English for Education Systems China

5 years on: exploring the impact and influence of a 'Train-the-Trainer' programme for Junior High School teachers in a Guangzhou suburb

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Abstract

This research paper follows up on the progress of teachers who took part in a British Council facilitated TDC: Trainer Development Course (I.e., cascade trainer training) held in 2016 – 2017. The research was conducted to be shared at the 2021 Language Teacher Education and Development in the Greater Bay Area International Conference in Guangzhou, China. It is intended to support English teacher Continuous Professional Development (CPD) decision-making within the province and, potentially, across China. The results offer clear insight into how similar cascade programmes can be more effectively designed and implemented to ensure more teachers benefit from a sustainable CPD training model in their local context.

The primary research was conducted with the support of 30 teachers who participated in the programme. Their responses and experiences were then contrasted against 29 teachers from the same district who had not received the training. The primary purpose of the research was to explore the impact of the TDC training on the participating teachers and whether they had been able to use what they had learned. Areas covered included current perspectives, opportunities, challenges and needs as a trainer in the Guangzhou local district context.

From data compiled, while the training has positively influenced their own teaching it was found that most teachers had done little teacher-training since the completion of the course in 2017 and there had been little support from their own schools to support further development of the teachers as trainers, or to develop replicable resources they could use. Without ongoing support after intensive training delivery, and due in part to certain engrained ideologies on the ground, many teachers had lost confidence in their ability to train over the past 5 years and this had discouraged them from pursuing teacher-training as an area of continuous professional development (CPD).

However, more recent opportunities within the district that support the dispatch of experienced teachers to partnered rural provinces under the auspices of the national *fupin* poverty alleviation programme have offered a renewed pathway for teachers to use the skills acquired through the TDC. These nationally and locally endorsed programmes – endorsed at both district and school level - provide teacher cascade training, such as the TDC, with a potentially relevant and sustainable future within the scope of local and national priorities, offering a practical face-to-face method that supports rural and under-developed areas at scale whilst also being a valuable CPD opportunity for English teachers across China.

Introduction

This paper explores the impact of a 4-stage Train-the-Trainer programme held over 6 months in a suburban district of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province between 2016 and 2017. The key purpose of this paper is to build on lessons learned and inform key local decision makers in English teacher Continuous Professional Development (CPD) within Guangdong province on what effective, well planned models of cascade training might include, and how they could be better utilised to maximise positive impact. The research was originally undertaken to be presented at the 2021 Language Teacher Education and Development in the Greater Bay Area International Conference in Guangzhou, China[1]. The results of the research also have relevance to English teacher CPD across mainland China.

This research is also of significant importance to the British Council English for Education System's (EES) future strategy within China as it contributes to our knowledge of English language teacher cascade programmes and how they might be adapted and implemented within the China context to support national educational priorities I.e., supporting English teacher training in rural areas. This knowledge can better support integration of sustainable models of teacher training and CPD opportunities in future grant-funded work under Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funding or through other relevant British Council supported programme initiatives.

The Train-the-Trainer programme in Guangzhou used an adaptation of the British Council's Trainer Development Course (TDC) to provide support for 2 cohorts of teachers from the primary (31) and junior high (32) sectors in developing a foundation in English teacher training and workshop creation for future cascade training.

This paper explores and notes the changes in circumstance of teachers who took part in the 2016-2017 TDC training, and what challenges they still face. In doing this we identify what needs there are for trainers in the local context and speculate on how adaptation of an intensive TDC model or similar programme could be improved, supplemented, or changed to maximise its effectiveness. The teachers who participated in the TDC training are referred to as the **Training Group.**

To identify if trainee responses might differ from other local teachers due to their experience on the TDC training a **Control Group** of in-service teachers who did not receive the TDC training were also consulted to cross-reference perspectives and needs. These teachers are referred to as the **Control Group.**

Specifically, the paper hopes to address the following questions about the context and experience of teachers from the Training Group[2], 5 years on:

- *Has the training resulted in greater opportunities to train and develop? How?*

- *What challenges have teachers met as cascade trainers after the course?*

- *How have the perspectives of the participating teachers changed since the training?*

Due to limitations in resources and to narrow the focus of the follow up research only the junior high group were selected. This decision was also in part due to a perceived lower language proficiency amongst the primary teacher cohort based on experience during the delivery. The research was conducted in English and carried out anonymously. The names of teachers and the district involved in the training have been redacted in the interests of confidentiality.

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[1] Due to local restrictions on foreign participants the paper was not presented.

[2] Training Group will refer to the participants of the 2016-2017 TDC training only.

