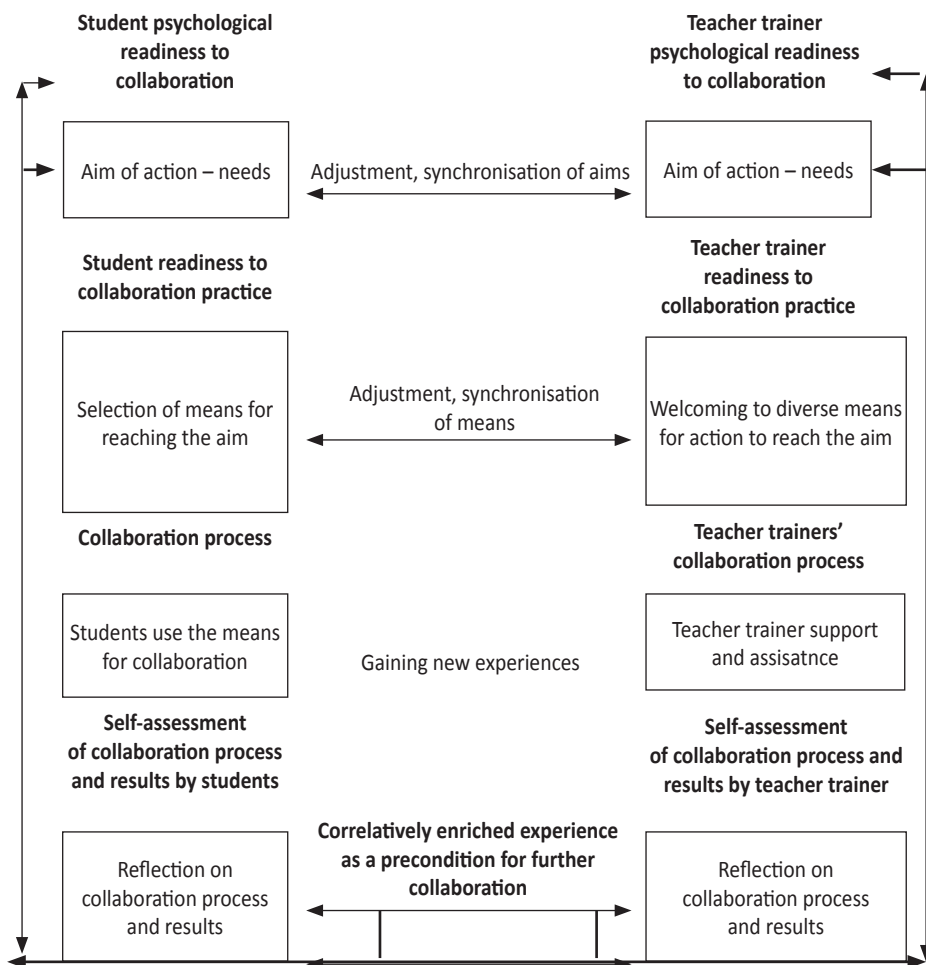
The crucial points on sustainable development and equity were introduced to the teacher trainees by collaboration of the teachers from the respective 11 higher education institutions. The questionnaire made up of 20 questions referring to the process of IP was administered to 47 participants and some of the valid answers analysed, which address the reactions of the students to the sustainable development issues explored and implemented into the videos produced by the students, sample designs and lesson plans used in the lessons conducted by the trainee teachers in schools during the intensive programme. Some interview results disclosing the reactions of the participating students were also included. The questionnaire included such questions as: What equity issues did you notice while observing lessons in schools? What sustainable development issues did you notice while observing lessons in schools? What equity issues do you plan to involve into the lessons you will be conducting in the host country's schools? What sustainable development issues do you plan to involve into the lessons you will be conducting in the host country's schools? How will you support and encourage your international team members during the lesson? What was surprising and innovative in the observed lessons for you in comparison with the lessons you have observed in your home country schools?

## Results of research

The participants considered the knowledge gained, reflected on the most important issues of equity and sustainable development. In national and international teams they produced posters and videos on ESD. Preparatory and follow-up project activities were enhanced by the forum provided by an Internet-based Learning Management System (see Chart 1).

Equity and ESD issues were approached in a multidisciplinary sense: the incorporation of education for sustainable development into different subjects of the school curricula contributed to the development of social and civic competences required for lifelong learning based on sustainable development. Before visiting the IP schools the participants formed their free-choice 4 member international trainee teacher teams for observing and conducting the lessons in the IP offered schools. Thus, at first the trainee teachers in international groups guided by one of the IP teachers went to the chosen schools and observed classes and students. They observed science, history, geography, mathematics, domestic science, PE, EFL classes. Directly after the observed lessons the IP participants answered the questionnaire.

