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**Title: Teachers' educators' perceptions of authentic assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups: Trends and Challenges**

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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this work to my father E. Jules OTCHOUN and my mother Angèle TOKOUETE who have given me invaluable support and educational opportunities to complete this Master. They have sacrificed so that I could complete this program. Their quiet strength deterred my moments of doubts and provided anchoring in the midst of the storm.*

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, teachers are facing increasing demands in their work: dealing with diverse groups, supporting the learning process, taking into account the students needs, interacting with students parents ...etc...These challenges require student teachers to be prepared for real professional contexts of their profession. It also requires teacher's educators to be well aware of these challenges.

The aim of this study is to identify the assessment tasks teachers' educators assign in cooperative learning groups. It also aim at finding out what are their perceptions of an authentic assessment task in cooperative learning and how they evaluate its degree of authenticity according to the five-dimensional framework of an authentic assessment (the task, the social context, the physical context, the assessment result, the criteria and standards) developed by (Gulikers & al, 2004).

This qualitative study deals with the trends in teachers' educators' assessment task practices. We conducted it in Norway and France due to our mobility as a student of the Erasmus Mundus Master- Mundusfor. Our sample population comprises 11 teachers' educators either from teacher education for vocational education and training or from general teacher education. They work in university colleges in Norway and teachers training centers in France called *Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres* (IUFM).

Our theoretical background is informed on the one hand by the socio-constructivist nature of cooperative learning that states that learning is a process of successive stages, an interaction between the individual and his environment, with his peer and his teacher (Dyste, 2008) . It is also informed by theories of authentic assessment that posits that discourses, products and performances must have value or meaning beyond success in the training center and reflect professional practices (Newman, Wehlage, 1993). We then asked our participants to reflect on their practices. We used semi-structured interviews to collect the data and proceeded to their discourses content analysis according to an *a priori* coding based on our research questions (types of assessment tasks, authenticity dimensions, and challenges).

Results show that the most common assessment tasks used by the teachers' educators in cooperative learning groups are :( 1) group oral presentations (2) seminars,(3) group research works,(4) oral or written self-reflection tasks,(5) weblogs, (6) group projects and (7) portfolios. These assessment tasks are generally, either prescribed by the curriculum and the national program, or used instinctively by teachers' educators who have perceived the potential of these tasks to induce some professional competences during the training. In addition, during the assessment tasks, the teachers' educators sometimes assign some tasks individually to the student teachers inside the group. However, they consider them as authentic meaningful interactions as the student teachers cannot fulfill their assignments without cooperating with their classmates. The teachers' educators consider those isolated works and reflections inside the cooperative group as useful for the future professional development of the student teachers.

The teachers' educators attach the same importance to our five elements of authentic assessment tasks. However, the physical context, which is rated as the same with the criteria and standards, does not all the time meet their expectations in terms of adequate teaching and learning resources material. The other difficulties are most of the time expressed in terms making students tolerant to peer-assessment on the one hand, and ensuring individual accountability and the group goals when the tradition in grades giving in their respective educational system consists in whether awarding individual grades or group grades on the other hand.

The results suggest that cooperative learning has positive effects in preparing student teachers, and more authenticity in the assessments tasks will provide prospective teachers with the necessary competences to tackle the challenges of their profession. This can only be done with well-trained teachers' educators constantly reflecting on their practices.

Our results also imply that teachers' educators consider the acquisition and the development of professional competences by the prospective teachers as a collaborative and cooperative endeavor that should involve policy makers and professional of Education. The role of stakeholders in teacher education for providing necessary funds, infrastructures for the teachers training centers is seen to be crucial for meeting real-world practices.

Some interesting impulses for theoretical and practical further research suggest investigating on a larger sample on the following questions : student teachers' perceptions of authentic assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups; who should decide on authenticity in education among the stakeholders?; do simulated school-based assessment tasks really account for authentic assessment? The answers to these research questions will certainly provide ways for improving teaching practices in teacher education.

Key words: cooperative learning, authentic assessment, teacher education.

## RÉSUMÉ

De nos jours, les enseignants doivent faire face dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions à des défis de plus en plus complexes. Ces défis sont entre autres la gestion de groupes hétérogènes, l'adaptation et l'accompagnement des processus d'apprentissages en tenant compte des besoins et des spécificités des apprenants, la collaboration soutenue avec les parents d'élèves,...etc. Il devient donc de plus en plus indispensable pour les futurs enseignants d'être formés dans des conditions reflétant le plus fidèlement possible la réalité de leur futur métier et d'acquérir au cours de leur formation initiale les compétences nécessaires pour affronter les interactions et les défis qui les attendent. Cette nécessité exige particulièrement des formateurs d'enseignants d'être au faite de ces défis du terrain et de les intégrer à leurs pratiques d'évaluation.

Cette étude a pour but d'identifier à travers les discours des formateurs d'enseignants, les tendances dans les pratiques d'évaluation utilisées dans les groupes d'apprentissage coopératif pour préparer les futurs enseignants aux réalités concrètes de leur métier. Les apprentissages coopératifs étant considérés comme des travaux en petits groupes pour optimiser les apprentissages de chacun (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Il s'agira particulièrement d'identifier les types de tâches évaluatives qu'ils utilisent, pourquoi ils les utilisent et quelles sont leurs perceptions du degré « d'authenticité » de ces tâches dans un contexte d'apprentissage coopératif. Cette analyse se fera au regard des cinq éléments d'une « évaluation authentique » des apprentissages suggérés par (Gulikers & al, 2004) à savoir la tâche évaluative, le contexte social de la tâche, le contexte physique de la tâche, le résultat de l'évaluation, les critères et les normes de l'évaluation ; ces cinq éléments devant refléter le plus fidèlement possible toutes les dimensions d'une activité professionnelle telles qu'elles se présentent dans la réalité. S'ensuivra ensuite une identification des difficultés rencontrées par les formateurs d'enseignants dans ces conditions.

Les référents théoriques qui sous-tendent notre démarche méthodologique et nos réflexions sont d'une part les considérations socioconstructivistes du fait du caractère coopératif des apprentissages que nous étudions. Les socioconstructivistes stipulent que l'apprentissage est un processus par étapes successives de l'interaction entre l'individu et son environnement, avec ses pairs et avec son formateur (Dyste, 2008). D'autre part cette recherche est aussi sous-tendue par les théories de l'évaluation authentique qui stipulent que les discours, les produits et les performances en formation doivent avoir une valeur et une signification au-delà de la réussite en centre de formation et refléter des pratiques professionnelles utiles et avérées dans la réalité de la future fonction (Newman, Wehlage, 1993). Une « tâche authentique » étant considérée comme celle qu'exécute le professionnel sur le terrain tous les jours.

Cette étude qualitative sur les pratiques de formateurs d'enseignants en matière d'évaluation authentique des apprentissages coopératifs a été réalisée sur un groupe de 11 formateurs d'enseignants choisis en Norvège et en France. Notre échantillon comprend des formateurs d'enseignants pour l'enseignement général et des formateurs d'enseignants pour l'enseignement technique et la formation professionnelle. Ils exercent pour les uns dans les écoles supérieures en Norvège et les autres en Instituts Universitaire de Formation (IUFM) en France. Nos participants ont été invités lors d'entrevues semi-directives à réfléchir sur les tâches d'évaluation qu'ils utilisent et les raisons qui sous-tendent ces choix par rapport à leur authenticité. Les tâches d'évaluation étant entendues ici comme celles qui permettent aux étudiants de démontrer des compétences professionnelles nécessaires à leur futur métier

d'enseignants. Une analyse thématique du contenu des discours selon un codage a priori basé sur nos questions de recherche (les types de tâches évaluatives, les degrés d'authenticité de ces tâches et les défis rencontrés) a ensuite été effectuée.

Les résultats montrent que les tâches d'évaluation considérées comme des outils d'évaluation authentique en apprentissage coopératifs par les formateurs d'enseignants interviewés et couramment sont : (1) les présentations orales de groupes, (2) les séminaires, (3) les travaux de recherche en groupes, (4) les réflexions personnelles ou auto-évaluations écrites ou orales, (5) les blogs ou plateformes numériques interactifs, (6) les élaborations de projets et (7) les portfolios. Ces tâches d'évaluation sont généralement, soit prescrites par le programme en vigueur ou soit utilisées de façon instinctive par les formateurs quand ils y perçoivent un potentiel pour faire acquérir aux étudiants des compétences professionnelles. Même si certaines tâches évaluatives font appel à des réflexions et travaux individuels isolés mais au sein du groupe d'étudiants, les formateurs les perçoivent utiles en interactions significatives pour le développement professionnel des futurs enseignants.

Les formateurs interrogés déclarent aussi accorder la même importance aux cinq éléments de l'évaluation authentique quand ils évaluent leurs étudiants. Le degré d'authenticité des tâches d'évaluations varient entre formateurs d'une part et entre formateurs et autorité politico administrative d'autre part. Toutefois, le contexte physique des tâches d'évaluation qui est considérée de même importance que les critères et les normes d'évaluation n'est pas toujours adapté par manque d'infrastructures, de matériel et de ressources didactiques. A cela s'ajoutent les difficultés à rendre les étudiants tolérants vis à vis de leurs camarades lors des évaluations par leurs pairs et celles liées aux traditions des systèmes éducatifs qui rendent problématiques selon les cas l'attribution de notes individuelles ou de notes de groupe dans ce contexte d'apprentissage coopératif.

Les résultats suggèrent que l'apprentissage coopératif a des effets positifs dans la préparation des futurs enseignants, et que plus d'authenticité dans les tâches d'évaluation permettra aux formés d'acquérir plus de compétences professionnelles à même d'être efficaces dans la relève des défis de leur profession. Cela ne peut se faire aussi qu'avec des formateurs bien formés. Nos résultats impliquent aussi que l'acquisition et le développement des compétences professionnelles des futurs enseignants en apprentissages coopératifs dans des conditions « authentiques » rendent indispensable la mise à disposition par les autorités politico-administratives de l'Education, de centres de formation d'enseignants aux infrastructures adaptés et entretenus par le financement nécessaire à leur fonctionnement optimal. Cette implication des parties prenantes dans la formation est considérée comme cruciale pour la formation initiale et la formation continue des enseignants.

Quelques pistes de recherche se dégagent cependant de nos conclusions. Des études sur un échantillon plus large de participants pourront s'intéresser à la perception qu'on les futurs enseignants de l'authenticité des tâches d'évaluations auxquelles ils sont soumis en apprentissages coopératifs. On pourra aussi se demander si les pratiques professionnelles de l'enseignant, simulées en formation sont vraiment authentiques et reflètent toutes les dimensions de la pratique de tous les jours. Enfin il sera judicieux de se demander qui du professionnel de l'éducation ou du politico-administratif doit fixer le degré d'authenticité des tâches d'évaluation en formation initiale des enseignants. Les réponses à ces questions contribueront certainement améliorer les pratiques des formateurs d'enseignants.

Mots clés : apprentissage coopératif, évaluation authentique, formation des enseignants



## RESUMEN

En la actualidad, los maestros enfrentan un incremento de demandas en su trabajo: manejo de la diversidad, apoyo del aprendizaje, tomar en cuenta las necesidades de los estudiantes, interactuar con sus padres, entre otros. Estos desafíos requieren que los maestros estén preparados para contextos profesionales. También requiere que los formadores de maestros estén bien informados de estos desafíos.

El objeto de este estudio es identificar las tareas de evaluación que llevan a cabo los formadores de maestros en grupos de aprendizaje cooperativos. En este sentido, se indagará las percepciones que los maestros tienen acerca de una auténtica tarea de evaluación en grupos de aprendizaje cooperativo. Para llevar a cabo este objetivo, se evaluará el grado de autenticidad de acuerdo a un marco de teórico de cinco dimensiones sobre la “evaluación auténtica” (tarea, contexto social, contexto físico, resultado de la evaluación, criterios y estándares) desarrollado por (Gulikers *et al*, 2004).

Este estudio cualitativo fue llevado a cabo en Noruega y España de acuerdo a nuestra movilidad como estudiantes del Máster Erasmus Mundus – Mundusfor. La muestra incluye 11 formadores de maestros, tanto del campo de la Educación Vocacional como de la Educación General. Los participantes de Noruega trabajan en Colegios Universitarios de ese país, mientras que los de Francia trabajan en un instituto de Formación de Docentes llamado *Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres (IUFM)*.

Nuestro marco teórico parte de una concepción socio-constructivista de la naturaleza del aprendizaje cooperativo. En este sentido, concebimos el aprendizaje como un proceso sucesivo de estadios de interacción entre el individuo y su ambiente, con sus pares y con sus maestros (Dyste, 2008) Con respecto al concepto de evaluación auténtica, propuesta por esos discursos, entendemos que los productos y los desempeños deben tener valor o significado más allá de los sucesos que tienen lugar en el centro de formación, y también, deben reflejar prácticas profesionales (Newman and Wehlage, 1993) Por este motivo, hemos inquirido a nuestros participantes también sobre sus prácticas profesionales. La recolección de datos se realizó por medio de entrevistas semi-estructuradas, a las que se les aplicó el procedimiento de análisis de contenidos de acuerdo a códigos *a priori* basados en nuestras preguntas de investigación (tipos de tareas, dimensiones de autenticidad y desafíos)

Los resultados muestran que la tarea de evaluación más común utilizada por los formadores de maestros en grupos de aprendizaje cooperativo son: 1) presentaciones orales en grupo, 2) seminarios, 3) trabajos de investigación en grupo, 4) tareas de reflexión oral o escrita, 5) weblogs, 6) proyectos grupales, y, 7) portfolios. Las tareas de evaluación son, por lo general, prescriptas por el currículo y por los programas nacionales, o son usadas porque los profesores han percibido su potencial para mejorar las competencias profesionales. Aunque algunas tareas de evaluación en grupos de aprendizaje cooperativo implican algún tipo de trabajo aislado, los formadores de maestros las encuentran útiles para desarrollar interacciones auténticas y significativas entre los futuros maestros cuando para resolverlas necesitan de la ayuda de sus pares. Estas tareas son consideradas significativas para el desarrollo profesional de los futuros maestros según los formadores docentes.

Los formadores de maestros reconocen la importancia de nuestros cinco elementos de una tarea de evaluación auténtica. Sin embargo, el *contexto físico*, que tiene la misma valoración

de los *criterios y estándares*, no siempre responde a sus expectativas en términos de recursos materiales adecuados para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. Además del problema de la disponibilidad de un contexto físico relevante para las tareas de evaluación, otras dificultades que enfrentan son, por un lado, la tolerancia de los estudiantes a la evaluación de pares, y por otro lado, garantizar el control individual y los objetivos grupales, cuando la tradición de sus respectivos sistemas educativos consiste en otorgar marcas individuales o marcas grupales.

Los resultados sugieren que el aprendizaje cooperativo tiene efectos positivos en la preparación de los maestros, y más autenticidad en las tareas de evaluación beneficiará a los futuros maestros con el desarrollo de competencias necesarias para enfrentar los desafíos de su profesión. Esto sólo puede ser llevado a cabo con formadores de maestros bien entrenados quienes reflexionen constantemente sobre sus prácticas. Nuestros resultados también muestran que la adquisición y el desarrollo de las competencias profesionales de los futuros maestros son consideradas por los formadores de maestros como un esfuerzo colaborativo y cooperativo que debería abarcar niveles políticos y profesionales de la Educación. Es crucial el compromiso de los agentes estatales y sociales en el proceso de formación de maestros de cara a los nuevos desafíos que se presentan, sobre todo en cuanto a la provisión de fondos necesarios para infraestructuras para los Centros de Formación de Maestros.

Desde el punto de vista teórico y práctico sería interesante seguir investigando, sobre una muestra más amplia, acerca de las percepciones que los estudiantes para maestro tienen sobre las tareas de evaluación auténticas en grupos de aprendizaje cooperativo: ¿quién debería decidir sobre la autenticidad de la educación? ¿Los profesionales de la educación o los políticos? Llevar a cabo tareas de evaluación simulada, ¿da cuenta realmente de la autenticidad de la evaluación? Las respuestas a estos interrogantes seguramente mejorarían las prácticas en el ámbito de la Formación de maestros.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje cooperativo, evaluación auténtica, formación de maestros.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Finding the most effective and efficient assessment practices of non –traditional teaching techniques has always challenged educational systems all over the world. Nowadays assessment of knowledge and competencies then appear inseparable from all sort of learning. It even sometimes guides the learning process. A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context (OECD)<sup>1</sup>.

In 2003, the OECD's DeSeCo<sup>2</sup> project issued a final report after a survey in 16 European countries for setting up the key competencies an individual needs today. It has led to three general categories of competencies that include using tools interactively, interacting in heterogeneous groups, and acting autonomously. Each key competency must:

- Contribute to valued outcomes for societies and individuals;
- Help individuals meet important demands in a wide variety of contexts; and
- Be important not just for specialists but for all individuals.

Today's societies place challenging demands on individuals, who are confronted with complexity in many parts of their lives. These demands imply for key competencies that individuals need to acquire. Defining such competencies can improve assessments as well as identify overarching goals for education systems and lifelong learning. Individuals and especially student teachers need a wide range of competencies in order to face the complex challenges of their work.

The demands of teaching contents that are more challenging; to learners that are more diverse suggest a need for teacher education to have teachers' educators skillful in their understanding of the learning strategies they use so that as a result their students acquired the key competences relevant to the teaching profession. A profession is:

*“ a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to high ethical standards and uphold themselves to, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized, organized body of learning derived from education and training at high*

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<sup>1</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation in Europe

<sup>2</sup> Definition, Selection of Competences



level, and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and these skills in the interest of the others.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, assessment practices that help to build and to identify required competences play a central role in educational systems whether as proof of training (certification assessment), to check if knowledge and competencies have been acquired (summative assessment), to assess the level attained and the learner’s potential to continue in one way or another (forecasting assessment), to measure the level reached by an age group or a school population (diagnostic assessment). There are then as many learning processes as assessment forms, tools and practices. A learning task stimulates students to develop competencies whereas with an assessment task, students demonstrate the competencies (Gulikers & al, 2004)<sup>4</sup>.

As an instructional methodology with many techniques, cooperative learning does not escape an eventual assessment. In cooperative learning, small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject and produce a final work or product in a teaching method. It may seek to social attitudes, knowledge, problem-solving ability, managerial competencies...etc. It depends on the intended goals of the work assigned. The major feature of these learning groups is that there are designed to maximize each group member learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999)<sup>5</sup>. It is becoming very common to use cooperative learning in tutorial activities and course assignments. Increasingly praised as a successful educational method, it is gaining the attention of teachers’ educators who must prepare the student teachers for the teaching profession.

Many researchers have found out that cooperative learning has many potential advantages for students. Cooperative learning helps student to learn how to develop and to build interpersonal skills (Freeman, 1995)<sup>6</sup> and to learn how to develop them (Slavin, 1987)<sup>7</sup>. Among these social skills are: trusting and providing support to team members, communicating effectively, providing support and assistance (Johnson and Johnson,1981)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dr John Southwick, 'Australian Council of Professions' view', during proceedings of a joint conference on competition law and the professions, Perth, April 1997

<sup>4</sup> Gulikers, J.Bastiaens,T., & Kirschner, P, (2004), *A five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment*. Educational Technology Research and Development, 52(3), 67-86.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989)., *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Edina, Minn. : Interaction Book Company.