Overview of project

The genesis of the project stemmed from a British Council EES project with a local Guangdong Education Bureau to deliver a 5-day intensive CPD course on communicative teaching methodology for Primary English Teachers in 2014. Feedback on the course was positive and the experience encouraged the partner to explore ways to increase the reach and impact of future teacher development in the district. From this, emerged the 2016-2017 'Trainer-the-Trainer or 'Cascade Trainer Development Project'.
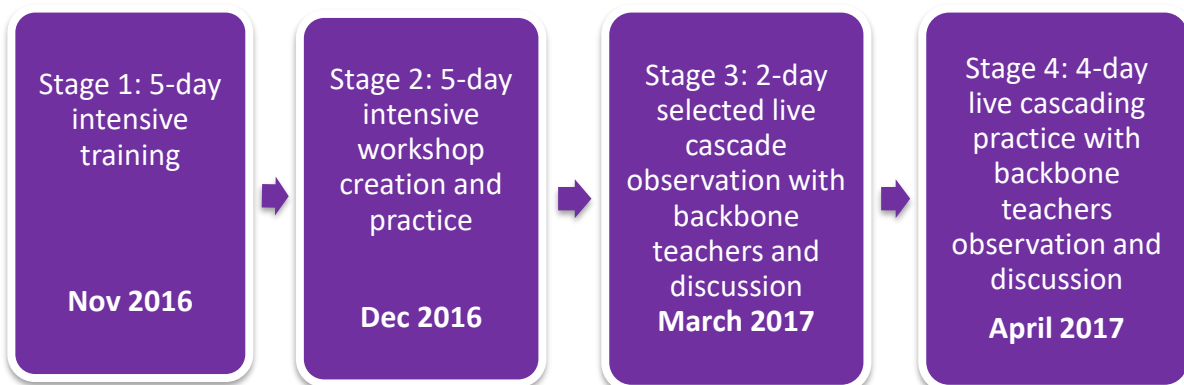
At the time of programme design it was understood that for logistical and financial reasons neither the training delivery nor support could be longitudinal, and while there would be multiple stages to allow interspersed time for reflection and development, the programme was to be completed within a set time frame and over a very limited number of face-to-face training days. In undertaking the training design it was also understood that cascade training, while potentially beneficial, has limitations and there is some "risk that knowledge promoted in a programme will be diluted or distorted as it passes" (Brownhill et al, 2016, pp.175) to the local trainers. Therefore, both parties understood from initial discussions that these limitations may have some effect on impact of the programme and continuing institutional policy or school support beyond the life span of the training would be required.

The agreed objectives set for the programme were to:

- *To enhance participants' skills, confidence and ability for cascade workshops' planning and delivery*
- *To develop their observation and reflection skills*
- *To support course participants' in cascading workshop design and material optimisation*

McKinsey (n.d.) notes that cascade training often allows teachers to train as trainers externally and then return to their school to train the remaining teachers. This initial outcome was expected as part of the programme legacy, but from discussions it was also hoped that teachers in the training cohort would have the chance to go beyond their school context and be able to train other teachers in the district or further afield. It is from this perspective that we approach the follow up investigation.

Figure 1: The agreed 'intensive' training model[3]: 14 days of face-to-face instruction

Stage 1: 5-day intensive training **Nov 2016**	→	Stage 2: 5-day intensive workshop creation and practice **Dec 2016**	→	Stage 3: 2-day selected live cascade observation with backbone teachers and discussion **March 2017**	→	Stage 4: 4-day live cascading practice with backbone teachers observation and discussion **April 2017**

Stage 1: 5-day intensive training course on foundational training skills

Stage 1 focused on providing some foundational training methodology and techniques that could be applied generally to course participants' (CPs) own training. As McKinsey (n.d.) notes, often teachers

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[3] Originally the training delivery was scheduled to end in February making the programme 4 months in duration. Stage 3 and 4 were delayed due to local logistical reasons.

who take part in cascade programmes do not have the foundational knowledge required to effectively pass on their knowledge, therefore providing a basis on which to build was important. The course content of Stage 1 and 2 was adapted from the British Council's Trainer Development Course, and informed by the results of the a needs analysis conducted in Sept 2016.

At the end of the week, 30 CPs were put into six groups and assigned one workshop topic for each group to work on collaboratively in the interim between Stages 1 and 2. In total, 3 topics were provided for CPs' cascading workshops according to the needs analysis results. These were: *Classroom Language; Giving Instructions; Learning Styles.*

Stage 2: 5-day intensive training course on cascade workshop design

Stage 2 allowed CPs to build and test their own training workshops while sharing ideas. They were guided in their design by the British Council trainer and had a chance to deliver some aspects in micro-lecture format.[4] In order to focus primarily on quality of delivery and to explore variation on similar ideas, the 6 groups used only the 3 topics provided and therefore each topic was presented differently by two groups.

Stage 3: 2-day cascade observation and discussion for each cohort

Stage 3 aimed to develop CPs' confidence in a live training environment and support them to adjust the workshops through targeted observation and discussion. Cohorts were divided into two groups to allow for more intensive feedback and each day the British Council trainer would work with one group to observe 1-2 cascading workshops delivered to volunteer 'backbone teachers' in the morning. Discussion and feedback sessions based on the observations were held in the afternoon.

Stage 4: 4-day cascading observation and discussion for each cohort

Stage 4 allowed all CPs [5] to co-deliver their own workshops and supported them to optimise the workshops through observation and discussion. Participants delivered part or all of a 1.5-hr workshop to approximately 20 frontline teachers per session. Through scheduling and some movement between classrooms, each block of frontline teachers received 3 workshops delivered by 3 CPs cooperatively in one day. The final re-usable workshops were intended to be a legacy of the programme and a resource on which teachers could build in future. When building their own replicable workshops this would then, in theory, supplement the resource bank available to all trainers.