**Chart 1.** Teacher trainer and student collaboration model (Developed in collaboration with Špona A., 2008; upgraded in 2010)



The answers included the following observations: students were highly motivated; talkative, willing to contribute; the teacher's friendly manner, positive and supportive atmosphere; Hi-Tech equipment; a smart board in every class room; mutual respect; relaxed students; allowed to come without footwear to class; multicultural class; freedom of movement within classroom; cooking class for both boys and girls; high level of English; two lessons (45 min. x 2) dedicated to the same topic; students were willing to complete their work; students not disruptive; open, common space within buildings, playgrounds; spacious buildings and grounds, ample classrooms.

As new and unexpected experiences were considered the following: no school uniforms; staff informally dressed; cheeky pupils; seating arrangements; mixed abilities in the classes; too much freedom; work, not play; attention paid

only to talkative pupils; pupils can take some time off from class, not participate in all activities; open, large library; pupils could go on their own to borrow books; observation turned into participation; warm and helpful teachers; teachers ask for pupils' opinions; an assistant for physically impaired pupils; teaching close to real life, problem based; mutual respect; up-to-date equipment in classrooms, special rooms and play grounds; little ethnic diversity in the private school visited.

Each participant compared the observed data to his/her own education system, social behaviour and environment in schools and beyond. Therefore, the received answers were really diverse. At the same time they helped the trainee teachers to learn more not only about the IP host country, but also about their respective countries, when the answers were displayed on the board.

In one of the schools the trainee teachers organized a games' session. The participants of the IP according to the division in international teams (trainee teachers from three or four IP countries formed one team) involved a group of students into their national games and rhythmic songs used for some traditional play-games. The communication turned out very friendly, enthusiastic and exciting for the both parties involved. The trainee teachers shared an opinion that the host teachers were very welcoming and supportive during the games' session. Supposedly the conducting of the lessons for the trainee teachers was in a friendlier environment in this school due to their mutual participation in the games' session.

The IP participants conducted the lessons in international teams of 4 trainee teachers from four different countries. EquiTIFoLa participants experimented with task-based CLIL lessons, with elements from keyboarding skills, communication and arts. They admitted as very useful inclusion of the tasks learnt during the IP workshops and lectures. The trainee teachers also admitted involving into their lessons the observed and shared novelties and innovative approaches. They concluded that the IP introductory lectures, workshops, assistance from the IP teachers for the lesson planning and hints for conducting were of major importance. The teachers and the trainee teachers observing the lessons conducted by the IP participants appreciated mutual support displayed by the trainee teachers conducting the respective lesson in an international team of 4 participants from 4 different countries. The self-assessment was done by each team on the lesson conducted and each member reflected on and self-assessed IP in total as well.

EquiTIFoLa drew also on previous project outcomes dealing with Multiple Intelligences, Culture and Creativity (Ratniece 2010).

By reflecting on the experiences and results, the below mentioned model of criteria, indices and levels was developed for measurement of trainee teacher competences in collaboration with RTTEMA professor A. Špona, habilitated PhD in Pedagogy sciences (see Chart 2).

The model of criteria, indices and levels for measurement of trainee teacher competences highlighting collaboration is displayed to scholars for discussing and suggesting variants for further development and improvement.



**Chart 2.** Model of criteria, indices and levels for measurement of trainee teacher competences highlighting collaboration

Criteria	Indices	Level A	Level B	Level C
Knowledge	1) Knowledge of English: reads, writes, speaks, listens	Perfect knowledge of English	Fluent knowledge of English	Poor knowledge of English
	2) Knows how to teach English	Knows interactive activity organisation	Moderately knows interactive activity organisation	Poor knowledge in interactive activity organisation
	3) Knows collaboration methods	Perfectly knows cooperative learning methods in accordance with pupils' needs	Moderately knows cooperative learning methods in accordance with pupils' needs	Poor knowledge of cooperative learning methods in accordance with pupils' needs
	4) Knows ESD conditions for society, economy and environment	Perfectly knows conditions for ESD	Moderately knows conditions for ESD	Poor knowledge of conditions for ESD
Comprehension/ understanding	1) Can understand causes and reasons of phenomena	Always can understand causes and reasons of phenomena	Often can understand causes and reasons of phenomena	Seldom can understand causes and reasons of phenomena
	2) Responses to self-discovered causes and reasons of phenomena	Always positive response to self-discovered causes and reasons of phenomena	Often positive response to self-discovered causes and reasons of phenomena	Indifferent to (self-) discovered causes and reasons of phenomena
	3) Skills to use self-discovered causes and reasons' phenomena	Instant, self-dependent use of skills in cases of self-discovered causes and reasons' phenomena	Rather slow, self-dependent use of skills in cases of self-discovered causes and reasons' phenomena	Rather slow, with support can use (self-) discovered causes and reasons' phenomena
Skills as ability to use knowledge	1. Reading	Can and is able to read perfectly any texts	Can and is able to read perfectly (textbook) texts	Can and is able to read poorly text-book texts
	2. Speaking	Can and is able to speak perfectly monologues and dialogues	Can and is able to speak moderately monologues and dialogues	Can and is able to speak poorly monologues and dialogues
	3. Writing	Can and is good at creating texts by writing	Can and is moderate at creating texts by writing	Can yet is poor at creating texts by writing
	4. Organising of interactive learning methods	Can and often is good at organizing interactive learning methods	Can and sometimes is good at organizing interactive learning methods	Seldom can organize interactive learning methods
	5. Collaboration methods appropriate for pupils' needs	Good at choosing collaboration methods appropriate for pupils' needs	Moderate at choosing collaboration methods appropriate for pupils' needs	Seldom chooses collaboration methods appropriate for pupils' needs