<sup>6</sup> Freeman M (1995). *Peer assessment by groups of group work*, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, vol 20, no 3, pp 289-292.

<sup>7</sup> Slavin, R. (1987), *Cooperative learning and the cooperative school*, Educational Leadership, vol 45, no 3, pp 7-13.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson ,D.W .& Johnson ,R.T. , (1981), *Effects of cooperative and individualistic learning experiences on interethnic interaction*, Journal of Educational Psychology, vol 73, no 3, pp 444-449.

challenging team members and engaging in constructive conflicts resolution . In fact, they acquire a sense of social responsibility (Vermette, 1988)<sup>9</sup>. Cooperative learning also helps the students to build cognitive skills (Freeman, 1995) because they need to reorganize their way of thinking in relation to the group so that they can explain concepts to the other team members.

Moreover, cooperative groups' works have proved to obtain higher achievement scores than individualistic groups after a test and students working in group become active learners as they discuss with teachers and can better learn course material. They have positive feeling towards school (Slavin and AI, 1985)<sup>10</sup>. Being in a cooperative group thus enhances self-esteem after a success. Research by (Johnson and Johnson, 1989)<sup>11</sup> sum up all these positive aspects of cooperative learning by indicating that compared with competitive and individualistic efforts, cooperative learning typically results in higher achievement and greater productivity; more caring, supportive and committed relationships; and greater psychological, health, social competence and self-esteem. It thus has a positive impact on the student achievement (Ream, 1990)<sup>12</sup>.

These studies although they are about the use of cooperative learning with young people revealed that the few teachers who master cooperative learning activities have positive effects. These positive outcomes cannot be achieved otherwise and then call for the need to prepare student teachers for that. There is then as a result a need for teachers' educators to be prepared through their training, to adjust their teaching and learning methods but to also find efficient ways to make sure that theirs learners achieve valuable competencies whatever the learning context, and in particular in a cooperative learning environment which is gaining more attention in teacher education.

In addition, judging from the many competencies Cooperative Learning permits learners to acquire, teachers' educators need good knowledge about assessment tasks and tools related to this learning method to apply it effectively for their student teachers. As a result, it is necessary for them to reflect on their practices and to get insights on their assessment

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<sup>9</sup> Vermette PJ (1988) ,*Cooperative grouping in the classroom*, Social Studies, vol 79, no 6, pp 271-273.

<sup>10</sup> Slavin, R., Sharan S, Kagan S, Hertz-Lazarowitz R, (1985), *Learning to cooperate, cooperating to learn*, New York: Plenum Press

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989), *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Edina, Minn. : Interaction Book Company.

<sup>12</sup> Ream TA (1990), *Selected effects of cooperative learning*, in MM Dupuis & ER Fagan (eds) *Teacher education: reflection and change*. United States of America: Pennsylvania State University.

practices of a cooperative learning works or tasks. These reflections are also indispensable for tackling the most common reproaches to cooperative learning this: the awarding of equal grades to all the members of the group regardless of their participation or contribution and a weak hold on individual achievement. Teachers must then question, reflect on and understand how they assure fairness and efficiency through their assessment tasks of the professional competences of student teachers as far as the balance between group goals and individual accountability are concerned. This insight is also necessary as the assessment tasks can determine or influence students' motivation to learning. Such a questioning is then important for the improvement of professional practices in both general Teacher Education as well as Teacher Education for Vocational Education and Training and teaching profession-oriented studies.

The aim of this study is thus to determine through teachers' educators discourses their current practices of assessment tasks, the eventual challenges they confront and assessment forms or tools that they think best fit the cooperative learning activities they assign to their student teachers. Such a study may help us to contrast our experiences as student and intern in Norway and France, two different educational and cultural settings.

## **1.2 Background of the study**

Our willingness to carry out this study derives from our learning and studies experiences in Norway and in France through the mobility path of our Erasmus Mundus Master program Mundusfor. This mobility requires apart from the academic studies, an internship in each country in order to have practical experiences of professional practices. In this program, the specialization of Norway is in *Teacher Education for Technical and Vocational Education and Training* whereas that of France is *Education of Teachers, of Educators in Enterprises and of Consultants*.

From these experiences in two different contexts, we have noticed contrasting teaching methods and learning strategies; especially the abundant use of cooperative learning techniques in Norway and much less use of this technique in France. We think that this learning strategy deserves a special attention so as to understand, to explore and to identify what can derive from professional teachers' educators experiences and practices in a cooperative learning settings and that can be shared and lead to the improvement of learning processes and the assessment of profession-oriented studies especially in the field of Teacher Education.

It subsequently appears that the cultural, political, social and economical features greatly determine the type of learning as well as the perspectives of assessment practices prevailing in educational system. Teaching methods and assessment practices then depend on the social, economical, political and cultural model a country wants to enhance and build.

With such a cross- national contrast fresh insights can be gathered from the diversity of the discourses and highlight the assessment tasks as far as cooperative learning is concerned in Teacher Education, and then identify the best practices about this learning strategy that is increasingly being used all over the world. Being not a straight comparison between Norway and France, our objective is to ensure a broad scope of practices, as the choice of those research sites is inherent to our mobility scheme as Erasmus Mundus student.

The two countries (Norway and France) with their specific characteristics and our two internships thus serve as the general background of this study that aims at exploring and understanding teachers' educators or teaching profession-oriented studies teachers' educators' discourses about assessment tasks in a cooperative learning setting of Higher Education institutions dealing with Teacher Education.

### **1.2.1 Educational context in Norway**

As a very egalitarian Scandinavian country of the North of Europe, with 4,7 millions of inhabitants, Norway has over the last decade undergone a major reform to improve its educational system and especially Teacher Education. The 2006 Knowledge Promotion Reform is the latest in the 10-year compulsory school and in upper secondary education and training. This comprehensive curriculum places increased focus on basic skills and knowledge promotion through outcome-based learning<sup>13</sup>:

- The core curriculum
- The quality framework
- Subject curricula
- Distribution of teaching hours per subject
- Individual assessment

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<sup>13</sup> Retrieved on August 10,2010 from [www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Artiker/\\_Larerplaner/\\_english/Knowledge-promotion](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Artiker/_Larerplaner/_english/Knowledge-promotion)

The teachers must be able to provide the pupils with basic skills that include the ability to express oneself orally, the ability to read, numeracy, the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools. The government shows the guidelines for implementation of specific aspects of this reform through some “White Paper”, a set of propositions, guidelines to the Norwegian parliament to vote.

In Norway, the Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for carrying out the national educational policy through legislation, regulations, curricula and framework plans. It fulfills its role through many executive agencies like the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (primary and secondary education), NOKUT (Agency for Quality assurance in Education), VOX (Agency for lifelong learning, adult education)...etc

This overall supervision does not contradict the decentralization of the system and extensive academic powers are awarded to accredited institutions. The municipalities are responsible for operating and administrating primary and lower secondary schools whereas the county authorities deal with secondary education and training. As the responsible for universities and universities colleges, the state as a result deals with teacher education. Recently the White Paper on Teacher Education<sup>14</sup> put great emphasis on subject knowledge and teaching skills, quality of studies and research orientation. Among its key objectives for teacher education are:

- Improving quality of practical training
- Mentoring for all newly qualified teachers
- Increased recruitment and New paths to the teaching profession
- Centers of teaching excellence
- National research school

The overall goal this reform in teacher education in Norway is as we sum up in the following table to improve teaching practices and assessment tasks perspectives:

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<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Education and Research ( February 2009), White Paper on Teacher Education “ The teacher- the role and the education” (2008-2009) report to the Storting N°11 retrieved August10 2010, [www.kunnskapsdepartementet.no](http://www.kunnskapsdepartementet.no)

Some of the White Paper N°11 reform's objectives	Some of the expected goals
The teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Competence in school subjects and how they may contribute the learning of basic skills</li> <li>-Understanding school purpose and its significance to society at large</li> <li>-Ability to cooperate and to reflect on their own practices and that of the school</li> </ul>
Reinforcing teaching practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fostering the link between teaching practice and working experiences</li> <li>-Quality assurance framework for teaching practice</li> </ul>
Gradual enlargement of Master programmes	It is desirable for teachers to hold a master degree
Enhance quality of education and research	Teacher education must be research –based, development oriented and adaptable
National supervision and control	-The ministry assume with all the stakeholders curriculum regulations, policy dialogue, capacity design, performance measurements
Increased recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increasing the number of applicant to teacher education for improving supply of teachers</li> <li>-Elevating the status of the teaching profession</li> </ul>
Mentoring for all newly qualified teachers	Teachers develop their professional identity during their first year

Table 1: Major objectives of the current Teacher education reform in Norway

The overall consideration of the “White Paper” is that Education must be equitable, free, and inclusive and organized in a lifelong learning perspective to meet changes in society constructively. Education is considered as everyone concern.

The prospective teachers in Norway generally entered the teaching profession after three years of training in university colleges and other technical colleges. They must hold a bachelor degree. However, with the on going process is to have qualified teachers with master degrees at the end of their training. The philosophical idea for education in Norway is learning by doing. In order to achieve that, teaching methods are student- centered, aiming at developing competences and skills for working life and life itself. In few words, the main goal of teacher education is to get useful knowledge. For this reason, it is logical in teacher education to think of teaching methods that emphasis practical works. Therefore, the student teachers are widely subject to:

- a. Collaborative learning and team work
- b. Use of Projects and portfolios
- c. Creativity and quality work and production
- d. Communication, counselling and mentoring, which is very important in the helping of pupils to choose the programme more adapted to their needs and wishes

To sum, this context of education in Norway seeking more practical ways to meet the challenges of the teacher work on the one hand, and hence that of the society on the other hand, has been one of the reasons we chose to investigate on this topic.

### **1.2.2 Educational context in France**

France, a west European country with almost 65 millions of inhabitants has a very centralized educational system that praises competition and elitism. The ministry of education is responsible for pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education (university level). It involves at different level, special education for people with disabilities and vocational education. France is also implementing a reform to improve its educational system and adapt it to current realities. The ongoing reform is to redesign and improve teacher education. The objectives and the goals are the same with the reforms in Norway: ensuring better-qualified teachers, professional practices, and reflexive teachers. The *Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres* (IUFM) are the teachers training centers responsible for initial teacher

training until the validation of their training. Successful applicant teachers spend the first year of initial training to prepare for the national recruitment examination and the second year for acquiring practical knowledge for teaching. However, candidates must hold a bachelor degree to take part in the recruitment exam. The following figure shows in details the process for becoming teacher trained in the IUFM.

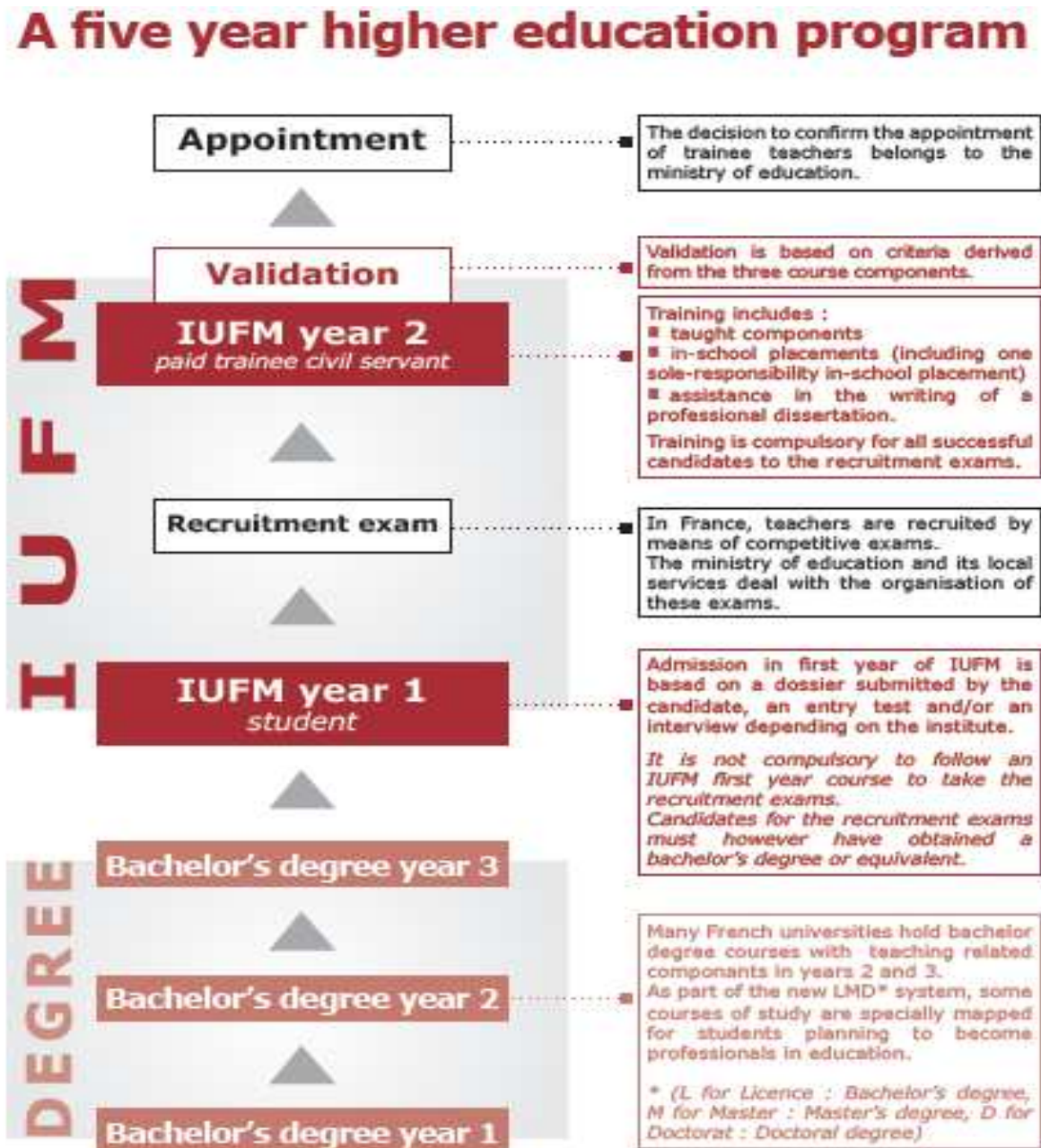


Figure 1<sup>15</sup>: A five-year higher education program in IUFM in France

<sup>15</sup> From Portail des IUFM, [http://www.iufm.education.fr/connaitre-iufm/plaquettes\\_documents/en\\_IUFM2.html](http://www.iufm.education.fr/connaitre-iufm/plaquettes_documents/en_IUFM2.html)



The goal of the training provided in the IUFM is to meet the national objectives and provide the prospective teachers with the following competences<sup>16</sup>:

- being good civil servant and master French language
- mastering French language for teaching and communication skills
- acquiring a good knowledge of their subjects
- Be able to conceive and implement his teaching and innovating
- Knowing how to manage a class
- Taking into account the diversity of the pupils
- Assessing pupils
- Working in team and cooperate with parents and school partners

In France the IUFM are going to be part of the universities and a qualified teacher must hold a master degree to participate in the competitive recruitment examination. This process effectively started in 2008 leading to first university master degrees programs leading to the teaching professions will start on September 2010 the transitory year. The pedagogical and practical training will take place at the end of the master. This year the first cohort of teachers holding master degree will move directly from the university to the classroom. The new qualified teachers are supposed to have mentors but the latter number is insufficient. Critics of this reform argue that the practical aspects of the teaching professions are left aside. Prospective teachers will lost sight of the real teaching world and be formatted only academically with theories. They will no longer have the dual training provided by the IUFM, which include training at school and practical experiences with teaching in classrooms before the end of their training. In addition, critics argue that the assessments of student teachers are likely to be only theoretical and lose their relevance to real-world practices or effective professional practice. An evidence of that change in teacher education in France is that from September 2010, more than six thousand<sup>17</sup> newly qualified teachers, only trained at the university and without any pedagogical training will be responsible for whole classes under a casual supervision of a mentor. There is then an appeal to leave the practical aspects of teacher training to the IUFM.

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<sup>16</sup> Cahier des charges de la formation des maîtres en institut universitaire de formation des maîtres (A. du 19-12- 2006 JO du 28-12-2006)  
Article 5

<sup>17</sup>From [lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr) [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/09/02/la-drole-de-rentree-des-professeurs-stagiaires\\_1405451\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/09/02/la-drole-de-rentree-des-professeurs-stagiaires_1405451_3224.html)

With respect to our study, this French context of educational reforms deepens our intention to investigate on ways to make the teacher training reflecting real teachers' professional practices. In addition, our experience from our internships has also informed the background of this study.

**1.2.3 Experiences from internships and the topic**

**1.2.3.1 Internship in Norway: Teaching and learning in a digital world**

This internship took place at LATINA LAB a laboratory of research and development of e-learning solutions in Oslo University College and its partners. The acronym LATINA stands for Learning and Teaching in a Digital World. The following topics are highlighted in Latina Lab:

<p><b>1. Global education in a digital world</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The construction and use of individual and collective learning spaces.</li> <li>- Teaching and learning as forms of digital production.</li> <li>- Students as developers and co-researchers.</li> <li>-Blended learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>2.Tools for digital collaborative production and presentation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blogs and word processors: learning-by-writing</li> <li>- Digital story telling: design, production and use.</li> <li>- Triggers for learning: design, production and use.</li> <li>- Interaction frameworks: wikis, blogs and learning platforms</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Retrieval and reuse as knowledge construction.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recombination of online resources</li> <li>-Data mining and management</li> <li>- Statistical reasoning: data collection, processing, presentation and use</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Museums, libraries, and archives as learning institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large-scale digitization projects</li> <li>- From collections to co-production</li> <li>-The economy of culture and creativity</li> </ul> <p><b>5. The role of the Web in the global knowledge society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The growth and structure of the Web</li> <li>- The social impact of the Web</li> <li>- The cultural impact of the Web</li> </ul>
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Table 2: the topics highlighted in Latina Lab (Oslo University College)

During my internship of six weeks period with a group of international interns of Erasmus Mundus program, I participated in the following projects:

**-The Lingua project** with translation of project and course materials from English into languages (Spanish, Polish and French) and with a corresponding experience-based comparative analysis of automated versus manual approaches.

**-The Count the Traffic project** in which the activities in an academic library was classified according to location, service type and patron behavior and a statistical survey was produced in order to improve the relevance and quality of library services.

**-The Glossa project** (Global Statistics for Advocacy) which is a training program that was developed for the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and for which training materials were developed.

**-The ACHRON Project-** phase one. ACHRON (Art and Cultural Heritage Resources on-line) is a project to develop and identify educational practices and design patterns in the field of digitally supported art and cultural heritage dissemination. Phase one of this project that was conducted in the fall 2009 consisted in the development and the run of one course on digital dissemination and relationship building for Norwegian museum curators. As interns, we produced visual documentation using video and still images based on interviews with one-lecturer and course participants.