The situation 5 years ago [6]

Beginning of the cascade training

The original training took place between late 2016 and early 2017. The junior high cohort consisted of 32 teachers, of which 14 teachers provided initial data on their experience and background for the needs analysis. From this we saw that 57% of respondents had less than 10 years of teaching experience at the time of training. 14% of respondents had more than 20 years of teaching experience while no

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[4] Micro-lecture = to their peers on the course
[5] Some CPs were allowed to participate in different ways due to limited classroom numbers and where L2 use for delivery may have been problematic. This was at the British Council trainer's discretion.
[6] Data here is primarily provided from the British Council needs analysis and end of course surveys conducted in 2017. % are rounded up above each 0.5 percentage point.

teachers had less than 3 years of experience, as might be expected given they were to provide cascade training to in-service teachers.

Teachers were asked about how they felt about their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at this point as this could have some bearing on their motivation and ability to fully participate in the 4-stage training, and also to maintain their development beyond the programme's completion.

From the responses on CPD (n=10), unfortunately 4 teachers chose not to answer. However, we saw that 70% (7) of respondents believed that they alone were responsible for their CPD, with 20% (2) believing it was the head of their department and 10% (1) teacher believing this to be the responsibility of the senior teacher. 100% of respondents stated that they did receive 'some support' from their department head in planning their CPD, but this was not specified.

In terms of collaboration, only 20% (2) said they had regular meetings to discuss CPD opportunities with other teachers. 30% (3) teachers stated that they had no meetings with peers in relation to CPD while 50% of teachers stated they sometimes have meetings to discuss CPD, suggesting that this may be on an opportunistic basis and that largely there were few established peer-led communities. This did not initially bode well for cascade work.

Even though the length of the TDC programme was relatively short it still aimed towards supporting the longer term development of teachers as cascade trainers in their own contexts, and therefore the teachers were asked where they saw themselves professionally in 5 years. Of these, only 1 response mentioned training in any way (*"conduct other teachers"*) with the majority stating that they expected to still be teachers. E.g., *"English teaching"; "In my job"; "still at school to be a common teacher."*

This was a little concerning, and answers in the needs analysis suggested potentially low levels of relevance or ambition felt amongst some of the cohort. Although it is unlikely that teachers would transition entirely to training, this lack of expectation amongst responses may also have represented an underlying conflict between teacher's needs and the ambitions of the local district in arranging such training. This separation is further emphasised anecdotally as in the first week of training there was confusion amongst certain CPs who were not fully aware of what was expected of them after the training, particularly the creation and delivery of cascade workshops[7]. Some CPs had thought the training was to develop their teaching practice. This confusion may have been due to internal communication issues or participants not fully grasping the objectives, but ultimately it could also have had some impact on how the training content was received or absorbed both during and after the TDC programme.

End of the cascade training

The final stage of the programme was completed in April 2017. For logistical and financial reasons under the agreement between the British Council and the local district partner no follow up support was scheduled or integrated into the programme. This was unfortunate, but a reality for many training projects where intensive delivery and completion is favoured over more resource intensive extensive programmes. Data collected at this point (n=22) was therefore largely concentrated on the stages that had been completed and teachers' own assessment of change that had taken place; making it somewhat limited for future reference.

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[7] In some cases teachers had thought the training was teacher training and not cascade Train-the-Trainer training.

From the post-training data in 2017 we know that, after stage 4, 100% of CPs believed that they had increased confidence in designing their own training workshops or deliveries. Of these, 56% stated they were "*somewhat confident*" while 45% stated their confidence had increased "*very much*". No respondent stated they had very little or no confidence. Participants were also asked to rate how likely they were to recommend the course to others on a scale from 0 to 10[8], with 10 being the highest rating . Here 91% of respondents rated the course from 6 – 10, with 60% of CPs rating between 8 and 10. Only 1 respondent gave a 2, while another rated a neutral 5. Overall the response to the completed training programme was very positive.

Looking to explore how the training may influence teachers' work beyond the training term, when asked if respondents thought the training was relevant to their current job (as teachers) after Stage 4, a total of 82% (18) *agreed* (59%) or *strongly agreed* (23%) that this was the case, but conversely 18% stated they *disagreed* (9%) or *disagreed* strongly (9%).

Looking beyond the training, there was a similar breakdown with 77% (17) stating that they *agreed* (64%) or *agreed strongly* (14%) that the training would be relevant to their jobs in future , with 9% *undecided* and 14% (3) who *disagreed* (5%) or disagreed strongly (9%). Finally, when asked if the training was important to the organisation (i.e., their school) in which teachers work there was an interesting shift. While 77% (17) *agreed* with this statement, no respondents *strongly agreed.* 5% of respondents were *undecided* while 18% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. This potentially represented a lack of confidence in the relevance of cascade training to the district or more pertinently the school where the teacher's work. This shift in perspective perhaps echoed some of the uncertainty of participating teachers at the start of the course on where the training would lead.