Shared relationships – living together	1. Organisation	Knows how and systematically organizes cooperative learning in pairs and groups	Partly organizes cooperative learning in pairs and groups	Seldom organizes cooperative learning in pairs and groups
	2. Respect	During teaching/ learning process the teacher always respects pupils (their ignorance) and their parents	During teaching/ learning process the teacher often respects pupils (their ignorance) and their parents	During teaching/ learning process the teacher seldom respects pupils (their ignorance) and their parents
	3. Taking responsibility in collaboration	During teaching/ learning process the teacher and the pupil share responsibility for it equally (50%=>50%)	During teaching/ learning process the teacher and the pupil share responsibility for it unequally (the teacher > than 50%)	During teaching/ learning process the teacher is always responsible for the pupils' learning process (100%)
Attitude	1. Attitude to the profession	I have prepared well for teacher's continuous professional performance (3 points)	I have prepared for teacher's professional performance (2 points)	I have not prepared for teacher's professional performance (1 point)
	2. Attitude to the child	The child is a very great, genuine teacher's treasure	The child is a great, genuine teacher's treasure	The child is a teacher's treasure
	3. Interest in teacher's work	I am very greatly interested in the teacher professional performance	I am interested in the teacher professional performance	I am not much interested in the teacher professional performance
	4. Attitude to collaboration and cooperation	I very highly appreciate collaboration and cooperation with pupils, colleagues and parents	I highly appreciate collaboration and cooperation with pupils, colleagues and parents	I appreciate not very much collaboration and cooperation with pupils, colleagues and parents

## Conclusions

In order to drive positive change, contemporary teachers need the skills and competences to act appropriately – sustainability competences are increasingly seen as part of the normal, required cooperation and collaboration skill set within communities.

Valid knowledge on sustainable development and equity gained in collaboration of the teacher trainees and the academic staff emphasizes their significance for the next generation. The cooperation and collaboration should be developed still further to reach an appropriately high level for ESD.

Through face-to-face workshops, an on-line learning community and the support of contact tutor, the global issues are explored; trainee teachers' thinking developed and both personal and strategic action plans are created which ensure a holistic approach to ESD.

Lesson planning and conducting experience were developed due to the theoretical input, the observation of practice and the lesson conducting in international teams by collaboration.

Teacher Education for ESD in Higher Education of Latvia has to be emphasized. Contemporary society and its education paradigm undergo fast changes. Equity implementation in benevolent, creative student and academic staff collaboration in a study process, involving participation in Erasmus projects, fosters English as a foreign language acquisition by use of ICT materials and involvement of non-traditional real life video and audio materials as well as contributions by students themselves, serves as a precondition of a creative professional's lifelong SD in the EU as well as in entire world democracy's efficient advancement context.

Educators should promote themselves creatively alongside their main collaboration partners – pedagogy students, to attain their common goal – progress due to ESD. Latvian educators should pursue the goal by joint efforts with colleagues outside of Latvia. Shared experiences bring genuine reward.

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## Współpraca z uczniami – przyszli nauczyciele angielskiego

### Streszczenie

Szkolnictwo wyższe na Łotwie jest w trakcie zmiany związanej z trzema zmieniającymi się komponentami: społeczeństwem, indywidualizacją, edukacją.

Celem niniejszych badań jest ustalenie, jaką wiedzę, umiejętności, doświadczenia, cechy indywidualne i kompetencje powinni posiadać nauczyciele mający z powodzeniem przeprowadzić ten proces zmian.

Artykuł przedstawia model kompetencji, które powinni posiadać kształcący się nauczyciele języków obcych: 1) ogólne kompetencje zawodowe (wiedza, sprawności, doświadczenie, myślenie krytyczne, decyzyjność itd.); 2) kompetencje społeczne (kooperacja, zapobieganie i rozwiązywanie konfliktów, tolerancja itd.); 3) zdolności osobiste (kreatywność, inicjatywa, dążenie do celu itd.).