At the end of the internship, we organized a public outreach seminar that was a public summary event for us based on our participation and analysis of our experiences during the internship period with intensive use of weblogs as tool for blogging and active reflections, self-reflections; and debate among us with our supervisors.

However, during this internship, i constantly considered as part of the background of this study, the cooperative aspects of our activities especially the tools for digital collaborative production and presentation on the one hand; and on the other hand, the ways our supervisors tried to assess us and to insure individual accountability and our group goals.

To sum, during this internship, we have been subject to different tools for assessing and enhancing group learning by our supervisors such as (group presentation, discussions, blogging, and peer assessment).

### **1.2.3.2 Internship in France: Discourses' analyses of professionals to find out their competences at work**

This internship lasted ten weeks. It took place at the *Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Professionnalisations*<sup>18</sup> (LERP), a laboratory of research and educational development of the University of Reims Champagne Ardennes in France. It is located inside the *Institut Universitaire de Technologie*<sup>19</sup> (IUT) of Reims. The LERP specializes in issues of professionalization, of definition of skills between knowledge and professionalism, the issues of professions and occupations, pedagogical and structural aspects of training programs in the public and the private sectors. We consider professionalization here as the social, cultural, political, educational and economic process whereby people come to engage in an activity for pay or as means of livelihood. Professionalism rather refers here to the expertness of a professional person. We designate by occupations, people habitual employments. The laboratory aims at promoting interdisciplinary research approaches in Research and focuses on studies about changes that affect the process of professionalization. Changes influencing preparation and access to employment are also of great importance. It focuses on joint and complementary overlapping dimensions of the process of professionalization leading from higher education to work life. This laboratory is logically part of international educational partnerships and especially part of the Erasmus Mundus Master Mundusfor consortium.

During this internship, which last ten weeks, we participated in a collaborative research project, that involves the LERP laboratory and a private vocational training center. Because of some confidential aspects, we cannot mention the training center name and some details of the project; the project being still on process. Nevertheless, we can say that the main objective of the research is to ensure and identify a broad scope of practices, available competences, required competences and needed competences as far as Food Safety Management is concerned. The competences to look for are to be in relation with the domains of Hygiene, Quality, Security and Environment. The sample population comprises persons working in these fields of work. We investigated with the administration of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

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<sup>18</sup> Laboratory of Studies and Research on Professionalization

<sup>19</sup> University institute of Technology

For the LERP the research project stands for a critical reflection on professionalization, professional competences and an understanding of the evolution of activities in the domain of Food Safety Management.

This internship topic somewhat new to me and very different in context from the first one was very fruitful and rewarding in term of new knowledge gained. I had, in addition to knowledge of management processes some notions of a multitude international food processing standards norms and accreditations. I identified some commonly used in the domain of food processing.

They include:

- Hazard Analysis and Critical control points( HACCP) that is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product. The hazard is a biological, chemical, or physical agent that is reasonably likely to cause illness or injury in the absence of its control.
- International Organization for Standardization 22000 (ISO 22000) ,that is a generic food safety management standard. It defines a set of general food safety requirement and applies to all the organizations directly or indirectly involved in the food chain. It uses HACCP and is designed specifically for food processing organizations.
- International Food Standard (IFS) mainly use in France, Germany and Italia as a certification system to guarantee food health and safety standards for distributor-brand processed foods

I then participated during this internship in the following activities related to the project:

- ✓ Attendance of interviews
- ✓ Transcription of interviews
- ✓ Designing of some of the research instruments such questionnaires and analytical framework for human resources manager discourses content analysis
- ✓ Identification of the persons whose functions have a direct impact on quality and food management safety in general
- ✓ Identification of professional competencies available through the content analysis of the interviews
- ✓ Identification of professional competencies needed through the content analysis of the interviews

- ✓ Identification of professional competencies acquired at work through the content analysis of the interviews
- ✓ Evaluation of the gap between available competences needed or required competences.
- ✓ Crosschecking of results with two qualitative analysis software (Alceste and Tropez)
- ✓ interpretations of results

Some observations led me to conclude preliminarily that the human resources managers manage by competences in recruiting the persons that have the required profile for the work. They also manage through competences by arranging and adapting the available competences in their enterprise to meet commercial challenges. The project being still on progress, my other preliminary conclusions is that all the person interviewed acknowledge that working in a real professional setting help and induce them to acquire professional competences in a practical and directly useful way.

All these activities occurring in a real research project provided me, apart from the classes, we had within Mundusfor framework, with a useful and necessary experience and practical research attitudes and methods background to undergo this study. From the interviews, I also reached the conclusions that a real professional setting, an authentic one has a great potential for learning real world practices. This internship also provided me with the some research tools( grids of discourses analysis) and training for qualitative studies and an understanding of how the work context helps to build new professional competences which can be pedagogical useful for us as future trainer in and for enterprises. Furthermore, it has helped to have a taste of the dynamics a collaborative research conducted by a group of teachers and researchers.

Briefly, the experiences from the internships immersed me in the dynamics of group works and qualitative research methods. They have comforted my interest to know more about group works and efficient assessment tasks to assess individual achievement or accountability in cooperative group works.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

There is an increasing emphasis on the use of cooperative learning in Teacher education because in many education systems the most dominant pattern of classroom organization for instruction is whole class (Veenman, & al, 1987)<sup>20</sup>. This is due to the facts that current teacher training methodologies do not promote cooperative learning and some teacher's educators are

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<sup>20</sup> Veenman, S., Voeten, M., & Lem, P. (1987). *Classroom time and achievement in mixed age classes*. Educational Studies, 13(1), 75–89.

not familiar with all the aspects of this teaching method even if they are required to implement it sometimes. As a result, student teachers perpetuate individualistic and competitive learning in their classroom once they have finished their training because they are not trained to facilitate learning in small groups. These negative experiences tend to label cooperative learning as not suitable for teacher education and effective professional teaching practices.

According to (Johnson & Johnson 1999)<sup>21</sup>, teachers must have a good knowledge of the nature of cooperation and the essential components of a well-structured cooperative lesson in order to improve effectively the learning process. The teachers with real expertise in the use of cooperative learning groups must include five essential components in the instructional activities: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). This also applies to teachers' educators who use it.

Furthermore, the need for student teachers to be endowed with effective professional skills and the extent to which their achievements enable them to be efficient practitioners increases when they have been trained with cooperative learning courses. Some researchers have obviously pointed to some weaknesses of cooperative learning : the setting up of dysfunctional group, an acute mismatch of personalities leading to an inability to work together so as to deliver the desired outcomes, and a lack of democracy within the group to attain a consensus on how a task should be carried out (Beckam, 1990)<sup>22</sup>. However, little has been said about the strategies the teacher's educators use to assess efficiently individual achievement in a cooperative group and to cope with all the impending difficulties. According to (Conway and al, 1993)<sup>23</sup>, the first concern of cooperative learning should be the fairness of assessment as students' behavior and attitudes to learning are highly influenced by the assessment system. Cautioning against abuse and overuse (Randall, 1999)<sup>24</sup> sees vague goals and poor expectations of accountability in a cooperative learning as threat to cognitive skills. According to her, making the group members responsible for each other places a too great burden on some active students and this cooperative learning gives way to lower level of

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<sup>21</sup> Johnson, D.& Johnson, R. (1999). *Making cooperative learning work*, Theory into Practice, 38(2),67-73.

<sup>22</sup> Beckman, M. (1990) ,*Collaborative learning: preparation for the workplace and democracy?* , College Teacher, vol 38, no 4, pp 128-133.

<sup>23</sup> Conway R, Kember D, Sivan A & Wu M (1993), *Peer assessment of an individual's contribution to a group project*, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, vol 18, no 1, pp 45-54.

<sup>24</sup> Randall, V.( 1999), *Cooperative Learning: Abused and Overused?*, The Education Digest 65, no. 2 October: 29-32.

thinking and ignores the strategies necessary for the inclusion of independent critical high level. The weakest members of the group would all the time rely on the other for the result. Moreover, the participation of students in a cooperative group varies. Some greatly commit themselves while the others put in the minimum effort. This usually brings about tension inside the group. Furthermore, the current reproach to this teaching strategy is the awarding of equal grades to all the members of the group regardless of their participation or contribution. It is also common to hear students saying : “*It is not fair that someone in the group who did not do the task gets the same grade like me. He just nodded and we did all the work!*”

Due to these weaknesses of cooperative learning, the concerns for better professional practices of teachers have then led to a growing sentiment that more realistic and innovative assessment tasks are now needed in teacher education to target the complexities of the knowledge that qualified teachers bring to bear in their professional practices (Shulman, 1987)<sup>25</sup> as well as the subtleties of innovative teaching practices (Smith, 1990)<sup>26</sup>. The major problem of teaching and teacher education is the problem of moving from intellectual understanding of teaching and assessment to performance in practice (Kennedy, 1999)<sup>27</sup>. Teaching must build upon and modify students' prior knowledge (Villegas 1997)<sup>28</sup>. The responsive teachers select and use instructional materials that are relevant to students' experiences outside school (Hollins, 1989)<sup>29</sup>. He must also design instructional activities that engage students in personally and culturally appropriate ways (Garibaldi, 1992)<sup>30</sup> and use a variety of assessment strategies that maximize students' teachers opportunities to display what they actually know in ways that are familiar to them (Moll, 1988)<sup>31</sup>. The teachers' educators should make use of tasks that are relevant to professional practices in cooperative learning groups.

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<sup>25</sup> Shulman, L.S. (1987). *Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of a new reform*. Harvard Educational Review

<sup>26</sup> Smith, K.E. (1990). *Developmentally appropriate education or the Hunter teachers assessment model: Mutually incompatible alternatives*. Young Children

<sup>27</sup> Kennedy, M. (1999). *The role of pre-service teacher education*. , In L. Darling-Hammond, & G. Sykes, *Teaching as the learning profession* (pp. 59}85). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

<sup>28</sup> Villegas, A. (1997)., *Assessing teacher performance in a diverse society*, In L. Goodwin, *Assessment for equity and inclusion: Embracing all our children* (pp. 262}278). New York: Routledge.

<sup>29</sup> Hollins, E. (1989), *A conceptual framework for selecting instructional approaches and materials for inner-city black youngsters*. Paper commissioned by the California Curriculum Commission, Sacramento, California.

<sup>30</sup> Garibaldi, A. (1992), *Preparing teachers for culturally diverse classrooms*, In M. Dilworth, *Diversity in teacher education: New expectation* (pp. 23}39). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>31</sup> Moll, L.,(1988). *Some key issues in teaching Latino students*. *Language Arts*, 65(5), 465}472.



Then the problems that arise is how to assess student teachers in a learning method (cooperative learning) that is increasingly used in teacher education and make sure to fit real-world practices despite the pointed out weaknesses of cooperative learning. These concerns appeal to question the strategies used by teachers' educators more specifically the assessment tasks they use and what dimensions of these tasks they take into account as reflection of the reality. How do they handle these issues of individual achievement and accountability in group works in teacher education where there is a common agreement that student teachers should be prepared and educated to master efficiently their future work either individually or collaboratively with their colleagues later on in their workplace? Do cooperative works ultimately lead to the same individual achievement or competences as tends to assume the common grade generally allocated to group works?

As pointed it out by (Darling- Hammond, Snyder, 2000)<sup>32</sup>, without an appreciation for the dynamics and the interactions occurring in classroom reality, and for the multidimensional problems and possibilities posed by individual learners or cooperative groups of learners, it would be difficult for teachers' educators to apply the theoretical knowledge they know to practice. It is then a requisite for teachers' educators to know the efficient tasks to assess their students, to develop such abilities and to question their practices by reflecting on them rather than assuming a single approach to teaching or a single right answer to teaching and assessment issues. Moreover, without an understanding of the learning environment in addition to its related assessments tools and the expectations from the training in terms of outcomes, achievements and professional competences in general, it would be difficult for teachers' educators to make good judgments about their students' professional competences. Teaching in ways that are responsive to student teachers requires teachers' educators to be able to engage in systematic learning from teaching and assessment practices contexts as well as from more generalized theory about teaching and learning within constant reflections to better their practices.

We have also asked ourselves during the regular classes we had and the cooperative tasks we carried out with our classmates during our internship how our teachers and supervisors

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<sup>32</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., & Snyder, J. (2000)., *Authentic assessment of teaching in context*. Teaching and Teacher Education, 16(5-6), 523-545.

managed to assess our individual achievement in relation to the common work. Our intention with this study is to understand and explore through teachers' educators stories the different assessment tasks they use in cooperative learning groups; and how they make sure that the individual student teacher demonstrates evidence of cognitive skills (excellent judgment and independent thinking) and social skills, as required by the professional life. Our purpose also leads to question according to what criteria the teachers' educators convince themselves that the student teacher is ready for workplace.

To address and explore this issue, we framed the study questions for figuring out the trends in teachers' educators' assessment tasks practices in cooperative learning groups of student teachers, and allowing them to share their experiences. Our overall objective is to know more about how a teacher educator can assess effectively and efficiently through cooperative learning assessment tasks that the student teacher really developed appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for himself as student and in cooperation with his fellows. This study also intends to know to what extent the teachers' educators care about the assessment task, its physical context, the social context, the criteria and the assessment result.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Instead of implementing set routines, teachers' educators need to reflect on their practices in order to become ever more skillful in their ability to assess student teachers and induce in the latter, professional competences that can be effective under different circumstances of teaching. Moreover, the assessment tasks for judging their competences must reflect real life whatever the learning environment. Teacher education and teachers' educators as a result must then use appropriate tasks and assessment forms or tools to ensure that the students teachers acquire all the professional competences he/she needs to act in a real professional setting.

This type of inquiry should prove to be useful for educators and policy makers engaged in the reform of the assessment practices in teacher education and those calling for authentic assessment tasks to provide the prospective teachers with the necessary tools they will need. It is an opportunity for developing teachers' thinking about some practices they used to take for granted.

The aim of this study is to contribute to a dialogue that shores up the theory behind authentic assessment and construct more resilient forms of authentic assessment tasks in theory and in practice for teacher education. We will also gain responses and insights with dealing with

heterogeneous groups. The need to explore ways and identifying good practices for assessing individual students achievements in a cooperative learning will help trainers, teachers and pedagogical responsible in education institutions to better their practices and to make cooperative learning more efficient for the students outcomes.

This study is also important for student teachers as during their initial training, they will be very early aware of the challenges of assessment in cooperative learning. As the tendency is for cooperation in society and partnership in education, this study is significant to the future generations as succeeding in learning to work cooperatively with others without frustrations will influence positively their work life and the society as a whole.

In addition, this study also reports on the teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning, some aspects that need to be considered if this pedagogical approach to teaching and learning is to be used more widely in teacher education. Investigating on teachers' educators perceptions of cooperative learning as a pedagogical practice will help to determine how it can be effectively implemented, how it can bring about adequate and innovative assessment tasks and improve teacher education.

Concisely, investigating on the trends of assessment tasks considered as authentic in cooperative learning groups in teacher education will provide some leads to designing appropriate assessments tasks of cooperative tasks in teacher education.

## **1.5 Research purpose and questions**

### **1.5.1 Research Purposes**

Our purpose with this dissertation is to obtain an understanding of the kind of assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups of student teachers teachers' educators use; and to what extent according to them those assessment tasks are authentic. There will also be a focus on how teachers' educators from France and Norway make the balance between the group goals and the individual accountability. The overall goal is to explore ways by which teachers' educators handle both the dilemma of cooperative learning and individual assessment tasks and that of authentic assessment tasks for the student teachers' professional practices. The interviews we had with them are meant to induce self-reflections on their practices. The data of this study are based on their discourses.

As defined by Schon, reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Schon, 1996)<sup>33</sup>. It is then thoughtful skill of thinking through and often discussing an experience with another person. He suggested that the capacity to reflect on action to engage in a process of continuous learning was one of the defining characteristics of professional practice (Schon, 1983)<sup>34</sup>. However, there are many ways in which reflection is defined in higher education for the professional development of teachers and the list is not exhaustive<sup>35</sup>:

- self-awareness with respect to one's own processes of learning and development
- an approach to teaching and learning support that is informed by an understanding of how learners develop knowledge and learning skills
- making changes to one's professional practice in the light of experience
- deepening one's understanding of one's role as a professional teacher in the light of experience
- basing professional decisions upon feedback ( from learners and /or colleagues)
- theorizing from experience that is, constructing abstract models or analytical frames based on practical experience of teaching
- It could be argued that the reflective practitioner makes use of most or all of these kinds of reflection at one time or another. Reflective practice should be viewed as an umbrella concept - a theme that permeates all of your work as a university teacher. It is a way of being, rather than a set of practical strategies or techniques, an attitude of mind, a way of understanding oneself as a developing professional, and a commitment to continuous improvement and deepening knowledge.
- evaluating the effectiveness of one's teaching practice
- examining teaching from the perspective of the learner
- conscious and self-aware deliberation on professional practice

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<sup>33</sup> Schon, D.A. (1996), *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc

<sup>34</sup> Schon, D A (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action* London: Temple Smith

<sup>35</sup> Adapted from ITSLIFE <http://www.itslifejimbutnotasweknowit.org.uk/RefPractice.htm>

- intuitive and implicit application of professional knowledge to specific teaching-and-learning settings

We then attempt with this study to analyze and report on the teachers' educators' practices through their reflections about their assessment tasks practices in particular in cooperative learning groups and on the challenges and difficulties, they experience to make them as authentic as possible.

### 1.5.2 Research questions

To reach the purposes of our study, we have found relevant to address them with the following research questions:

- What are the assessments tasks teachers' educators' uses in cooperative learning and how do they carry out these assessment tasks?
- To what extent do teachers' educators care about the assessment task, the physical environment, the social context, the form that is the demonstration of a performance, the results and the criteria when assessing student teachers in a cooperative learning groups to ensure that the assessment tasks are authentic?
- What are the challenges/difficulties they confront when assessing the student teachers?

In addition, some preliminary conversations, discussions, interviews with some teachers and students provided us with the following lead for this sub-question:

- How do they make the balance between group goals and individual accountability?

We will try to answer these questions on teachers' educators reflections through the five - dimensional framework of an authentic assessment as developed by (Gulikers & al, 2004)<sup>36</sup>. They posit that to be authentic -that is to fit real –world practices , an assessment designed for professional competences must take into account that the task, the physical context, the social context, the form that is the demonstration of a performance, and the results and criteria of a learning environment reflect practices are as they are encountered in real world practices.

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<sup>36</sup> Gulikers, J.Bastiaens,T ., & Kirschner, P, (2004), *A five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment*. Educational Technology Research and Development, 52(3), 67-86.

## Chapter 2. Review of literature

We provide with this chapter, the prior knowledge about assessment of cooperative learning in teacher education for understanding all the aspects involved in our study.