However, overall, it can be confidently stated that there was a strong feeling that the training could and would be relevant to both current work – primarily as teachers - *and* future work - potentially as trainers - if given the opportunity. Therefore, it also seems likely that teachers who formed part of the Training Group will have had or sought to have the opportunity to train other teachers in the 4-5 years since 2016/2017. That is one area this paper will explore.

Recalling the legacy after 5 years

Revisiting a course after 5 years can be difficult for many reasons, not least of these being participants' own varying recollections. Therefore, to start off and perhaps 'jog the memory' of the CPs the junior high Training Group were initially asked the question: *What takeaways from the 2016-2107 British Council Trainer Development Course (TDC) have been most useful to you as a trainer[9]?*

In order to explore respondents' answers a text analysis tool (voyant-tools.org) was used to analyse and create a corpus of the key terms and answers given through a word scatter. To prioritise key areas only the top 100 words that appeared in teacher's answers were placed in the word scatter, with the most common words appearing as the largest. The results can be seen below in **Figure 2**:

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[8] This is generally taken as a mark of satisfaction with the overall content and execution of the training.
[9] It is understood that not all teachers went on to be trainers, but the question was intended to highlight some of the areas that 'stuck' with CPs from the intensive course and get a general impression of where it may have been useful.

Figure 2: Takeaways from the 2016-2017 TDC training

The prominent words give an indication of the key areas that trainees 'took away' from the training. It is perhaps unsurprising that activities (11), students (10) and teaching (9) were the words most mentioned given the topic area and experiential nature of the delivery.

However, it is notable that a number of terms related to isolated activities, games and techniques were also prominently mentioned[10]. *E.g., activities, techniques, methods, dictation, giving instructions, games,* all of which perhaps lend themselves to assimilation through more intensive training deliveries where they can be briefly and efficiently presented, explained, and possibly practiced to help teachers learn how to execute them in their own environment. Words that warranted fewer responses such as: *think , make, check, interest, involve, sharing, principles,* appear to represent more abstract, but perhaps also more sustainable and developmental, practices yet all had generally only one mention.

While it is positive that these are mentioned at all by the respondents after 5 years, and certainly good that techniques are still retained for use as part of a trainer's repertoire, it is worth considering whether the more holistic 'foundational' ideas that gained only scant mention, and which are arguably more commensurate with sustainable development in a training role, would be better served and assimilated through more extensive ongoing support and reflection rather than focusing on the 'quick hits' of individual activities.

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[10] Most frequent words in the corpus:
activities (11); students (10); teaching (9); skills (6); learning (5); classroom (4); learn (4); techniques (4); use (4); dictation (3); feedback (3); instructions (3); make (3); methods (3); ways (3); work (3); better (2); check (2); class (2); clear (2)

Surveys and interviews – Data Collection

Methodology used

In order to follow up with the participants after such an extended time, access was sought and kindly granted through the local authority partner to speak with prior course participants. It was also agreed to allow for a comparison of results by involving a second cohort of local teachers with similar teaching experience. This would help contrast CPs' views on key areas and identify any notable similarities or differences. In doing so, it was hoped that this could highlight some commonalities or trends between or within the groups that might be of value.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and for cost reasons, an online survey (MS Forms) to gain a baseline of knowledge from all participants was selected as the primary tool. The survey supported the interpretative approach employed in this exploration by gaining insightful qualitative data for analysis. However, some empirical data was also collected to allow further positivistic interpretation of teacher's responses that could be quantitively compared across both participating groups (Blaxter, L, 2010).

In order to save time and ensure everyone was made aware of the intentions of the research the survey also acted as a participant information sheet explaining the purpose of the survey, which was anonymous, and the rights of each respondent. Participants were under no obligation to answer or submit the survey for consideration.

A selection of remote semi-interviews using questions designed to follow up on points raised in the online survey were also carried out as the secondary research method as:

"This method typically consists of a dialogue between researcher and participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments. The method allows the researcher to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic." (DeJonckheere, M, & Vaughn L.M., 2019, pp.1)

The follow up interviews sought to delve deeper into the experiences of participants from the Training Group using the baseline survey data as a logical starting point for the interview questions. The objective here was to further explore survey responses and subsequently find out more about how the training had influenced participant's current roles and experiences as a trainer from an individual perspective.

In order to recruit participants for the interview, the initial survey's final question asked members of the Training Group to provide their email address if they agreed to be contacted for this purpose. This was not a mandatory field and if the respondents did not leave their email address then they would remain completely anonymous. Email addresses were only retained until the interviews were completed and by providing the email address this did not signify a commitment to the follow up interviews. All respondents from the Training Group who intimated that they may like to be interviewed were given a second chance to pull out before these were scheduled and were aware under their "right to delf-determination" that they could "withdraw once the research had begun." (Cohen et al, 1993, pp78).