### 2.1 Cooperative learning in teacher education

There have been many empirical studies that have examined the effects of cooperative learning methods on students' achievement in general. (Slavin, 1983)<sup>37</sup> found that cooperative learning resulted in significant positive effects in 63% of the studies after a review of 46 studies related to cooperative learning. (Sherman and Thomas, 1986)<sup>38</sup> reached similar conclusions in a study involving high school general mathematics classes taught by cooperative and individualistic methods. Most of these studies are about school pupils and the success encountered by their teachers. In the other hand, there is little research about the implementation of cooperative learning in teacher education. However, some experiments and empirical studies have been conducted.

(Van Voorhis, 1991)<sup>39</sup> used cooperative learning activities in a course designed for student teachers for secondary school. He found that there were positive outcomes for the student teachers' interest in learning the course material. After an investigation on the use of cooperative learning to teach student teachers for primary and secondary teachers' (Nattiv, Winitzky, Drickey, 1991)<sup>40</sup> study showed that the attitudes of the student teachers towards cooperative learning demonstrated that most of them value this teaching method and intend to use cooperative learning activities in their classrooms. Moreover, these student teachers also indicated that they appreciated the opportunity because it provided more interactions with their peers and considered cooperative learning as one of the most valuable parts of the student teacher training course. In the same way the results of a study by (Watson, 1995)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Slavin, R. (1983). *When does cooperative learning increase achievement?* Psychological Bulletin 94, 429-445.

<sup>38</sup> Sherman, W., Thomas, M. (1986), *Mathematics achievement in cooperative goal-structured high school classrooms*, Journal of Educational Research, 70(3), 169-172.

<sup>39</sup> Van Voorhis, J., (1991)., *Instruction in teacher education: A descriptive study of cooperative learning*, Paper presented at the International Convention on Cooperative Learning, Utrecht, The Netherlands

<sup>40</sup> Nattiv, A., Winitzky, N., & Drickey, R. (1991), *Using cooperative learning with pre-service elementary and secondary education students*, Journal of Teacher Education, 42(3), 216-225.

<sup>41</sup> Watson, B. (1995), *Relinquishing the lectern: Cooperative learning in teacher education*, Journal of Teacher Education, 46(3), 209-215

about teaching student teachers class about cooperative learning revealed that all of the student teachers recognized the benefits of cooperative learning for learning the course material, motivating them to do their best and encouraging them to help one another.

A similar study by (Hillkirk, 1991)<sup>42</sup> reported that student teachers experiencing cooperative learning valued the opportunity to explain and listen to other class members' explanations of the key concepts of the course. They had the opportunity to become better acquainted than usual with their classmates, and the opportunity to reflect and collaborate on the cooperative skills needed to help their own pupils in the future. Furthermore, these student teachers reported that their experiences with cooperative learning during the course greatly comforted and increased their perceptions and their intentions to use cooperative learning in their own teaching.

However, a study by Bouas tends to show opposite views about students teachers' eagerness to implement cooperative learning activities in their future classrooms. (Bouas, 1996)<sup>43</sup> examined the effects of cooperative learning instruction and participation on future teachers' attitudes towards cooperative learning, their knowledge of the academic and social benefits of cooperative learning and their ability to organize classrooms for cooperative learning. The activities appeared to affect positively the student teachers' attitudes towards and knowledge of cooperative learning. The student teachers acknowledged the pedagogical value of cooperative learning as a model of instruction and appreciated the opportunity to experience the model. Even so they stated that they only had a moderate degree of confidence with regard to their ability to plan cooperative learning activities in their future classrooms.

Student teachers also found cooperative learning tasks appropriate to enhance the active pursuit of learning. In a study conducted by (Herbster & Hannula, 1992)<sup>44</sup> on the introduction of student teachers to cooperative learning through direct experience with the instructional strategy, the results showed that most of the student teachers viewed cooperative learning positively, as a means of promoting academic progress and the development of important

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<sup>42</sup> Hillkirk, K. (1991), *Cooperative learning in the teacher education curriculum*, Education, 111(4), 478–482.

<sup>43</sup> Bouas, M. J., (1996)., *Are we giving cooperative learning enough attention in pre-service teacher education?* , Teacher Education Quarterly, 23(4),45–58.

<sup>44</sup> Herbster, D., & Hannula, J.,(1992)., *Cooperative learning in the teacher preparation course*, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators, Orlando,FL

social skills. The findings also show that many of the student teachers expressed their desire for more traditional lecture methods. In the light of that, Herbster and Hannula suggested that cooperative learning should not replace traditional instruction but simply supplement effective instructional strategies.

In the same way, (Hwong, Caswel, Johnson & Johnson, 1993)<sup>45</sup> examined the effects of cooperative and individualistic learning on prospective elementary school teachers' music achievement and attitudes. They discovered that in the cooperative condition, all of the in-class assignments are completed as a group and in the individualistic condition, the student teachers worked on their own. In addition they found that cooperation among the students promote higher achievement than individualistic learning on assignments done in groups. Moreover, the student teachers in the cooperative condition were found to be less off task than other student teachers and more positive towards their own musical skills.

(Ledford and Warren 1997)<sup>46</sup> examined in a study the results of student teachers reflecting on their perceptions of cooperative learning before, during and after their participation in several cooperative learning activities during their social studies methods classes. Results showed that prior to the study, the student teachers had developed several misconceptions about cooperative learning. But after various cooperative learning activities, the student teachers demonstrated an increased awareness of the essential elements of cooperative learning.

Implementing cooperative learning in teacher education has also revealed to be sometimes challenging or difficult. In a recent study, (Artzt ,1999)<sup>47</sup> gave a description of how a cooperative learning activity permitted student teachers and in-service teachers in middle and high school mathematics to experience, learn about and reflect on the complexities and values of effective cooperative learning strategies. Most of the student teachers reported that cooperative learning strategies are complex. For example, the structure of a cooperative learning activity can influence the participation of the group members and the nature and level of difficulty of a mathematical problem can influence the degree and quality of the discourse within the learning group.

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<sup>45</sup> Hwong, N., Caswell, A., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T.(1993), *Effects of cooperative and individualistic learning on prospective elementary teachers' music achievement and attitudes*, Journal of Social Psychology, 133(1),53–64.

<sup>46</sup> Ledford, C., Warren, L., (1997), *Cooperative learning: Perceptions of pre-service teachers*, Journal of Instructional Psychology, 24(2), 105–107. McManus, S. M., & Gettinger

<sup>47</sup> Artzt, A., (1999), *Cooperative learning in mathematics teacher education*, Mathematics Teacher, 92(1),11–17.



Judging from the findings of these studies, we can say that student teachers greatly appreciate the instructional value of using cooperative learning activities during their training period. Cooperative learning tasks motivate them. Without motivation, a teacher cannot devote himself to his work. Moreover, there is a common agreement that whenever it has been experienced with students teachers, cooperative learning proved to be an effective method for instructing and motivating students teachers. This implies that cooperative learning must be modeled and practiced during teacher education to prepare prospective teachers for the use of these skills in their future classrooms (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)<sup>48</sup>. These authors conclude that teaching prospective teachers in cooperative learning groups provide the latter with the skills to implement it in their turn. This is a professional competence they have to acquire. Using cooperative learning strategies in teacher education is then useful and important and student teachers found it very useful for personal and professional development.

However, these studies do not show the perceptions of teachers' educators nor how the latter assess their students and to what extent the cooperative learning activities implemented by these teachers' educators prepare and fit real-world practices. They only accounted for students teachers perceptions. The present study therefore addresses the teachers' educators' reflections on the assessment tasks, to what extent these assessment tasks reflect professional practices and what are the eventual challenges teachers' educators encounter in cooperative learning activities.

## **2.2 The role of assessment tasks in teacher education: A call for authentic assessment tasks in teacher education**

Literature is replete with these calls "authentic assessments". Authors focus on the need for teachers' educators, the assessors to reflect on their access to the context sensitive understandings of pedagogical and personal principles that underpin the work of teaching and assessing (Tellez, 1996)<sup>49</sup>.

Finding the best way for assessing student teachers has always created tensions between politicians and professionals of education. Assessment of student teachers has traditionally

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<sup>48</sup> Hoy, A., & Tschannen-Moran, M., (1999), *Implications of cognitive approaches to peer learning for teacher education*. In A. M. O'Donnell, & A. King (Eds.), *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning* (pp. 257–284). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>49</sup> Tellez, K. (1996). *Authentic assessment*, In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (2nd ed., pp. 704–721). New York: Macmillan.

avored administrative over professional approaches (Darling-Hammond, 1986)<sup>50</sup>. The administrative view suggests that teachers need to be assessed with competency tests that are externally imposed, rule governed, and highly prescribed by education authorities. This is to ensure the development of professional habits by teachers that are supportive of political decisions. This is also a means to control entry into the profession by weeding out incompetent teachers lacking the necessary knowledge and skills (Haney, Madaus, & Kreitzer, 1987)<sup>51</sup>. According to this model, good teachers ask certain types of questions, provide wait time, display warmth and enthusiasm, and provide structure in the form of advance organizers, explicit transitions, and closure (Wilson, 1995)<sup>52</sup>. The teacher controls the environment and chooses from a repertoire of “effective” official behaviors to ensure an efficiently run classroom dynamic. The student teacher is not supposed to be active and reflective participant of his/her training.

The professional approaches by contrast, calls for forms of assessment tasks that reflect the complex decision-making processes that qualified teachers engaged in the course of their work encounter and their perceptions of their practices to address the diversity of their students and the social and institutional contours of their school and community. This approach is valued by teachers and provides the background for calls for authentic assessment tasks in teacher education.

Authentic assessments are thus viewed as those that rely on multiple sources of evidence collected in diverse contexts and over time; sample the actual professional skills and dispositions of teachers in teaching and learning contexts; require the integration of multiple types of knowledge and skills; and are evaluated using codified professional standards. So real-world instructional tasks can better prepare student teachers for the increasingly varied challenges of their future work (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000)<sup>53</sup>.

According to (Wiggins 1989)<sup>54</sup> the sampling of professional skills and the integration of multiple types of knowledge and skills during the training are particularly important as criteria for authenticity because assessments tasks need to reflect the intellectual work of practicing professionals. Those tasks need to be characterized by active participation, exploration, and

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<sup>50</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., (1986), *Teaching knowledge: How do we test it?*, American Educator, 10 (3), 18}21, 46.

<sup>51</sup> Haney, W., Madaus, G., & Kreitzer, A. (1987), *Charms talismanic: Testing teachers for the improvement of American education.*, In E. Z. Rothkopf, *Review of Research in Education*, 14, 169}238.

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<sup>53</sup> Darling-Hammond, L. , Snyder, J. (2000), *Authentic assessment of teaching in context*, Teaching and Teacher Education, 16(5-6), 523}545.

<sup>54</sup> Wiggins, G. (1989). A true test: *Toward more authentic and equitable assessment*, Phi Delta Kappan, 70(9), 703–713.

inquiry on the part of the student teacher. Understood like that authenticity is then rooted in contexts and enriched with the intellectual opportunity for the participant to act like a professional. This view parallels ( Newmann, Wehlage , 1993)<sup>55</sup> who claim that authentic assessments in teacher education help the student teacher to create discourses, products, and performances, that have value or meaning beyond success in their training center. For example, the use of teaching portfolios has been widely advocated as an authentic practice because of the opportunity it offers for teachers to reflect on their work and its potential sensitivity to the complex context of the teacher's work. A portfolio is generally a purposeful collection of student works that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas of the curriculum (Paulson, Paulson, Meyer, 1991)<sup>56</sup>.

According to (Jorro, 2005), repositories of expertise are essential tools in the assessment process: they provide both a descriptive note to the extent that skills are informed by indicators and prescriptive notes due to the expected results. The repository should specify different contexts and the frames of references for the skills and be improved from professionals' experiences.

Therefore, to make sure that the assessments tasks designed by the teachers' educators help to improve learning, (Jorro, 2005)<sup>57</sup> suggests that the teacher educator must have the following competences:

- **Competences in theories:** he should be able to distinguish a wide range of assessment practices with their supporting theories, and to refer to these elements in the course of his practices . The theoretical knowledge is not an end in itself; it enables the practitioner to act with relevance, for example to reflect on assessment approach.

-**Methodological competences:** The diversity of assessment practices calls for methodological competences. For example the teacher' educator must proceed with methodology when he is engagement in a peer-assessment process with the student teacher.

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<sup>55</sup> Newmann, F. M., & Wehlage, G. G. (1993), *five standards for authentic instruction*. , Educational Leadership, 50(7), 8–12

<sup>56</sup> Paulson, F., Paulson, P., Meyer, A. (1991), "What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio?" ,*Educational Leadership*, CA pp. 60-63.

<sup>57</sup> Jorro A.( 2005), *Les compétences évaluatives des formateurs d'enseignants*, Université de Provence UMR-ADEF, retrieved on August 10 2010 : <http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/11/23/26/PDF/Competences-05.pdf>

**-Pedagogical competences:** As education supposes pedagogy, the practitioner must plan his assessment tasks for avoiding making confusion about the assessment task objectives and what he wants to assess.

**- Semiotic competences:** The professional of education who wants to assess a situation, an activity or a professional act must have good skills in listening, observation, and analysis. He must also show evidence of these competences when he writes reports about the student achievements because every learning situation is influenced by some constraints and his role is not to have a rigid point of view on what should exist.

**-Ethical competences:** Assessments always highlight the question of power of the person who assess. This asymmetric relationship between the teachers' educator and the student teacher must be taken into account. The teacher' educator must distinguish between the assessment task and the person to assess. The omnipotence of the teacher educator has often been denounced as she was installing a relationship asymmetric between the evaluator and evaluated. The evaluator must distinguish the person from the act to assess. In this way, the assessment takes another dimension more oriented towards the improvement of possibilities and potentialities rather than on filling in gaps according to fixed sets of directions.

The success of the assessment task thus highly depends on the competencies of the teachers' educators and on the strategies he uses. In addition, this is quite important as the teacher educator is supposed to train the student teacher for practical professional competences hence a call for authentic assessment. In the light of this,( Rogers, Hubbard, Charner, Fraser, and Horne , 1996) said that the essential nature of the training to work or school-to-work calls for authentic assessment. They note that:

*"The measurement of learning that occurs in settings so unlike the traditional classroom requires assessment practices that are correspondingly different. Many school-to-work programs have drawn up comprehensive sets of competencies, often in consultation with business partners, which students in that program are expected to acquire, at certain minimum levels."* <sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Rogers, A., Hubbard, S., Charner, I., Fraser, B.,Horne, R. (1996), *Study of school-to-work initiatives: Cross-site analysis*, retrieved August 10, 2010,<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/SER/School Work/index.html>

This supports the views of ( Iverson & al, 2007)<sup>59</sup> who see the process of becoming a teacher as involving initiation into the community of teachers, learning the methods, theory and practices of that community, working under the guidance of a mentor ( the teacher educator), and eventually becoming a full participant in that community.

However, the ultimate role of teacher education through instruction and assessment practices must be according to (Altet, 2008) to ensure that teachers have:

“- *A knowledge of their subject matter;*

- *The knowledge of pedagogy and didactics;*

- *The skills and competences required to guide and support learners;*

- *An understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of education.”*<sup>60</sup>

All these previous opinions about assessments in teacher educations suggested that assessment in teacher education is a big and crucial issue in teacher education. It shapes the professional knowledge of the teachers’ educators and that of the prospective teachers. Assessment tasks in teacher education should take into account real professional practices, hence the call for authentic assessment tasks. These opinions also pointed out that the quality of assessments tasks depends on the teacher’ educator competencies. The student teacher’s achievements are evidence of whether he has experienced good and appropriate assessments tasks or not during his/her training. These opinions also support our consideration in this study that the teachers’ educator is an active participant in the student teacher’s achievements. On the other hand, he has to integrate strategies and challenges during his assessment tasks. However, these opinions do take into consideration a particular instructional method like cooperative learning that is a key point in our study but general training.

### **Chapter 3. Theoretical background**

Overall, the theoretical background used in this study is a combination of cooperative learning theories and authentic assessment theories via our research instruments that involve

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<sup>59</sup> Iverson, H. , Lewis, M., Talbot Iii, R.(2008), *Building a framework for determining the authenticity of instructional tasks within teacher education programs*, Teaching and Teacher Education, 24(2), 290-302.

<sup>60</sup> Altet, M. (2008) *Professionnalisation et Universitarisation de la formation des enseignants : Tensions et conditions de réussite*, Colloque CDIUFM, *La formation des Enseignants en Europe*, Paris, le 6 Décembre

documents analysis, interviews, observations and reports from our personal experiences in internships.

### 3.1 Learning and Cooperative Learning

Our intent with this section is to highlight the major theories underlying our understanding in this study of a cooperative learning environment.

#### 3.1.1 Learning

Cooperative learning takes on a variety of forms and teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds and teaching traditions. However, it relates to important assumptions about learners and the learning process according to (Smith, B.; MacGregor, J., 1992)<sup>61</sup> which we can summarize in this way:

**-Learning is an active, constructive process:** To learn new information, ideas or skills, students have to work actively with them in purposeful ways. They need to integrate this new material with what they already know-or use it to reorganize what they thought they knew. In collaborative learning situations, students are not simply taking in new Information or ideas. They are creating something new with the information and ideas. These acts of intellectual processing- of constructing meaning or creating something new are crucial to learning.

**-Learning depends on rich contexts:** learning is fundamentally influenced by the context and the activity in which it is embedded. Rich contexts challenge students to practice and develop higher order reasoning and problem solving skills. Cooperative learning activities immerse students in challenging tasks or questions. Instead of being distant observers of questions and answers, or problems and solutions, students become immediate practitioners.

**-Learners are diverse:** students bring multiple perspectives to the classroom-diverse backgrounds, different learning styles, experiences and aspirations. Teachers, can no longer assume one-size-fits- all approach. When students work together on their learning in class, we get a direct and immediate sense of how they are learning, and what experiences and ideas they bring to their group. The diverse perspectives that emerge in collaborative 'activities are clarifying but not just for us. They are illuminating for our students as well.

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<sup>61</sup> Smith, B., MacGregor, J.( 1992) "What Is Collaborative Learning?" in *Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education*, National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Pennsylvania State University USA

**-Learning is inherently social:** The mutual exploration, meaning making, and feedback often leads to better understanding on the part of students, and to the creation of new understandings for both the teachers and the students.

In addition, (Philip, C Abrami., & al, 1996)<sup>62</sup>, summed up that there are four major theories about learning and motivation to learn, motivation being understood as what lead or induce to learn:

Approaches	Learning	Motivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviorist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in observable behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward(positive) Consequences(negative)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition, representation and information processing</li> <li>• personality dimension which influences attitudes, values, and social interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected results and values to causes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanist</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to self-development,</li> <li>• Personal development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with physical and social environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to balancing a cognitive process</li> </ul>

Table 3: Some majors learning and motivation theories *adapted from* (Philip, C Abrami., & al, 1996)<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> Abrami, P., Chambers B., Poulsen C., De Simone C., d'Apollonia, S., Howden, J. (1996), *L'apprentissage coopératif ; théories, méthodes, activités*, Les Editions de la Chenelière inc,Canada

<sup>63</sup> Idem 7

### 3.1.2 Cooperative Learning

Research has shown that there are many theoretical perspectives related to cooperative learning. Most researchers conclude that cooperative learning is based fundamentally on the socio-constructivism learning theory. According to socio-constructivists, the construction and the assimilation of concepts or representations by the learner is a process of successive stages through an interaction between the individual and his environment, with his peers and the teacher (Dyste, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978)<sup>64</sup>. They then define knowledge as temporary, developmental, and socially and culturally mediated. From this perspective, learning is understood as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection.