It was decided to interview a significant cross-section of participants to make the follow data more meaningful, but from the 17 who agreed to be interviewed only 8 could be arranged . This represented approximately 27% of the total Training Group participants and 47% of those originally willing to be interviewed. Before each interview, teachers were reminded that there was no recording and that only typed notes would be taken by the interviewer for later documentation. Names of participants were not

recorded, and no audio or video recording was made. Interviews lasted for approximately 20 minutes and were conducted in English.

The data collected was compiled, with no personal information retained. Recordings and survey responses were deleted after data had been extracted for the purpose of this paper in line with common ethics requirements (Cohen et al, 1993).

Limitations

It is clear that the selected research methods had a number of limitations. First of all, it is very difficult to definitively state that the training had any influence on what teachers did over the last 5 years as there have undoubtedly been other trainings and experiences; some teachers will have different priorities and, ultimately, teachers can only work with the opportunities they are given. Additionally, this study only focused on teachers in junior high and experiences of teachers in other sectors of Basic Education (I.e., primary and senior high) may differ.

Clearly, the timeframe is also significant as prior to 2021 there had been no support from or formal contact between the British Council and the trainees due to the limitations of the model and other logistical considerations. This may be regarded as positive by some, as it potentially reduces respondent bias, but to now ask CPs to recall how the TDC training may have affected them in their professional lives after 5 years is potentially unreliable and lacks validity. Therefore the follow up research can only be regarded as exploratory and provides only an indication of how teachers may have been affected by the train-the-trainer training itself in terms of development or opportunity.

Additionally, lack of contact with the teachers since the 2016-2017 TDC course ended meant that there was little point of reference relating to the specific training areas and content that was, or might have been, most relevant or needed.[11] To investigate this in detail prior to the study would have required a separate survey, which was not feasible. Therefore, academic question design and content, particularly on the topic of potential teacher and trainer needs, were defined by British Council academic staff based on experience in the local Basic Education sector and knowledge of the TDC course content. It is evident that some key and relevant ELT areas of need may therefore have been missed or not covered sufficiently and further investigation in relation to local needs may be required.

Language was also an issue. Research tools were provided in English only due to time and resource restrictions, and this may have resulted in some misunderstanding. This was particularly true when trying to dichotomise between *trainer[12]* and *teacher*, and where some teachers may not have been clear on the distinction made in certain questions. In a number of survey questions assumptions were made that teachers would be familiar with certain common ELT terms describing activities, content, or concepts which, while commonly used in China, may not be widely used in English within teaching communities. Also, while we have some idea of the Training Groups' language proficiency for the Control Group no further background information was provided by the local partner and therefore the English proficiency level of that group is not known.

Ultimately, the results, while of interest and potentially revealing, cannot be regarded as definitive. Further exploration on what the trained 'teacher-trainers' are now doing and how well the 2016-2017 has

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[11] A set menu of common ELT areas were presented in the survey to help identify areas of support or content that were needed. These areas were pre-selected by the British Council team.
[12] The term trainer rather than 'teacher educator' was used as this was the term used in 2016

supported them would benefit from further individual case studies and more detailed analysis of their training performance in a live training environment either in their schools or in other contexts.

Survey data - 5 years on

In order to follow up on the junior high cohort an online survey was initially used. The level of response was positive with 30 of 32 teachers from the original 2017 Training Group responding. This was a marked difference from the initial needs analysis survey conducted in 2016 where only 14 of 32 teachers participated. A Control Group of 29 teachers who did not participate in the training were also recruited in an attempt to offer a different perspective on some of the responses.

Notably, the Control Group were almost identical when compared against their levels of experience and qualifications. If anything the Control Group had more teaching experience overall with 14 teachers having more than 20 years' teaching experience compared to 11 teachers in the Training Group. The split of teaching experience between 11-15 years (11) and 16-19 years (3) in both groups was identical while the Training Group had 5 teachers with 8-10 years of experience compared to only 1 in the Control Group. No one had less than 8 years teaching experience.

The gender split was almost exactly the same with 27 females and 2 males in both groups while one participant in the Training Group chose not to specify.

Training experience

In terms of *training experience*, there was a clearer difference with the Training Group showing a greater number of teachers who had at least 1 year of training experience[13] or in developing other teachers. In total, 74%[14] (22) of all Training Group respondents had some training experience compared to 48% (14) of the total Control Group [15]. All respondents stated that they trained at junior high level. **Note:** statistics related to training below will assume n=22 and n=14 for the Training Group and Control Group respectively as only these teachers have stated they have training experience.

Significantly, 36% (8) of the Training Group who stated they <u>do train</u> are only in their first year of training. In fact, the majority of training experience in both groups was between 0 and 3 years[16], which falls well within the 5-year period since completion of the training and suggests a late start to any subsequent training work. 77% (17) [17] of the Training Group's 'experienced' teacher-trainers had recorded 0 -3 years previous training experience (n=22). The Control Group also had 65% (9) of teachers with less than 3 years of stated training experience.

When we include 4 -5 years of experience, we see that approximately 91% of all current 'trainers' in the Training Group who have some training experience began their training within the 4 to 5-year period since the programme ended. This compares to only 79% of teachers in the Control Group for the same period.

Overall, the data suggests that the original Training Group are finding slightly more opportunity to work with other teachers in a training capacity, or potentially have more opportunity and, possibly, confidence

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[13] Based on post-course feedback, it was expected that not every teacher would have the motivation or opportunity to train.
[14] % are rounded up to the nearest percentage point
[15] Given the teaching experience of the control group it is expected that they will have some experience of training or developing others.
[16] This included those who stated < 1 year (8/3) and 1 – 3 years (9/6)
[17] 77% = the percentage of the teachers who do have training experience, excluding those who did not train.

to do so than other teachers. However, much of the training experience appeared to begin sometime after the TDC training was completed, in particular within the last 2 -3 years.

A breakdown of training experience amongst the whole Group and those with experience is in **Figures 3 and 4**. This provides visual reference on some of the key differences between the groups as a whole and amongst those with experience .

Figure 3: Training experience of <u>full</u> Training Group and Control Group

TRAINING GROUP - EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING OTHERS (AGAINST ALL RESPONDENTS N=30)

■None ■<1 year ■1 - 3 years ■4-5 years ■6-8 years ■9-10 years
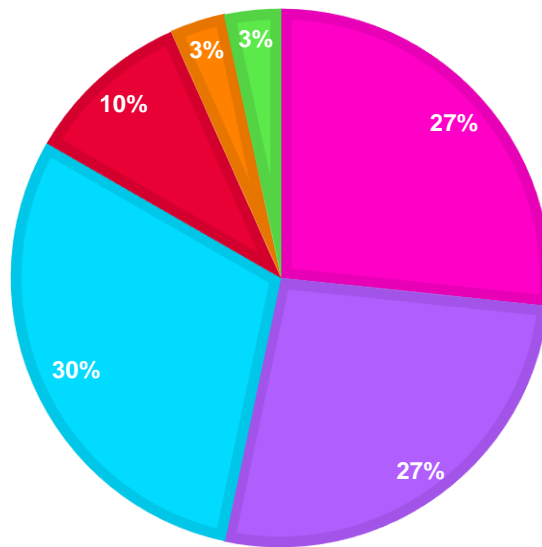
CONTROL GROUP - EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING OTHERS (AGAINST ALL RESPONDENTS N= 29)

■None ■<1 year ■1 - 3 years ■4-5 years ■6-8 years ■9-10 years ■11-15 years
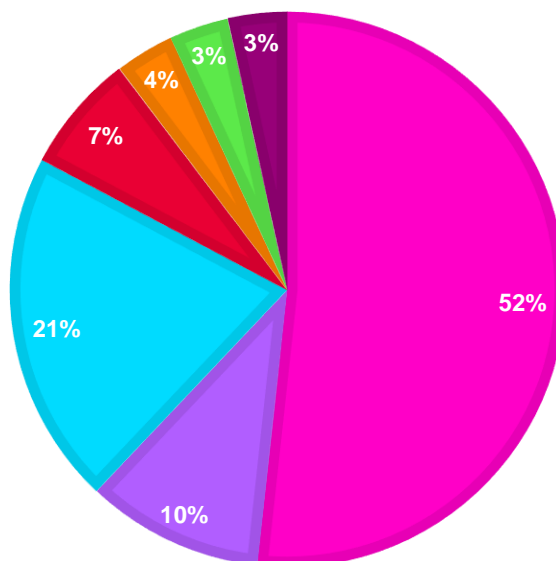
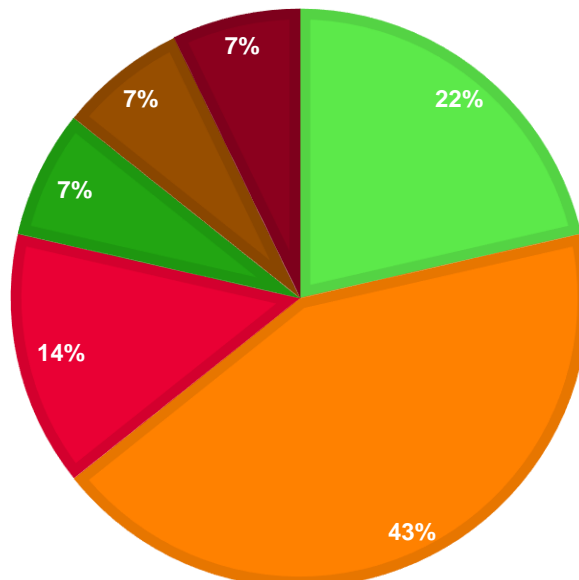**Figure 4: Training experience of <u>experienced members</u> in the Training Group and Control Group**

TRAINING GROUP - EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING OTHERS (AGAINST RESPONDENTS WHO TRAIN N=22)