A socio-constructivism-learning environment is then different from a “traditional learning environment”<sup>65</sup>:

socio-constructivism learning environment	“traditional learning environment”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum is presented part to whole, with emphasis on basic skills.</li> <li>• Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.</li> <li>• Curricular activities rely heavily on textbooks and workbooks.</li> <li>• Students are viewed as "blank slates" onto which information is etched by the teacher.</li> <li>• Teachers generally behave in a didactic manner, disseminating information to students.</li> <li>• Teachers seek the correct answer to validate student learning. Students learn that school is about learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum is presented whole to part with emphasis on big concepts.</li> <li>• Pursuit of student questions is highly valued.</li> <li>• Curricular activities rely heavily on primary sources of data and manipulative materials.</li> <li>• Students are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world.</li> <li>• Teachers generally behave in an interactive manner, mediating the environment for students.</li> <li>• Teachers seek the students' points of view in order to understand students' present conceptions for use in</li> </ul>

<sup>64</sup>Dyste, O. (2008)., *The challenges of assessment in a new learning culture* Balancing dilemmas in assessment and learning in Contemporary education, (pp. S.15-28). New York: Routledge.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978), *Mind in society: the development of Higher Psychological process*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>65</sup> Brooks, J. G., M. G. Brooks, M. G., ( 1993) *The case for Constructivist Classrooms*, Ass’n for Supervision and curriculum development Alexandria, Virginia



<p>"what the teacher tells them."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of student learning is viewed as separate from teaching and occurs almost entirely through testing.</li> <li>• Students primarily work alone.</li> </ul>	<p>subsequent lessons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of student learning is interwoven with teaching, including observations and student exhibitions and portfolios.</li> <li>• Students primarily work in groups.</li> </ul>
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Table 4 : Difference between a Socio-constructivist learning environment and a “traditional “ one adapted from Brooks, J. G., M. G. Brooks, M. G., ( 1993) The case for Constructivist Classrooms

However there are two major theoretical perspectives related to cooperative learning - motivational and cognitive according to (Slavin, 1987)<sup>66</sup> one of the prominent theorists on cooperative learning. He stated that the motivational theories of cooperative learning emphasize the students' incentives to do academic work, while the cognitive theories emphasize the effects of working together. Motivational theories related to cooperative learning focus on reward and goal structures. This supports (Johnson & Johnson, Holubec, 1986)<sup>67</sup> view that one of the elements of cooperative learning is positive interdependence, where students perceive that their success or failure lies within their working together as a group. From a motivational perspective, "*cooperative goal structure creates a situation in which the only way group members can attain their personal goals is if the group is successful*"(Slavin, 1990)<sup>68</sup>. Therefore, in order to attain their personal goals, students are likely to encourage members within the group to do whatever helps the group to succeed and to help one another with a group task.

On the other hand, there are two cognitive theories that are directly applied to cooperative learning: the developmental and the elaboration theories (Slavin, 1987). The developmental theories assume that interaction among students around appropriate tasks increases their

<sup>66</sup> Slavin, R.E. (1987), *Developmental and motivational perspectives on cooperative learning: A reconciliation*, Child Development, 58,1161-1167

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Holubec, E.J. (1986),*Circles of Learning: Cooperation in Class*, Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company

<sup>68</sup> Slavin, R.E. (1990)., *Cooperative learning: Theory, Research, and practice*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

mastery of critical concepts (Damon, 1984). It is through interactions with others, coordinating his/her approaches to reality with those of others, that the individual masters new approaches (Doise, 1990)<sup>69</sup>. So the individual cognitive development is seen as the result of a spiral of causality: a given level of individual development allows participation in certain social interactions that produce new individual states that, in turn, lead to possible more sophisticated social interactions and so on. When students interact with other students, they have to explain and discuss each other's perspectives, a situation which leads to greater understanding of the material to be learned. The attempt to resolve potential conflicts during collaborative activities results in the development of higher levels of understanding (Slavin, 1990). In examining the relationships between students' attitudes toward cooperation, competition, and their attitudes toward education, (Johnson & Ahgren, 1976)<sup>70</sup> results indicated that cooperation among students and not competition among them was positively related to being motivated to learn. Students taught by cooperative strategies believed they had learned more from the lesson than did students taught by competitive strategies (Tjosvold, Johnson, 1997)<sup>71</sup>. Cooperative learning thus promotes positive attitudes towards learning.

As for the elaboration theory, it suggests that explaining to someone else is the one of the most effective means of learning. Cooperative learning activities thus enhance elaborative thinking and more frequent giving and receiving of explanations, which has the potential to increase depth of understanding, the quality of reasoning, and the accuracy of long term retention (Johnson & Johnson, Holubec, 1986). In other words, giving and receiving feedback from peers enhance the learning process. Therefore, the use of cooperative learning methods should lead to improved student learning and retention from both the developmental and cognitive theoretical bases.

However, Cooperative learning involves more than putting students to work together on a lab or field project. It requires teachers to *structure* cooperative interdependence among the students. Cooperative learning rest on those five key principles developed from (Johnson & al, 1986, Kagan, 1994):

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<sup>69</sup> Doise, W. (1990). *The development of individual competencies through social interaction*, In H.C. Foot, M.J. Morgan, & R.H. Shute (Eds.) *Children helping children*. Chichester: J. Wiley & sons.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson D.W., Ahlgren, A. (1976), *Relationship between student attitudes about cooperation and competition and attitudes toward schooling*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68(1), 92-102.

<sup>71</sup> Tjosvold, D., Marine, P., Johnson, D.W. (1977)., *The effects of cooperation and competition on student reactions to inquiry and didactic science teaching*, *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 11(4), 281-288

Principles of cooperative learning	Meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positive interdependence,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual goals, division of labor, division of materials and roles</li> <li>• Part of each student's grade dependent on the performance of the rest of the group.</li> <li>• Group members must believe that each person's efforts benefit not only him- or herself, but all group members as well.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group processing, reflection,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students must be given time and procedures for analyzing how well their learning groups are functioning and how well social skills are being employed after the completion of their task</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Face to face interaction,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students promote each other's learning. oral explanations of problem-solving, discussions ,connection of present learning with past knowledge</li> <li>• Promotive interaction induces members to become personally committed to each other as well as to their mutual goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Individual accountability,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learn together, but perform alone in some cases</li> <li>• A lesson's goals must be clear enough that students are able to measure whether the group is successful in achieving them, <b>and</b> individual members are successful in achieving them as well.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Small group skills,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learn academic subject matter and also interpersonal and small group skills (teamwork).</li> <li>• A group must know how to provide effective leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict management.</li> </ul>

Table 5: Some key principles of cooperative learning groups *adapted* from (Johnson & al, 1986, Kagan, 1994)

### 3.1.3 Collaborative Learning versus Cooperative Learning?

Very often in some studies, the terms “cooperative learning” and “Collaborative Learning” are used interchangeably. According to (Gerlach, 1994)<sup>72</sup>:

*“Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants talk among themselves. It is through the talk that learning occurs.”*

For the purposes of this study and in acknowledgement of distinctions that others in the field have made, we stick to a restricted definition of the terms. “Collaboration” is distinguished from “cooperation” in that cooperative work “... is accomplished by the division of labor among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving...”, whereas collaboration work involves the “... mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together.” (Roschelle & Teasley, In press)<sup>73</sup>. Cooperation and collaboration do not differ in terms of whether or not the task is distributed, but by virtue of the way in which it is divided: in cooperation, the task is split (Hierarchically) into independent subtasks; in collaboration, cognitive processes may be (heterogeneously) divided into intertwined layers. In cooperation, coordination is only required when assembling partial results, while collaboration is “... a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem” (Roschelle & Teasley, in press).

We use in this study cooperative learning in the sense of an instructional use of small groups so that student’s work together to maximize their own and each other learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec 1998). The distinction between cooperative learning and collaborative learning group or group-work learning is important because some researchers argued that group-work learning has many of the characteristics of whole-class teaching where students are not linked interdependently together so they often work independently on tasks to achieve their own ends. Hence, there is no motivation to act as a group or to exercise joint efficacy to achieve a goal or accomplish a task (Johnson & Johnson, 2003)<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Gerlach, J. M. (1994). “Is this collaboration?” In Bosworth, K. and Hamilton, S. J. (Eds.), Collaborative Learning: Underlying Processes and Effective Techniques, New Directions for Teaching and Learning No. 59.

<sup>73</sup> Roschelle, J. & Teasley, S. (in press) *the construction of shared knowledge in collaborative problem -solving*. In C.E. O'Malley (Ed) *Computer supported collaborative learning*. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

<sup>74</sup> Johnson, D., & Johnson, R., (2003), *Student motivation in cooperative groups: Social interdependence theory*. In R. Gillies & A. Ashman (Eds.), *Cooperative learning: The social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups*, pp136–176 London Routledge Falmer.

In addition to cooperative learning theories, assessment theories also influence the theoretical background of this study.

### 3.2 Assessment: a central role in Education

It is a common knowledge that learning, a product or a work is likely to be assessed whether by oneself or by a peer. Assessment is one of the most difficult and important task for a teacher. Assessment is central to teaching and learning. The assessment information is needed to make informed decisions regarding students' learning abilities, their placement in appropriate levels and their achievement. It is often defined as the ongoing process of gathering according to standards (often criteria), analysing and reflecting on evidence (indicators) to make informed and consistent judgements to improve future student learning. Assessment is often divided into formative (during the learning process) and summative at the end of the learning process) categories for considering the different objectives for assessment practices. (Stake, R, in Scriven, 1991) <sup>75</sup> explains the difference between formative and summative assessment with the following analogy: *“When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative. When the guests tastes the soup that’s summative”*

However, we can distinguish three purposes for assessment:

**Assessment for learning (formative)** occurs when teachers use inferences about student progress to inform their teaching. A guidance of the teaching is constantly adjusted ( Scallon in Gregoire, 2008)<sup>76</sup>. It also involves providing feedback information about the degree of acquisition and mistakes made, in order to repeat, to look further into, or correct the learning as a result.

**Assessment as learning (formative)** occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals. It is very often a self-assessment process during which student are expected to gain an insight into their own learning needs. According to Broadfoot, 2007)<sup>77</sup>: *“It is a way of encouraging students to reflect on what they have learned so far, to think about ways of improving their learning and to make plans which will enable*

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<sup>75</sup> Stake Robert in Scriven, M. , (1991). *Evaluation thesaurus*, 4th ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication

<sup>76</sup> Scallon G., (2008). *Évaluation formative et psychologie cognitive : Mouvances et tendances*, In Grégoire Jacques (dir.). *Évaluer les apprentissages. Les apports de la psychologie cognitive*. Bruxelles : De Boeck.

<sup>77</sup> Broadfoot, P. (2007). *An Introduction to Assessment*, London: Continuum.

*them to progress as learners and to reach their goals. [...] As such it incorporates the skills of time-management, action-planning, negotiation, interpersonal skills, communication - with both teachers and fellow students - and self-discipline in addition to reflection, critical judgment and evaluation”*

**Assessment of learning (summative)** occurs when teachers use evidence of the student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards, often defined in the curriculum. The objective here is to rank, approve, giving a final mark or check the student expertise at the end of the learning process. It can be a self- assessment or a peer-assessment.

The distinctive features of assessment for learning and assessment of learning appear like this:

<b>Assessment for learning</b>	<b>Assessment of Learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ establishes a classroom culture that encourages interactions</li> <li>➤ occurs throughout a learning sequence and is planned when teachers design teaching and learning activities</li> <li>➤ involves teachers and students setting and monitoring student progress against learning goals</li> <li>➤ requires teachers to ascertain students' prior knowledge, perceptions and misconceptions</li> <li>➤ involves teachers adapting teaching practice to meet student needs</li> <li>➤ provides sensitive and constructive feedback to students on their performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do</li> <li>➤ describes the extent to which a student has achieved the learning goals, including the Standards</li> <li>➤ uses teacher judgements about student achievement at a point in time</li> <li>➤ is supported by examples or evidence of student learning</li> <li>➤ ensures consistent teacher judgements through moderation processes</li> <li>➤ is used to plan future learning goals</li> </ul>

Table 6: Some Distinctive features of Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning

We must note that the terms *evaluation*, *assessment*, and *test* often are used interchangeably. (Badger 1992)<sup>78</sup> suggests that we distinguish among them as follow:

- A **test** is a measuring tool used in an assessment approach (ie pronunciation in a speech..etc)
- **Assessment** is a process of gathering evidence of what a student can do, and providing feedback on a student's learning to encourage further development.
- **Evaluation** is the process of interpreting the evidence and making a judgment of a performance to make informed decisions, such as assigning a grade or promoting a student to a higher performance level.

However, the assessment process and the evaluation process most of the time go together.

### **3.2.1 Authentic assessment: Assessing according to real-world practices**

#### **3.2.1.1 Definitions and Principles**

Authentic assessment is one of the alternative forms of assessments educational practitioners have drawn attention to to better assessment practices. Authentic assessment is any type of assessment that requires students to demonstrate skills and competencies that realistically represent problems and situations they are likely to be encountered in daily life or professional life. According to (Wiggins, 1989)<sup>79</sup>, an assessment is “authentic” when it directly examines students performance on worthy intellectual tasks as they appear in real life. He also adds that traditional assessment, by contrast relies on indirect simplistic substitutes items from which valid inferences can be made about the student’s performance.

Students are required to produce ideas, to integrate knowledge, and to complete tasks that have real-world applications. Such approaches require the person making the assessment to use human judgment in the application of criterion-referenced standards (Archbald, 1991)<sup>80</sup>.

Two major theoretical considerations led to the growing attention payed to authentic assessment. The first relates to conceptions of validity, with renewed emphasis on the appropriateness of assessment tasks as indicators of intended learning outcomes, and on the

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<sup>78</sup> Badger, E. (1992). *More than testing. Arithmetic Teacher*, in *Assessment for Effective Intervention* October 1999 vol. 25 no. P 15-30

<sup>79</sup> Wiggins, G. (1989), A true test: *Toward more authentic and equitable assessment*, *Phi Delta Kappan* , 70(9), 703–713.

<sup>80</sup> Archbald, D. (1991)., *Authentic assessment: What it means and how it can help schools.*, Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin.

appropriateness of interpretation of assessment outcomes as indicators of learning (Messick, 1994)<sup>81</sup>. The second relates to the need for learning and assessment of learning to be used in context and meaningful for students. The quest for context and meaningfulness arises from general awareness that learning and performance depend on context and motivation (Wiggins, 1993)<sup>82</sup>.

In authentic assessment, students use remembered information in order to produce an original product, participate in a performance, or complete a process. They are assessed according to specific criteria that they knew beforehand. In teacher education, this may be management of class, ways of teaching and so on. These criteria of assessment are called *rubrics*. Rubrics give students a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their work as it would be in real practices and to confront the realities of their work. Authentic assessment is a contrast to traditional educational testing and evaluation, which focus on reproducing information such as memorized dates, terms, or formulas. According to (Wiggins 1990)<sup>83</sup> moving towards authentic assessment is designed to:

1. Making students successful learners with acquired knowledge
2. Providing the students with a full range of skills (e.g., research, writing, revising, oral skills, debating, and other critical thinking skills)
3. Demonstrating whether the student can generate full and valid answers in relation to the tasks or the challenges he is likely to encounter in his/her daily life.
4. Providing reliability by offering suitable and standardized criteria for scoring such tasks and challenges
5. Giving students the chance to ‘rehearse’ critical thinking in achieving success in their future adult and professional lives
6. Allowing for assessments that meet the needs of the learners by giving authenticity and usefulness to results while allowing students greater potential for improving their learning and teachers more flexibility in instruction.

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<sup>81</sup> Messick, S. (1994) *the interplay of evidence and consequences in the validation of performance assessment*, Educational Researcher, 23(2), pp. 13-23.

<sup>82</sup>Wiggins, G. P. (1993) *Assessing student performance*, San Francisco, USA, Jossey-Bass

<sup>83</sup> Wiggins, G. (1990). *The case for authentic assessment*, Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 2(2). Retrieved August 10, 2010 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=2&n=2>



In addition, (Herrington &Herrington, 1998)<sup>84</sup> see seven characteristics to an authentic assessment:

<p><b>“Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires fidelity of context to reflect the conditions under which the performance will occur, rather than contrived, artificial, or de-contextualized conditions</li></ul> <p><b>Student’s Role</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires the student to be an effective performer with acquired knowledge and to craft polished performances and products</li><li>• Requires significant student time and effort in collaboration with others</li></ul> <p><b>Authentic Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Involves complex, ill-structured challenges that require judgment and a full array of tasks</li><li>• Requires the assessment to be seamlessly integrated with the activity</li></ul> <p><b>Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides multiple indicators of learning</li><li>• Achieves validity and reliability with appropriate criteria for scoring varied products”</li></ul>
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Table 7: Seven characteristics of authentic assessment (Herrington & Herrington 1998)

These authors point of views serve to support our understanding in this study of how assessment tasks practices in teacher education should be analyzed from a teachers’ educator point of view in relation to cooperative learning group. The perspectives of authentic assessment and cooperative learning meet as both aim at providing the students with a full range of skills. As a result, to analyze trends and challenges from teachers ‘educators discourses we use the five dimensional framework of authentic assessment developed by (Gulikers & al , 2004)

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<sup>84</sup> Herrington, J., Herrington, A. (1998). *Authentic assessment and multimedia: How university students respond to a model of authentic assessment*, Higher Education Research and Development, 17(3), 305-22.

### 3.2.1.2 The five dimensional framework of authentic assessment: A description

The five dimensional framework of authentic assessment developed by (Gulikers & al, 2004) which is a redefinition of authentic assessment; supports the dimensions of assessment practices we intend to investigate through the teachers' educators discourses. This helps us to draw our specific interviews questions within this framework and to guide the respondents reflections about what can be a true or an authentic assessment task of cooperative learning in teacher education as far as the professional competences of the student teacher are concerned.

(Gulikers & al, 2004) aim in designing the framework is at defining authenticity in competency-based assessment, without ignoring the importance of other characteristics of alternative assessments. According to them, an authentic competence-based assessment rests on its construct validity and its impact on student learning also called consequential validity. Construct validity of an assessment is related to whether an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. With respect to competency assessment, this means that the tasks must appropriately reflect the competency that needs to be assessed and must represent real-life problems of the knowledge domain assessed. In the same order, the thinking processes that professionals use to solve the problem in real life must be part of the task (Gielen et al., 2003)<sup>85</sup>. The consequential validity describes the intended and unintended effects of the assessment.

They then distinguish five dimensions of authentic assessment that can vary in their degree of authenticity as show the following table:

Authentic assessment dimensions	Meaning
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="855 1514 1398 1653">• A problem task that confronts students with activities that are also carried out in professional practice.</li><li data-bbox="855 1675 1398 1821">• The users of the assessment task should perceive the task as representative, relevant, and</li></ul>

<sup>85</sup> Gielen, S., Dochy, F., & Dierick, S. (2003)., *The influence of assessment on learning*. Optimizing new modes of assessment: In search of quality and standards In M. Segers, F. Dochy, & E. Cascallar (Eds.), Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers (pp. 37–54).

	meaningful.
Physical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The physical context ( facilities) of an authentic assessment should reflect the way knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be used in professional practice</li> <li>• The place where people are, often if not always, determines how they behave or do something,</li> </ul>
Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration that social processes are ever- present in real-life contexts.</li> <li>• If the real situation demands collaboration, the assessment should also involve collaboration, but if the situation is normally handled individually, the assessment should be individual.</li> </ul>
Assessment result or form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quality product or performance that students produce in real life</li> <li>• This product or performance should be a demonstration that permits making valid inferences about the underlying competencies</li> <li>• Full array of tasks and multiple indicators of learning in order to come to fair conclusions</li> <li>• students should present their work to other people, either orally or in written form, to ensure that their apparent mastery is genuine</li> </ul>
Criteria and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Criteria</i> : characteristics of the assessment result that are valued;</li> <li>• <i>standards</i> are the level of</li> </ul>

	<p>performance expected from various grades and ages of students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria and standards should concern the development of relevant professional competencies be based on criteria used in the real-life situation.</li> </ul>
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Table 8: Overview of the five dimensions of authentic competence-based assessment

Adapted from (Gulikers & al, 2004)

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Research design

Faced with the large amount of qualitative material, we use many ways of managing, analyzing and interpreting the data available. These include transcription of relevant sections of the recorded interviews, considerations of observed practices later on followed by a workshop with the participants, and a thematic analysis based on our research questions. With our research design, we aim at collecting empirical materials bearing on our research focus and then analyze and write about them. Therefore, we have tried to construct it in such a way that it combines *flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical material*<sup>86</sup>

This study finding is grounded on the content analysis of the discourses of teachers' trainers reflecting on their professional practices to understand their use of authentic assessment in cooperative learning groups. In addition, we use occasional observations and reflections from the experiences we had. We then chose a qualitative research design for understanding the teachers' educators' practices through their reflections. A qualitative research design is a research method used extensively by scientists and researchers studying human behaviors and

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<sup>86</sup> Denzin , N., Lincoln, Y. ( 2008) *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc

habits.<sup>87</sup> It is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. Its result is descriptive rather than predictive.

To reach the research participants and the adequate settings and learning environments that are particularly likely to yield significant insights about the focus of our study, we identified teachers' trainers from general teacher education and from teacher education for vocational education or from teaching profession-oriented studies. The reasons for this choice are that the competences assessed in this work field particularly account for workplaces or work life. The individual student teacher is during his career or in their work life most of the time, first recognized and assessed through his individual and personal professional competences even if he is working in a group or a community. We then chose higher education institutions (university colleges) in Norway and teacher training centers IUFM in France where there are opportunities to interview teachers' trainers or educators. Our internships cooperative settings are also of great importance to us because as participant and observer we experienced assessment tasks practices. We felt that contrasting those settings, teachers' educators' discourses and experiences in Norway and in France would lead us to an overview of some trends in assessment tasks practices and hence highlight eventual challenges of cooperative learning of teacher's trainers.

To collect data from teachers' discourses and stories we use the reflexive practice approach during interviews to make them speak. We then induced them to reflect on their current professional practices, the reasons for that and see how they can make them efficient.

Our investigation has been carried out and based on the teachers' discourses about assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups, their practices through our class observations and our experiences from the internships in Norway and France. Even though the study covers participants from two countries, it is not a straight comparison between Norway and France teachers' educators. This is to assure a broad scope of practices, as the choice of those research sites is inherent to our mobility scheme as Erasmus Mundus student. However some contrasts could be highlighted. The collection of data are then limited to these two countries. The overall goal is seeking to establish after documents and discourses content analysis from those sources of data, the general tendency and a detailed understanding of responses from teachers' educators to this issue.

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<sup>87</sup> From <http://www.experiment-resources.com/qualitative-research-design.html>

## 4.2 The participants

The population we study comprises 11 teachers educators in Norway and in France chosen randomly both from general teacher education and teacher education vocational education and training. However, some of them intervene in both field of teacher education. Our overall criterion is that they should be teachers' educators assessing cooperative learning groups and making effort to ensure that his/or assessment task fit real world practices. Seven are from Norway and four from France as shown below:

	France	Norway
Participants	5 from IUFM	2 from Oslo university college 5 from Akershus University College

Table 9: Research participants in France and Norway

The two participants from Oslo University College and two from France are from general teacher education field. The rest from Akershus University College and France are from Teacher education for Vocational Education and Training. All the teachers who agreed to participate in this study have shown a great interest in reflecting on some aspects of their professional practices. Some were even willing to organize special session with their students to show how they deal with assessment tasks but we did not have opportunity to arrange for that because of their busy agenda.

To ensure that our respondents would represent a wide range of experiences with assessment in cooperative learning in teacher education, we built this sample gradually and purposely. The aim is to have teachers' educators from both sides and a broad scope of assessment practices and challenges as from our preliminary discussions we found out that their daily practices is affected by the educational and cultural contexts. However, during informal discussions we made sure that they use cooperative learning as one of their teaching methods whether it is a casual pedagogical tool or an academic requirement.

## 4.2 Instruments

We used many data collections simultaneously whenever applicable to make sure that we get all the relevant information. It was depending on the setting, the context and the participant availability. Our data collection instruments include semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, and occasional observations and document analysis. We have used these instruments on purpose.

### 4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

We interviewed the teachers' educators were interviewed individually. Our research questions and the five dimensions of authentic assessment developed by (Gulikers & al 2004) informed our questions. We were particularly interested in how the teachers' educators carry out assessment tasks in cooperative learning according to the five dimensions we have mentioned. The interviews lasted half an hour beginning with a brief survey of years of teaching<sup>88</sup>. We transcribed the relevant parts of the interviews. Here are some of the core questions of the interviews:

- Tell me about your use of assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups.
- What kind of tasks do you assess? What do you assess through these tasks?
- What roles play in your assessment each of these: the task, the physical context, the social context, the criteria and the standards, the performance of the student?
- How can you define the authenticity dimensions of your assessment tasks?
- What are the challenges you confront in assessing in these conditions?

We used semi-structured recorded interviews to make the teachers 'educators to elaborate and speak freely of their experiences but inside the framework of our research questions (Freebody, 2003)<sup>89</sup>. We find it very useful to use for many reasons:

- ✓ It is very simple, efficient and practical ways of getting our data about things that cannot be easily observed (feelings and emotions) from our participants.
- ✓ The teachers are able to talk in detail and in depth and revealed the meanings behind their practices for themselves with little direction from us.

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<sup>88</sup> See the appendixes for guidelines for interviews

<sup>89</sup> Freebody, P. (2003), *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and practice*, London: Sage.

- ✓ Some complex questions and issues are discussed or clarified as we probed some areas suggested by our respondents' answers by picking up information that had either not occur to us or of which the teacher's educators had no prior knowledge.
- ✓ Our pre-set questions help to focus on what we should discuss about during the interview. This helped us not to waste time and to go straight on the issues.
- ✓ It was easy to record with our digital recorder.

### **4.3.2 Informal discussions**

During our preliminary investigations on our topic, we realized that some participants are more spontaneous about their experiences during informal discussions. We also used this method to record data before we agreed on formal interviews. It has proved to be an efficient way as sometimes our respondents stress during interviews.

### **4.3.3 Some observations**

Even though our data fundamentally rely on discourses analysis, we did not prevent ourselves whenever an opportunity knocks to observe some of our participants in actions. These were occasions to identify workplace or classroom real practices behind discourses and to gather firsthand information as they occur in the real setting. However, the number of observations was few. We just observe the teacher's educator, take notes and ask him questions about our remarks during the formal interview. We only observed three participants out of the eleven we interviewed. Nevertheless, the information gathered was useful. In addition to that, our internship experiences as both observer and to more understand our participants.

### **4.3.4 Documents analysis**

The existing literature, official reports, videotapes on our research topic and documents were reviewed so as to highlight the current state of knowledge about authentic assessment practices of teachers' educators in cooperative learning groups in teacher education.



### 4.3.5 Coding process and thematic analysis process

We employed a multistage coding scheme when dealing with the data we have collected. We use an *a priori* coding process as the categories to be analyzed are established prior to our content analysis based upon the five dimensions of authentic assessment. The content analysis according to (Weber, 1990):

*“(…) is a research technique that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from texts. These inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message. The rules of inferential process vary with the theoretical and substantive interests of the researcher”.*<sup>90</sup>

Our coding process generally consisting once the interview has been transcribed in the following steps:

- ✓ Marking with a highlighter all relevant sentences or paragraphs that are relevant to the study most of the time our research questions. Different colors are used to distinguish the units (sentences and paragraphs).
- ✓ We cut out units and put those who are similar in the same columns in our grid of analysis and revise categories as we continue to code data.
- ✓ We go through the interview transcript, identifying distinct units, grouping and regrouping similar and dissimilar units, re-labeling categories as we go along until we are satisfied.

The transcribed interviews allowed us to identify meaningful categories according to our research questions. We then arranged according to our main areas of inquiry. Through that process, we developed the broad categories of our findings: the assessment practices, the eventual challenges and the importance of the five elements of authenticity. Teachers' educators' discourses were coded by categories originally adapted from (Gulikers and al, 2004).

Before transcribing, we composed a narrative summary for each participant, summarizing the prominent theme they have tackled, noting memorable responses and describing the overall tone according to our first impressions. From a combined analysis of the discourses summaries, we were then able to track broad themes present in teachers' educators' account

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<sup>90</sup> Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis*, 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA

of their experiences in authentic assessment of cooperative learning concerning our research questions and the theoretical background.

#### **4.4 Ethical issues**

The individuals who participated in this study had a comprehensive idea about the purpose and aim of the research before the interviews. We contacted the participants through various means: e-mails, phone calls, informal discussion. All of them gave their formal consent by e-mails in response to calls or mail. We also identified those resource persons with the help of our instructors and classmates. During these initial contacts, we assured the research participants that their rights to confidentiality and freedom are protected. For more convenience, we changed their original names in our findings chapter. This also applies to confidential documents we had access to during our investigation mostly in the course of the internships. We followed this procedure from the preliminary discussions, interviews and observations until the end of the study.

We then asked for a 20 minutes anonymous semi-structured interview by mail or orally through informal meeting and assured that our talk would not be disclosed to a third party. Moreover, we also assured the participants that the content of our interviews would not be released without their consent. In case the recorded material should be transcribed, all the elements that can permit to identify the participant name or other personal data will be removed. This is to assure them that we are not evaluating or assessing them but we are just exploring and building our understanding of how and why they handle the assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups of student teachers.

Actually, none of the person interviewed accepted explicitly to be cited by his/her name. We have chosen not to cite them even to give hints to locate precisely them. Furthermore, before undertaking a class observation, we seek formal permission from our participants and the training institution board when needed, most of the time written through an e-mail to make sure that we are allowed to break into the privacy of the teachers' educators' classroom. At last, we have reported honestly and given credit for material quoted from previous researchers in this paper.

## **4.5 Research Time Line**

We planned this study during the third semester as required by the Mundusfor program. It started in Norway (Akershus University College) with classes on research on professional practices of educators in general and in the particular field of Teachers Education for technical and Vocational Education and training.

The objective of these courses is to provide us as a beginner researcher with the basis of educational research methods and instruments. We attended these classes alongside with the first internship and our preliminary investigations about our topic. This process ended up at the beginning of February 2010 by the designing of a pre-plan of our research proposal. The final research proposal is then to be designed after the second internship that is due to take place in France, in a place in a setting we did not know at that time.

The final choice to investigate on this topic was made after the second internship at the end of May 2010. This is to assure coherence, integration and a link between the eventual data collected in these two practicum experiences into two different cultural contexts. The last data were then collected from the end of May 2010 until the end of June 2010. The period for completing this study was then very short.

## **Chapter 5. Research Findings**

This section is to show the assessment tasks the teachers 'educators has declared to use in cooperative learning groups of student teachers. It is also designed to show the relationships between the assessment tasks and the extent to which the teachers' educators care about the five dimensions of the assessment (the assessment task, the physical context, the social context, the assessment form or result, the assessment criteria, ) and highlight alongside the challenges they confront according to the five dimensions elements. Throughout this chapter, the representative reflections of our respondents, the one that best summarize the views of the majority will be used to illustrate our findings.

### **5.1 Some general remarks**

Most all the teachers' educators interviewed said that they make use of cooperative learning works in their teaching because it is an academic requirement, mandatory and very often because it is specific to the fieldwork. This is true of all the Norwegian teachers interviewed:

*“it is an academic obligation here to make students working together cooperatively so that they have a taste of real life,”* said Mr Hakon. This tendency is observed in both countries especially in the field of teacher education for vocational education and training.

The other element worth noting is that cooperative learning techniques are not very commonly used in France. Most of the participants acknowledged that the traditional structures and the culture of the academy continue to perpetuate the teacher-centered, transmission- of-information model of teaching and learning. A French teacher, Mr Paul said:

*“(..) our educational system here values competition more than anything else .So the tendency here is to have the best mark, (...) you may have noticed that most entrances to both private and public educational institutions are by highly competitive tests...don’t forget our Grandes Ecoles who are supposed to training the elite ...so you see it is normal to have such difficulties...cooperative learning cannot be successfully implemented here if it is not an academic requirement. Both students and most teachers are not trained to experience cooperative learning. Working in groups here most of the time means sitting together to complete a task.”<sup>91</sup>*

Apart from traditions prevailing in each educational system in each country, the participants whenever implementing cooperative learning said they always try to apply the key principles of this learning method: small groups ( 3 to 5 students), positive interdependence, face-to-face interactions, group reflections, group skills, individual accountability. They insure that the groups are well structured and heterogeneous. Groups’ members are selected randomly. The participants we interviewed in this study also relatively plan and organize their teaching and assessment tasks sessions. They then generally:

- Prior to the class
  - ✓ Decide on the assessment criteria generally based on the national curriculum
  - ✓ Plan how to collect information ( generally through students completion of the assignments)
  - ✓ Define the process of learning (which in our cases is cooperative learning)

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<sup>91</sup> Paul said :« *notre système éducatif ici conforte la concurrence ; la tendance ici est d'avoir la meilleure note.(...vous avez pu remarquer que l'entrée dans les institutions éducatives publiques et privés se font par des tests...n'oubliez pas nos Grandes Ecoles qui sont supposées instruire les élites....donc vous voyez c'est normal d'avoir de telles difficultés...l'apprentissage coopératif ne peut s'appliquer avec succès que si c'est une obligation académique. Les enseignants aussi bien que les étudiants ne sont pas entrainer à cela. Travailler en groupe ici consiste à s'asseoir juste l'un à côté de l'autre pour réaliser une tâche. »*

- During classes or the learning process
  - ✓ Observe students during class or when it is possible make sure they participate in activities even when it is outside the classrooms
  - ✓ Interview or discuss with student whenever it is possible to give feedback and tutor the learning process..
  
- Following the class
  - ✓ Checking homework
  - ✓ Oral presentations
  - ✓ Compositions ( written reports)
  - ✓ Portfolios( to track the progress of the student teacher in many aspects)
  - ✓ Group Projects
  - ✓ Try to identify the student teacher progress or achievement (through formative assessment or summative assessment )

## **5.2 The different assessments tasks identified**

Different assessments tasks of cooperative learning groups assigned y the teachers educators have been identified through the discourses of our participants. We present those assessment tasks alongside with their reflections. These assessments tasks include Group projects, Group research work, seminars and group oral presentations, self-reflection written papers and Weblogs and portfolios.

### **5.2.1 Group projects**

The Chambers dictionary states that: “*a project is an exercise usually involving study and/or experimentation followed by the construction of something and /or the preparation of a report.*”<sup>92</sup>In addition, according to the Center of Advanced Language Proficiency, Education, and Research, CALPER (United State of America)<sup>93</sup>, project work and project- based learning as instructional approaches offer opportunities to create innovative learning environments. They afford students with working in teams, engaging in meaningful activities (problem-

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<sup>92</sup> The Chambers Dictionary ( 2003) , Chambers Harrap Publisher Ltd, p 1207

<sup>93</sup>Center of Advanced Language Proficiency and Education and Research, CALPER retrieved on August 10, 2010, <http://calper.la.psu.edu/projectwork.php>

solving, analyzing, evaluating, collaborating, reporting, presenting etc.) over a significant period, in order to create realistic and relevant product to the learner. From the discourses of our participants, the characteristics of the project they use as assessment tasks are as follow:

- ✓ Students make decisions within a prescribed framework.
- ✓ There is a problem or challenge without a predetermined solution.
- ✓ Students design the process for reaching a solution.
- ✓ Students are responsible for accessing and managing the information they gather.
- ✓ Assessment takes place continuously.
- ✓ Students regularly reflect on what they are doing.
- ✓ A final product (a report, a product, ) is produced and is assessed for quality.
- ✓ The classroom has an atmosphere that tolerates error and change

According to Mr. Olaf, a norwegian teacher educator for course on student enterprise, project works are useful tools for practical training and competences: *“They provide students with the opportunity to tackle real world situations, to understand...What I really appreciate with this...is that students learn to manage their time, interpret data sets, resolve value conflicts between group members and prepare and communicate the results of their investigation. It is a good playground to use own experiences to learn, to manage real life situations they are going to engage their future students in. So once my students succeed in attaining the goals we have set together, I can say they are competent.”*

The teachers’ educators also assess project on their coherence and clarity of ideas, the significance of the topic or the final product the students intend to make. They said that all the projects especially in the field of vocational education are structured on purpose to encourage direct applications to practice.

The intentions of teachers’ educators behind group projects are similar to that of the use of group research works. The difference with research group work lies in the content as research work according to them is about theoretical thinking about learning and teaching.

### **5.2.2 Group research works**

With such assignments, students are guided to acquire, to develop their analytical and critical competences through identifying, investigating and analyzing relevant local work bases issues, and to apply this competence carrying out actual research and innovative strategies. “

*“It is a way of making them familiar with research theories and within the field of education the students are induced to develop their own analytical abilities and their capacity to look at their perspectives with distance (...) but the fact is that they do it in groups.”*, explained Haldor, a norwegian teacher educator in general teacher education. Others teachers confirmed that group research works are to provide student teachers with the social, political, cultural and economic perspective of teaching to the society: *“The research works aim at developing them as “social scientists” because they have to realize...to acquire the knowledge that their profession must be integrated into the society. They must develop themselves as social analysts.”*<sup>94</sup> said Richard a French teacher educator. They all agreed that the objective of these research works is the development of a future thoughtful practitioner who is ready to inquire into and address problems of practice throughout his or her career.