■ <1 year   ■ 1 - 3 years   ■ 4-5 years   ■ 6-8 years   ■ 9-10 years
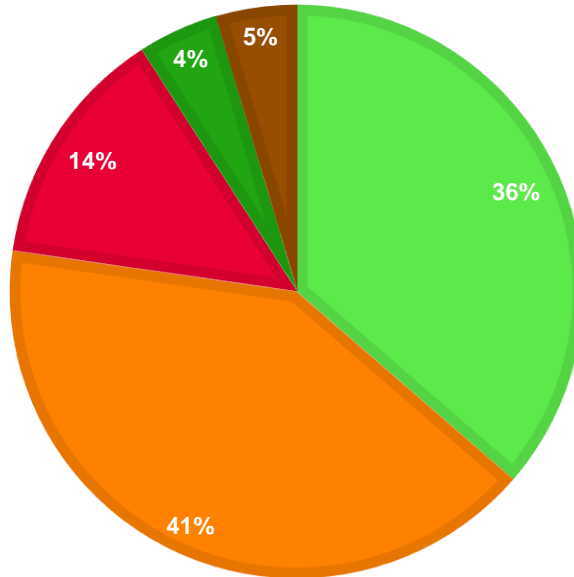
CONTROL GROUP - EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING OTHERS (AGAINST RESPONDENTS WHO TRAIN N= 14)

■ <1 year   ■ 1 - 3 years   ■ 4-5 years   ■ 6-8 years   ■ 9-10 years   ■ 11-15 years

In terms of *training frequency*, the majority of respondents[18] who *do train* in both groups stated that they train 0 – 3 *times per year*. In the Training Group 10 (45%) and in the Control Group 7 (50%) of teachers who do train are currently in this range. This is relatively infrequent, but this might be expected given other teaching duties and classes. However, from the Training Group, 7 (32%) teachers train 4-6 times per year with 3 (14%) stating that they train monthly or almost monthly. In the Control Group the numbers were 6 (43%) and 1 (7%) respectively.

In **Figures 5 and 6** we see a percentage breakdown of the training frequency of the whole Training Group and Control Group and also the 'trainer' groups who stated training experience.

Figure 5 : Training frequency of the <u>full</u> Training Group and Control Group

TRAINING GROUP - ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF TRAINING (AGAINST ALL RESPONDENTS **N=30**)

■ 0 -3 times p.y. ■ 4-6 times p.y. ■ Monthly or almost monthly ■ Trained before but not now ■ Did not answer
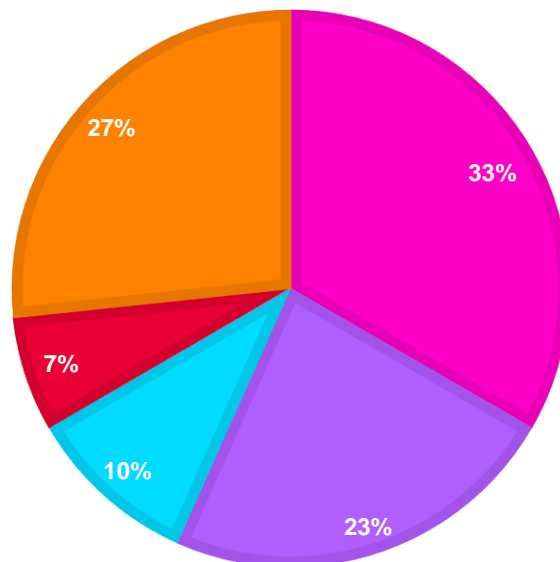
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CONTROL GROUP - ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF TRAINING (AGAINST ALL RESPONDENTS N = 29)

0 -3 times p.y. 4-6 times p.y. Monthly or almost monthly Trained before but not now Did not answer
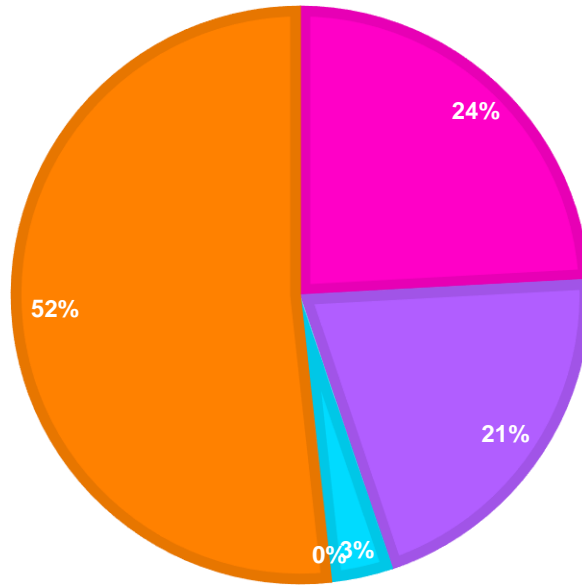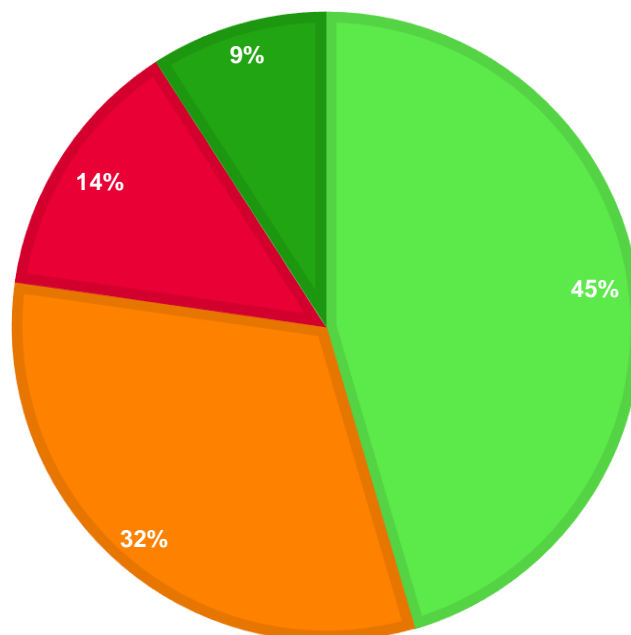