What matters with research here is the result and the social context (how the students come to articulate their views and defend it during the presentations. It is a way to early point to them the challenges emerging from the work life considering that different contexts guide workplaces and that networks are important for investigation. These assessment tasks are to develop and assess according to teachers’ educators skills of investigation and analysis.

### **5.2.3 Seminars and group oral presentations**

Our results also show that seminars and group oral presentations are very used in both countries especially in Norway.

A seminar is understood in this context in three ways<sup>95</sup>:

- ✓ a group of advanced students working in a specific subject of study under a teacher
- ✓ a class at which group of students and tutor discuss a particular topic
- ✓ a discussion group on any particular subject

As for an oral presentation, it involves speaking to an audience, explaining some findings to the classmates in classroom or in a particular setting with most of the time visual aids to convey the message. When using slides show, video clips or audio messages, it becomes a multimedia presentation. This kind of presentation is very common according to our participants. The teachers’ educators use group oral presentations in seminars or a seminar is

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<sup>94</sup>Richard said : *« les travaux de recherches ont pour but de les transformer en "sociologues" parce qu'il doivent se rendre compte...en acquérant le savoir nécessaire que leur profession doit s'intégrer dans la société. Ils doivent se transformer en analystes sociaux. »*

<sup>95</sup> The Chambers Dictionary ( 2003 ) , Chambers Harrap Publisher Ltd, p 1379

organized after a presentation to increase the understanding of group members from the presentation as mentioned by Knute a Norwegian teacher educator in Oslo.

*“it changes from the traditional way of teaching because it allow student teachers an opportunity to teach one another instead of always just listening to me...that is also an opportunity for them to learn multimedia skills in their process of planning the presentation... I received good feedback about that particular aspect.”*

Teachers from Vocation Education and Training claimed the use of presentations to make their students demonstrate their communication and analytical skills during for example exhibitions. They assure that on these occasions, the student teacher does only demonstrate some competencies; he also learns from those experiences: *“What I am looking for with seminars or oral group presentation assignments task is to promote development of knowledge...mutual exchange of experiences, reflections about one’s and others’ experiences during these sessions are valued by my students. You know... a teacher must have a deep knowledge in the teaching profession...”* explained Torger a Norwegian teacher educator. Cyril, a French teacher’ educator more activist said that he uses group oral presentations to induce in his students the sense of community: *“Sometimes debates go with passion ... and that makes the interactions in the group more dynamic...you must see how they tend to defend each other or their group views... (laughs)... after all there must be solidarity among teachers... it is necessary for future career development and professional identity as a teacher.”*<sup>96</sup> He added: *“it is a manner for me to assess the quality of the presentation content, if this information relies on in-depth information using valid references, how they are interacting among themselves to give the information.”* What teachers’ educators also assess with group oral presentations is the speech elements whether the group members speak clearly, their creativity of the presentation in using multimedia aids and their time management.

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<sup>96</sup> Cyril said : *«Parfois, les débats se déroulent avec passion ... ce qui rend les interactions dans le groupe plus dynamiques ... il faut voir comment ils ont tendance à se défendre les uns les autres ou le point de vue du groupe ... (rires) ... après tout il doit y avoir de la solidarité entre les enseignants ..., cela est nécessaire pour leur futur carrière et leur identité professionnelle en tant qu'enseignant. ».* he added : *« . C'est une manière pour moi d'évaluer la qualité du contenu de la présentation,... si cette information repose sur des éléments profonds, utilisant des références valables, la façon dont ils interagissent entre eux pour donner les informations »*



#### 5.2.4 Self-reflections written papers and weblogs

With the self-reflections tasks, either written papers or reflections on weblogs, students are required to reflect by these means apart from oral presentations, about their progress and the activities they carried out in cooperative tasks. Weblogs also called blogs are full websites or part of websites. An example of weblog is *wordpress.com*. There are thousands of weblogs available on the internet. The weblog can be an educational digital platform of the training center. We can list among many others FRONTER in Norway, DOKEOS in France. Each student teacher maintains his/hers with regular entries with texts, images and links to other blogs. What makes blogs useful is that it provides tools for the readers to leave their comments and to interact with the authors of the blog. The entries must also reflect the interaction in the groups and integrate the reflections of all the members of the groups and may be common reflection writings.

With weblogs, student teachers demonstrate analytical skills, writing skills but also but also their digital competences. A digital competence is the competence that makes the student teacher capable of using and exploiting digital tools and services connected with a broad spectrum of tasks and challenges in professional and everyday contexts. Justifying use of digital tools through weblogs assignments, a French teacher at IUFM, Paul noted: *“you know that today most all the pupils master internet and so on ...sometimes more than their teacher...someone who is willing to be a teacher must know something about that domain. As a teacher you will have to remain in network with colleagues, abroad...you may have to do collaborative research work...so having digital competences are important for teaching practices today.”*<sup>97</sup> One of his colleague Olav from Oslo university college said: *“Nowadays a teacher must be able to learn and to teach his students through the use of weblogs. It is a relevant interactive tool by excellence. A prospective teacher must master these digital tools”*

Another French teacher educator, Jacques explained that participating actively in this way in their learning group, presenting their articles to fellow students giving and receiving feedback help the students to build reflexivity in everything they do: *“They must very early become reflexive practitioners... this is very important in their future...if as a teacher you don’t or you can’t reflect on your practices with your students or your colleagues, how can you*

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<sup>97</sup> Paul said : *« Vous savez qu'aujourd'hui la plupart des élèves maîtrisent internet etc ... parfois plus que leur professeur ... quelqu'un qui veut être enseignant doit savoir quelque chose sur ce domaine. En tant que professeur, vous devrez rester en réseau avec des collègues, à l'étranger ... vous pourriez avoir à effectuer des travaux de recherche en collaboration ... donc avoir des compétences numériques est important pour les pratiques enseignantes d'aujourd'hui. »*

*improve them?*<sup>98</sup>.” However, the teachers’ educators interviewed also agreed that the self-reflection activities help them to identify the difficulties their students experience while learning, to adjust their teaching to the students needs and to match the levels of difficulties and learning activities.

### 5.2.5 Portfolios

Teachers’ educators from both countries said that they make a large use of portfolios. Portfolios are means by which teachers select and reflect upon artifacts of their practice they have collected over time and from multiple sources and diverse contexts to provide evidence of their thinking, learning, and performance as well as photographs, videotapes, or audiotapes or classroom activities (Darling- Hammond et al., 1998)<sup>99</sup>. Portfolios can include documents from handouts given to students, assignments, tests, and samples of student teacher work. The portfolios can be digital ( e-portfolios) or consisting in a set of the relevant documents. It is a *“selective and structured collections of information; gathered for specific purposes and showing/illustrating one’s accomplishments and growth, which are stored digitally and managed by appropriate soft-ware; developed using appropriate multimedia and usually within a web environment and retrieved from a website, or delivered by CD-ROM or by DVD”*( Challis, 2005).<sup>100</sup>

Portfolios with reference to our study participants are assessment tools for learning which help to document all the assessment tasks done by the student teachers. However, they said that it could be considered as an assessment task: *“it is also an assessment task in the sense that when the student provides all what is asked in his portfolio, he demonstrates evidence of his readiness to assume the responsibility of teaching which involves many tasks and skills. During my work time, I do not only teach. I have to write reports; to fill in administrative*

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<sup>98</sup>Jacques said : *« Ils doivent très tôt devenir des praticiens réflexifs ... ceci est très important pour leur avenir ... si en tant que professeur vous n'avez pas ou vous ne pouvez pas réfléchir sur vos pratiques avec vos élèves ou avec vos collègues, comment pouvez-vous les améliorer ? »*

<sup>99</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., Wise, A. E., & Klein, S. (1998). *A license to teach: Building a profession for 21st century schools*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

<sup>100</sup> Challis, D., (2005), *Towards the mature e-portfolio: Some implications for higher education*, Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, vol. 31, n° 3.

*papers for my career development and so on...this prepares them for that,*<sup>101</sup> argued Etienne a French teacher. Therefore, teachers' educators consider portfolios as including the evidence and offering the basis for judgment for as to the student teachers are ready to complete their training program and to become certified teachers.

As for the individual accountability in these cooperative activities, teachers' educators have their ways to manage it as far as individual accountability is concerned:

*"I usually arrange an individual to check participation by checking continually with a randomly selected group member on explanation, progress, issues as the group works; or a written summary page that describes "my participation", "my understanding", "the hardest part", "the best part", etc. that each group member fills out. My aim is that the group of student teachers realizes that each member needs to participate actively and to understand completely the material otherwise the group will not succeed,"* mentioned Torger. They have declared often assess individual through their self-reflections, during discussions and presentations: *"I cannot say that giving common grade to the group is unfair because the participation of each member may vary. I single out one person in the group while they are working or presenting and ask him to explain an answer or to give me in relation to what he has said, further details about the final product or the final work...because they usually done their presentations together.... I can ensure like this that he has participated. If anyone has difficulty to explain something, the group helps him. You know... this back up is an evidence that the group acknowledged common goals,"* confessed Bob, a Norwegian teacher educator.

A trend we have noticed in the vocational education area is that ensuring individual accountability often results to the student in performing alone the whole task after the group has completed it. This is the current case with the participants in Norway: *"When you pass this kind of "test", it means that you have in some way or the other experienced or taken part in all the process during the time of the group work. So the students know in advance that they have to devote themselves to all the aspects of the common work."*, confirmed Hakon.

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<sup>101</sup>Etienne said : « *c'est aussi une tâche d'évaluation en ce sens que lorsque l'étudiant dépose tout ce qui lui est demandé par son portfolio, il démontre ainsi sa capacité à assumer sa responsabilité d'enseignant qui implique de nombreuses tâches et compétences. Pendant mon temps de travail, je n'ai pas seulement à enseigner. Je dois rédiger des rapports, remplir des papiers administratifs pour ma carrière, ...ainsi de suite. ; ceci les prépare pour cela. »*

To sum, the assessment tasks we identified from our interviews are not exhaustive of all the practices in education. However, our results showed from their declarations that they assess the student teachers in cooperative learning groups to have evidence and according to:

**1-The academic Learning or requirements:** that is what the student teachers should know, understand, and retain over time according to the official program.

**2 Reasoning:** The quality of students' reasoning, conceptual frameworks, use of the scientific method and problem-solving, and construction of academic arguments.

**3-Skills:** Examples are oral and written communication skills, teamwork skills, research skills, skills of organizing and analyzing information, technology skills, skills of coping with stress and adversity, conflict resolution skills inside the group.

**4-Attitudes:** The attitudes student teachers develop, such as love of learning, commitment to being a responsible citizen, liking scientific reasoning, self-respect and respect to others, liking of diversity, commitment to making the group work valuable to each one.

**5-Class Work Habits:** The work habits students develop, such as completing schoolwork and assignments on time, using time wisely, meeting responsibilities, and striving for quality work, continuously improving one's work, and so forth.

The indicators of those competences are evidenced by the successful completion of the assessments tasks. The compulsory assignments in addition to group projects, group research works, weblogs, seminars and group oral presentations for the student teachers are to some extent:

- Participation in their program's seminars and learning group. (A quasi-full attendance is required)
- Presentation of project works for the learning group and sometimes in the name of the group
- Participation in group learning by giving and receiving feedback
- A reflection paper concerning one's learning in the group is to be handed in individually

Fulfilling the requirement of compulsory assignment is a sign that they will be a good civil servant who has the duty to

However, to what extent do the five dimensions of authentic assessment account for teachers' educators?

### **5.3 Teachers' educators reflections about the authenticity of their assessment tasks**

This study considers that the level of authenticity of the assessment tasks used by our respondents is explained by their degree of similarity to the criterion situation the student

teachers are likely to encounter as teachers. So we consider authentic assessment task here as an assessment requiring the same competences, the same skills and attitudes towards teaching or the same combinations of knowledge that the prospective teachers need to apply in their professional life.

In extending the assessment tasks alongside the five dimensional framework elements that can make them authentic (the task, the physical context, the social context, the result of the assessment task, the criteria) , our results show that teachers educators are well aware of those aspects in the particular setting of cooperative learning group and try to fulfill all the conditions.

### **5.3.1 The assessment task result and the task**

For some of them, the result of the assessment task equates the task: “*My assessment tasks are purposely designed for that. Once the student teacher has succeeded, I can say he ready for that aspect of teaching...that’s why the self-reflections assignments, the presentation of group research work...all these things are intended for that.*”, said Kjell in Norway. In the same light, Bob said: “*The student must feel after the task like real teachers, and be proud of their work...they must own their task like in a real classroom.*” The trend is that the assessment task result is evaluated according to four elements:

- The quality of the final work or the product
- The underlying competences of the student teacher through a demonstration
- The student mastery of the task through an oral or written defense

They all agreed that more assessments tasks and innovative ones should be designed to better-fit real professional practices and profile the student professional competence that is, the competence he needs to be a professional teacher.

### **5.3.2 The physical context**

The physical context of the assessment task deals with all kind of physical tools needed to perform the task. The teachers’ educators say they devote lot of time with school authorities to make the physical context as realistic as possible: “*Whenever some pedagogical tools are*

*missing and prevent me from implementing correctly my job, I report that to our authorities...you know we have to put our students in good working conditions, with the adequate premises,*"<sup>102</sup> claimed Benoît , a french teacher educator. From their discourses, the teacher educators make sure to have all the material and resources general available in the criterion situation their students are to work. Most teachers' educators for vocational education thus put great emphasis on the physical context of their assessment tasks as tried to explain Hakon: *"A prospective cook needs to be trained with what a professional cook uses. You cannot train a cook with the tools a tailor use... (laughs)...we have all the facilities here for a cook...or we have those special classes in our partners premises"*.

### **5.3.3 The social context**

The social context of an authentic assessment task must be similar to the social process in an equivalent situation in reality. There is a common agreement among our respondents that the cooperative learning environment of the task and the connections the students have when investigating provide the social interactions the students will be involved in, in the course of their future work.

### **5.3.4 The criteria and standards of the assessment tasks**

According to the teachers' educators, the criteria with which the assessments tasks are judged are the characteristics of the assessment result that are valued. As for the standards, they account for the level of performance expected from the different level and the number of years of training: *"a student teacher in his first year is not assessed like someone who is completing his training. Our expectations from them are different,"* explained Torger. However, the teachers conceded that the national program in teacher education fixes the criteria and standards and these criteria and standards are subjects to constant modifications due to the evolution of the teaching work.

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<sup>102</sup> Benoît said : *« Chaque fois que des outils pédagogiques manquent et m'empêchent de mettre en œuvre correctement mes activités,, je le déclare que à nos autorités ... vous savez, nous devons mettre nos étudiants dans de bonnes conditions de travail, avec les locaux adéquats. »*

Concisely, the relative importance the teachers' educators give to five dimension of authenticity could be sum up as follows:

Elements of authenticity	Teachers' educator practices to make assessment task authentic
The task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic task as performed in real life</li> <li>• Assure ownership of the task</li> <li>• The assessment task equates the assessment result</li> </ul>
The physical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring fidelity to the reality by allowing students enough time like professional.</li> <li>• Make sure to have all the needed and available resources</li> <li>• Work with enterprises to provide real practice for students (vocational education)</li> </ul>
The social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cooperative learning environment provide the social context</li> </ul>
The assessment result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality with the assessment task</li> </ul>
The criteria and the standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided by the national program</li> </ul>

Table 10: Teachers' educators' efforts to make authentic assessment tasks according to the five elements of authenticity developed by (Gulikers & al, 2004)

Nevertheless, the teachers' educators confront some challenges when implementing these assessment tasks.

#### 5.4 The Challenges and Difficulties

When implementing the assessment tasks, the teachers' educators we interviewed confront two sorts of challenges: some challenges related to cooperative learning and others to make the assessments tasks as authentic a possible

### 5.4.1 Challenges related to the cooperative tasks

These challenges deal with the management of cooperative learning groups and how to ensure the group goals and individual accountability. The teachers' educators have mentioned many challenges as follow:

**Challenge 1:** Making sure of the real participation of each member of the group.

The teachers cannot be with the groups all the time mostly when activities occur outside the training center: *"I cannot be around all the time the group members to see if each member effectively participates. I can assess individual only through what I have the chance to see during the work process, or during the discussions I have with each one, or the written paper each member writes about "his participation" or his experiences during the completion of the common task.,"* said Bob . In the case some group members do not actively participate, other teachers' educators to ensure the participation of all the members give responsibilities inside the group in such a way that no one can fulfill his task without positive interdependence with the others.

**Challenges 2:** Instituting a culture of peer-assessment in the groups

This challenge has to do with handling different personalities inside the cooperative groups in order to insure feedback among the students, positive interdependence and tolerance of the members to constructive criticisms: *"the student teachers must learn to receive and give constructive feedback,"*<sup>103</sup> defended Jacques from France. The teachers acknowledge that they have to struggle hard for that because the individuals have different cultural background and personal histories. Some students let the teachers have the impression that they are saying to them: *"Sometimes some of my students are upset about criticisms on their work or about their participation in the group work. You sometimes hear them saying: he does not know more"*

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<sup>103</sup> Jacques said :« les futurs enseignants doivent apprendre à recevoir et à faire des commentaires constructifs. »



*than me to judge me otherwise we won't be in the same program, at the same level,*"<sup>104</sup> seemed to regret Cyril from France. However, the teachers considered that it is normal from humans: *"In Teacher Education you know that we are dealing with adults. So sometimes when I use a peer-assessment strategies they are reluctant to check each other's understanding or request each other to pay more attention... but you see this a matter of student personality...at the end they succeed in accepting criticisms from their fellows. What I use to do is to assign that role to someone in the group each time they meet, in that way everyone learns,"*, concluded Hakon. Benoît from France insisted: *"it is also part of my job to make the student teachers learn how to give and receive constructive criticism. I think this must be an integral part of their training"*.<sup>105</sup>

**Challenges 3:** The awarding of equal grades or individual grades to the group members

The question of group grades has always challenged the teachers. Our respondents have always related it to individual accountability. They use several methods to awards grades to students. They then mix individual and group grades: *"The members of the groups know beforehand that the grade of the group depends on the performance of each member. This is to induce positive interdependence. So they help each other and no one is left at the bottom."* said Bob from Norway. However, French teachers said that it is not easy to give group grades in a system that rank students: *"Group grades are not highly praised in our context here as cooperative learning group are not much valued here,"*<sup>106</sup> said Cyril. On the contrary, the Norwegian teachers said that their challenge is to give individual grades, as the academic culture about cooperative learning group is to give group grades: *"with its performance or the product it has made, the group pass or fail. Successes of individuals are successes of the group. In the context of cooperative learning group even you demonstrate something alone, you learnt in the group. Therefore, group and individual are closely linked. Here you pass or fail with your group"*, explained Knute.

The other challenges of the teachers' educators relate to their intention to make their assessment tasks as authentic as possible.

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<sup>104</sup> Cyril said : « *Parfois, certains de mes étudiants sont mécontents des critiques sur leur travail ou de leur participation dans le travail du groupe. vous les entendez parfois dire : il ne sait pas plus que moi pour me juger, autrement nous ne serions pas dans le même programme au même niveau.* »

<sup>105</sup> Benoît said: « *cela fait aussi partie de mon travail de leur apprendre à faire et à recevoir des commentaires constructives. Je pense que cela doit faire partie intégrante de leur formation.* »

<sup>106</sup> Cyril said: « *les notes de groupes aussi bien que les apprentissages coopératifs ne sont pas très valorisées dans notre contexte ici.* »

#### 5.4.2 Challenges to make the assessment tasks authentic

The teachers encounter some difficulties with some elements of our five dimensional framework of authentic assessment.

As for the physical context, the teachers said that it is not easy to have on time all the resources needed for training and assessment. Moreover teachers from vocational education mentioned that these pedagogical tools are expensive and are not concentrated on time and space and fragmented over many places as usual: *“all this costs money for transportation and so on...this reduces the possibility to have the students perform in adequate places.”*, pleaded Hakon from Norway. Another difficulty with the physical context is the constraints of time when students have to perform in professional manners. The time given to student to perform the task is not always sufficient: *“In the training centered we have time constraints contrary to the professional in real-world who has time scattered over days.... But we do our best.”*, deplored Hakon.

The last challenge about the authenticity of the task some of our participants mentioned is the reports of self-assessment by the students' teachers. They often question its reliability. The difficulty lies in what credit to give to it: *“I question that aspect sometimes but what really matters for me is the final product (...) however I acknowledge that when a student writes in his/her paper “I have constructed some competences”, I cannot say he has really acquired them. The only way for me to assess is to see evidence from actions or interviews.”*<sup>107</sup>, argued Cyril from France.

As for, the criteria and standards, the teachers think that they should be more realistic because sometimes they do not have all the means to attest them through the performance of the student teacher. *“How can I know for sure that the student teacher will be a good civil servant if I don't allow him to behave like that in reality?”*<sup>108</sup>, asked Jacques from France.

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<sup>107</sup> Cyril said: « je me pose parfois la question sur cet aspect de la chose...mais ce qui compte pour moi , c'est le produit final(...)je reconnais que quand un étudiant écrit ..j'ai construit telles compétences, je ne peux pas dire s'il les a vraiment acquis. La seule façon pour moi d'évaluer, c'est d'avoir des preuves par ses actions ou par des entretiens. »

<sup>108</sup> Jacques said: « comment puis-je être sûr que le futur enseignant sera un bon fonctionnaire si je ne lui permet pas se comporter ainsi dans une situation réelle ? »

To sum, some the challenges encountered by the teachers' educators are:

- ✓ Making sure of the real participation of each member of the group
- ✓ Instituting a culture of peer-assessment in the groups
- ✓ The awarding of equal grades or individual grades to the group members
- ✓ Time and facilities constraints when performing the task
- ✓ Pedagogical tools expensive; not always concentrated on time and space and fragmented over many places
- ✓ Not easy to rely on students reports of the competences they say they have constructed and acquired

In a nutshell, the findings show that the assessment tasks the teachers' educators said they often use in cooperative learning groups are: group oral presentations and seminars, group research works, oral or written self-reflection task, group projects and portfolio. They arrange the tasks prescribed by the curriculum to be as authentic as possible and to fit real- world practices according to five elements of authenticity: the nature of the task, the social context, the physical context, the assessment result and the criteria of real life situation. However, they encounter some difficulties in terms of management of cooperative learning groups and availability of adequate pedagogical resources.

## **Chapter 6. Discussions and recommendations**

To reiterate, our research questions are:

- 1- What are the assessments tasks teachers' educators' uses in cooperative learning and how do they carry out those tasks?
- 2- To what extent do teachers' educators care about the task, the physical environment, the social context, the form that is the demonstration of a performance, the results and the criteria when assessing student teachers in a cooperative work?
- 3-What are the challenges/difficulties they confront when assessing the student teachers?

The answers of our participants to these questions have led us to the following reflections.

## **6.1 Discussion of the findings**

Many interpretations can infer from our findings only based on the teachers' educators' perceptions of their practices. This section provides them according to the assessment tasks identified, their level of authenticity according to the teachers' educators and the challenges encountered.

### **6.1.1 The assessment tasks**

All the assessment tasks used by the teachers' educators we interviewed are activities that the prospective teachers are likely to do in their future career. These tasks provide the student teachers with some teaching and administrative skills they will encounter. The assessment tasks we identified assess important aspects of the teaching profession. The cooperative aspects of the tasks soon involve them in the social interaction they will be subject to in their professional life like be tolerant to criticisms, management of conflicts with their colleagues and even in the groups of their future pupils. These assessment tasks also induce student teachers to be fond of inquiry, improvement and innovation in their future professional practices.

Working in cooperative learning groups is already part of authentic learning as in his professional life the student teacher is going to interact with others. The assessments tasks like group research works and group projects fully contribute to that. What they learn and the competences they gain from research could shape their long term-view about their practice. During the implementation of these tasks, the teachers' educators play the role of facilitators to respond to some questions. The student teachers learn by doing and reflecting on what they are doing; and the tasks permit them to undergo at the same time. Furthermore, with the weblogs and the presentations, they have the opportunity to share their projects and activities with the community and thus contribute to the improvement of cooperation and knowledge construction. Weblogs also prepare them for teaching and learning in a digital world.

### 6.1.2 The authenticity of the assessment tasks

With respect to our second question about the authenticity of the assessment tasks, we could say that the teachers' educators' practices are informed by what has been set up by the curriculum in terms of criteria and standards and the physical working conditions provided by stakeholders. When teachers educators take their students from the training center to the premises of partner institutions to have professional tools to work with, this means that they acknowledge that more authenticity with the tasks implies and supports the validity of the assessment. Otherwise, they will have to simplify or to simulate in their training center the assessments tasks so that the student teachers could demonstrate the required competences. The physical context of the assessment tasks then seems to be very important as the social context is provided by the cooperative learning environment. The criteria and standards and the assessment result are not neglected but they seem to be of less importance and taken for granted by the teachers educators.

This relative importance from one teacher's educator to one another, given to the elements that define authenticity is the fact that authenticity is subjective (Huang, 2002)<sup>109</sup>. This implies that what authorities perceive as authentic is not necessarily what teachers' educators or student teachers see as authentic. Therefore, the efforts each one puts to ensure authentic assessment tasks will vary. So developing authenticity according to one's own view causes problems and appeal for collaboration among all the stakeholders. Authentic assessment requires students to demonstrate relevant competences through a significant, meaningful and worthwhile accomplishment (Wiggins, 1993)<sup>110</sup>.

We think that once the task is successfully performed as it is in real- world, it accounts for an authentic assessment task.

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<sup>109</sup> Huang, H. M. (2002), *towards constructivism for adult learners in online learning environments*. British Journal of Educational Technology, 33, 27–37.

<sup>110</sup> Wiggins, G. P. (1993), *Assessing student performance: Exploring the purpose and limits of testing*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

### **6.1.3 The challenges**

With respect to our third research question about the challenges, the teachers' educators encounter, our results suggest that using or working or feel at ease in cooperative learning is cultural. What features in the results means that working in cooperative group is more accepted in Norway than in France. This is due to the egalitarian system prevailing in Norway whereas in France there is a very elitist educational system. However the fact that in some cases the students have to perform alone what they have done together with their group show that cooperative learning is not sufficient in itself and needs to be combined to other learning methods to ensure that the group does not wash out individual qualities. The individual needs the group and vice versa. The individual's competences foster the group and are necessary for self-development. The way teachers' educators care about ensuring a balance between individual accountability and group goals account for that.

Teachers educators expressed that there should be more consideration from the education authorities, all stakeholders in order to have more means to ensure authenticity in teacher education. This requires thinking of the perspectives of teacher education. It will be also necessary to investigate on how the existing resources of teacher education (infrastructures, pedagogical tools, and partnerships with private institutions) are organized and used.

To sum up our interpretations, we can say that an authentic meaningful assessment task of cooperative learning groups according the teachers educators is the one that encourage peer-assessment and self-assessment and constantly adjusts to the evolution of the teaching profession by using objective criteria and standards.

### **6.2 Limitations of the study**

When carrying out this study, we did not have many opportunities to observe our respondents in action. Our data are based originally on the content analysis of the discourses. However, the observations we had, allowed us to see the dynamics of some cooperative learning groups and to ask relevant questions. Although our subjects have provided us with interesting reflections and our results related to a limited number of participants, we cannot generalize them to the whole community of teachers' educators. However, the findings give an

overview of the trends in practices, and further leads for reflections. We cannot generalize their practices to all the teachers' educators in Norway or in France.

We are not comparing Norway and France in this study although we have highlighted some contrasts among teachers' educators' practices in both countries. This study is just to survey the trends in a small group of teachers' educators and provide hints for improvements of practices as far as assessment tasks in cooperative learning groups in teacher education are concerned.

We acknowledge that there are many techniques to make people work in cooperation as related assessment practices. In this study, we only refer to the assessment practices we identified in our participants' discourses. There may be other eventual ways, practices and their impending challenges according to the culture, the political and economic system or the educational system.

Using interviews to collect data may have also influenced our findings as we assume that human beings are complex and it is not possible to capture the full richness and complexities of our participants' practices only from their discourses. However, they have provided us so far good insights in professional practices of teachers' educators.

### **6.3 Implications for professional practices, Teacher Education and further research**

#### **6.3.1 Implications for professional practices and Teacher Education**

Learning activities that reflect real-world activities are more valid and valued in the workplace and in the work market. Therefore, in designing the assessment tasks, policy makers in designing the curriculum and teachers' educators should provide the student teachers with a range of opportunities to demonstrate the needed professional competences.

These would include on the teachers' educators part to:

- Know how to adjust current assessment tasks to maximize the student teachers' achievement according to their needs.
- Know that improving and refining assessment tasks is an ongoing process and not a rigid one
- Make use of integrated assessment tasks that provide the students with a variety of methods of achieving (information skills, cooperative learning activities, oral presentations, written reports and products)

For these reasons, we suggest a systematic formative approach to learning in teacher education so that assessment in Education could be efficient. This approach should include the following elements (OECD, 2008)<sup>111</sup>:

- Diagnosing Learning Needs and Settings Goals
- Relationships within the Classroom: Dialogue and Peer Assessment
- Techniques: Feedback, Questioning and Scaffolding
- Developing Learner Autonomy
- Recognizing Learning Progress

Such an approach to learning gathers all the information the teacher' educator needs to determine the level of each student's achievement even in cooperative learning and copes with the current tradition of awarding of grades in his educational system. It thus represents elements of authentic assessment by:

- assessing what is taught and learnt in a unit of work
- assessing what the teachers' educator have told the students he plan to assess
- matching the assessment criteria to the assessment task
- accommodating the needs of the different students during the learning process

Our results also imply that an assessment task should be considered as an interactive process between the teachers' educators and his students on the one hand, and among the students on the other hand. It is an interaction where the teacher supports the learning process. In this respect, the generalization of cooperative learning in teacher education should be a good start. To support that process, teachers can systematically make use of logs, portfolio assessments and other tools to document the progress of the learning. In addition, they should spend less time in marking and more time on providing feedback and comments.

In the same light, more and more authenticity in activities, tasks and assessment tasks will improve teacher education programs, student teachers learning experiences. Therefore, emphasis should be put on developing assessments practices in teacher education. This requires well- trained teachers' educators and reflections over the practices from all the stakeholders.

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<sup>111</sup> OECD, 2008, *Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Adults-Improving Foundation Skills* p 92



### 6.3.2 Implications for future research

The findings of our study give interesting impulses for further theoretical and practical research about who between professionals and politicians has to decide on the authenticity and the forms of the assessment tasks. The current shift in France of Teacher education towards Universities and the debate it has brought about practical training aspects of prospective teachers, suggest questioning the value of studies at universities. This reflection will be worthwhile, as people tend to label universities' studies as only theoretical. This will be interesting to determine the perspectives and conditions of teacher education nowadays. It will be also interesting to see if assessment tasks performed in real professional context worth school-based ones that use simulation to settle the lack of pedagogical materials.

In addition, it will be interesting to investigate on a large scale the following research questions: what mix of assessment tasks, methods or instruments provide the best authentic assessment task in cooperative learning and what are the students' perceptions of the authenticity of the assessment tasks as well.

### Conclusion

Cooperative learning is not commonly use in teacher education judging from our participants' reflections. However, they feel that it must be generalized as it reveals to be an efficient tool as a learning process of active inquiry, not passive reception (Knowles, 1990)<sup>112</sup> for socializing student teachers despite the challenges to ensure positive interdependence, individual accountability and group goals. According to them, the assessment tasks they use with the student teachers in cooperative learning such as seminars and group oral presentations, group projects, oral or written self-reflection, and weblogs account for real professional practices by nature. They are then authentic assessment tasks and integral part of the educational practices and not mainly associated with giving marks.

They also all agreed that learning and the criterion situations in real professional contexts should be aligned to each other in teacher education where ensuring the authenticity of the

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<sup>112</sup> Knowles, S. , (1990), *the adult learner: a neglected species*, Houston, TX: Gulf Publications Company.

physical context of the assessment task has always been a challenge for them. All the stakeholders must then provide all the teachers training centers with the necessary infrastructures and funds to focus on the development of competences and take authentic professional practices as a starting point in the initial training of prospective teachers.

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## Appendix A: Guidelines for interviews with teachers' educators

Categories/themes	Sample questions	Expected content
<b>Assessment tasks</b>	<p><i>What are the assessment tasks you use in cooperative learning groups?</i></p> <p><i>For what purposes?</i></p> <p><i>What guide your judgments?</i></p> <p><i>What do you expect from the student teachers in terms of professional competences?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Different types of assessment tasks assigned</li> <li>-The object of the assessment tasks</li> <li>-criteria and indicators</li> <li>- Performance expected from the student teacher</li> </ul>
<b>Elements of authenticity according to the five dimensional frame work of authentic assessment</b>	<p><i>How do ensure that your assessment tasks reflect real-world practices?</i></p>	<p>Reflections on the authenticity of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the task,</li> <li>-the social context,</li> <li>-the physical context,</li> <li>- the assessment result,</li> <li>-the criteria and standards</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<p><i>What challenges do you encounter when managing the group?</i></p> <p><i>What challenges do you encounter to ensure the authenticity of the assessment tasks? According to the task? The physical context? The social context? The result?, The criteria and standards?</i></p>	<p>Difficulties for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-cooperative group management</li> <li>-Authenticity of the tasks</li> <li>- administrative, institutional difficulties</li> <li>-hope for improvement</li> </ul>

**Appendix B : Guide des entretiens menés avec les formateurs d’enseignants pour recueillir leurs perceptions de l’évaluation authentique en apprentissage coopératif**

Catégories/thèmes	Questions types	Contenu attendu
<p><b>Les tâches d’évaluation en apprentissages coopératifs ou</b>  <b>Les outils d’évaluations en apprentissages coopératifs</b></p>	<p><i>Quelles sont les tâches d’évaluation auxquelles vous soumettez vos enseignants stagiaires ?</i>  <i>Pourquoi ces tâches, ces outils d’évaluation ?</i>  <i>Qu’évaluez-vous ? Quelles sont vos modalités ?</i>  <i>Qu’attendez-vous comme démonstrations de vos stagiaires ?</i></p>	<p>-Différent types de tâches évaluatives de compétences construites            -objets d’évaluation            -critères, indicateurs</p>
<p><b>Degré d’authenticité des évaluations ou tâches évaluatives par rapport aux cinq dimensions d’une évaluation authentique</b></p>	<p><i>Comment vous assurez-vous que vos tâches reflètent l’acte professionnel tel qu’il est exécuté dans la réalité ?</i>  <i>D’après vous qu’est-ce qui fait l’authenticité de ces tâches par rapport aux compétences professionnelles à acquérir par les enseignants stagiaires ?</i>  <i>Qu’est –ce qui vous permet de dire que vous menez une évaluation authentique ?</i></p>	<p>Réflexions personnelles des formateurs sur ce qui fait l’authenticité des évaluations menées par rapport à :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- la tâche évaluative,</li> <li>-, le contexte social de la tâche</li> <li>-l’environnement physique de la tâche</li> <li>- le résultat de la tâche,</li> <li>-les critères et les indicateurs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Défis et difficultés lors des tâches évaluatives ou avec les outils d’évaluations</b></p>	<p><i>Quelles sont ce contexte les difficultés ou défis à relever que vous rencontrez dans la gestion des groupes des enseignants stagiaires ?</i>  <i>Quelles difficultés rencontrez-vous pour assurer l’authenticité des tâches évaluatives ?</i></p>	<p>Difficultés liées la gestion des groupes de groupes d’apprentissage coopératifs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Difficultés rencontrées pour chacune des dimensions de l’évaluation authentique</li> <li>- Difficultés administratives, institutionnelles, stratégies pour les contourner.</li> </ul>

**Appendix C : Guidelines for coding and analyzing the teachers' educators' interviews**

<b>Assessment tasks used in cooperative learning groups in teacher education from teachers' educators' discourses.</b> Interview of Mr.../...Mrs X extr=extracts from discourse ; int= interpretations of the teacher										
<b>The assessment tasks</b>	Reasons for using the task ( prescribed or not)			Challenges about the assessment task			Teacher education for vocational education		General teacher education	
<b>Task 1....</b>	Extracts		Interpretations		Extracts		Interpretations		( tick)	( tick)
<b>Ex :Project work</b>	"...tackle real world challenges..."	Prescribed Com. Skills, etc..		"...group grade...individual..."		Group grade Peer-assessment		-		
<b>Perceptions/strategies to ensure the assessment task authenticity</b>										
<b>the assessment tasks according to the five dimensional framework of authenticity</b>	Degree of authenticity, to what extent it reflect professional practices The dimensions of authentic assessment developed by ( Gulikers & al, 2004)									
	<b>Tasks</b>		<b>Physical context( resources, material)</b>		<b>Social context( interactions, individual or group)</b>		<b>Assessment result( final work , performance, final product, competences)</b>		<b>Criteria , standards</b>	
<b>Ex: Project works</b>	Extracts "...tackle..."	Int. yes	Extr. "...Interactions..."	Int. yes	Extr Group "...interaction During assignment..."	Int. yes	Extr. "...successful completion.. Competent"	Int. Yes	Extr. "...national Curriculum..."	Int Yes.
<b>Task 2...</b>										
	<b>Assessment task</b>		<b>Physical context</b>		<b>Social context</b>		<b>Assessment result</b>		<b>Criteria standards</b>	
<b>Challenges to ensure authenticity according to each dimension</b>	Ex:project work	Task 2	Ex:Project work	Task .	Ex:project work	Task 2	Ex:project work	Task 2	Ex:project work	Task 2
	"...finding realistic projects..."		"...adequate premises.. time"		No	no	"...depends on material..."		"...do our best to respect curriculum..."	
<b>Interpretative summary</b>										