**Figure 6 : Training frequency of <u>experienced members</u> of the Training Group and Control Group**

TRAINING GROUP - ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF TRAINING (AGAINST THOSE WHO TRAIN N=22)

0 -3 times p.y. 4-6 times p.y. Monthly or almost monthly Trained before but not now

CONTROL GROUP - ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF TRAINING (AGAINST THOSE WHO TRAIN N = 14)

■ 0 -3 times p.y.   ■ 4-6 times p.y.   ■ Monthly or almost monthly   ■ Trained before but not now
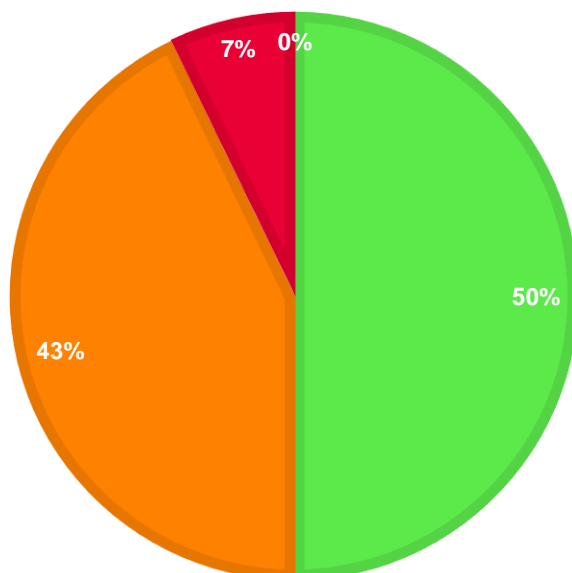
Ultimately, when percentages are put aside, as the total number of experienced 'trainers' in the Training Group is 22[19] compared to only 14 in the Control Group this suggests that the Training Group, in number, do appear to be trained more than and with greater frequency than the Control Group.

Type of training conducted by the Training Group

Going beyond the numbers alone, it is also important to look at the type of training teachers do. [20] Teachers were provided a set of possible responses that reflected common training and development methods. From these options they could choose multiple answers to help capture the extent to which they are developing other teachers and themselves.

The options were discussed and agreed internally by British Council colleagues based on experience in the public sector. However, an option of 'other' was also provided to allow further suggestions. From this, we see that 50% of the Training Group (11) and 64% of the Control Group (9) who have trained *"have led or co-led observation and feedback of teachers."* Additionally, 18% (4) of the Training Group have "*led or co-led assessment of other teacher's work portfolios*[21]" compared to 28% (5) in the Control Group. We also see from the data that 54% (12) of the Training Group with experience have previously *"led or co-led scheduled training sessions with teachers,"* designing which was a key objective of the original TDC training programme. This compares with 43% (6) of the Control Group. *'Other'* training and

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19 From the Training Group, 2 teachers also stated that did train but no longer do so. For our purpose they were classed as trainers and make up part of the 22.
20 Answers here were filtered to only include those teachers who stated that they do train or develop teachers in some way. Teachers could make multiple selections based on what they had done.
21 This was understood to include assessment of: lesson plans, teaching materials, self-assessment materials.

development noted by respondents was limited and only vaguely described in the field provided, but answers included helping "young teachers" and "other support for teachers" and "TESOL".

The data suggests that the majority of Control Group development activity is spent on more 'passive' development methods such as observation and assessment of created portfolios. While there are a number of teachers who do undertake direct training and workshops it is clear that there are a greater number and percentage of the Training Group who do so. However, overall, when percentages are removed the numbers are spread fairly evenly suggesting that the level and focus of activities are quite similar.

Development activities such as observation and assessment of teacher portfolios are particularly common within Chinese school settings, and in many cases amongst teaching peers, and this experience would perhaps be expected in a cohort of relatively experienced teachers. However, the nature and location of workshop design and creation - especially given its relevance to the TDC programme objectives - should be further explored to find out more about the opportunities being presented to teachers as trainers/workshop presenters in the local context.

Further support available

While data indicates that teachers from the Training Group have had more chances to create and deliver direct training to other teachers it is also important to consider what support they have had to help them do so in the interim. Of the 30 respondents, only 8 (27%) have received further training as a trainer since 2017. Of the total number, 19 trainers stated they did receive some support or opportunity to train as a trainer while the remaining 11 trainers stated they received *"none"* or *"not much"*.

Of the 19 who did receive support, *"sharing with others"* (4), training or *"workshops"*[22](5), a *"speech"* or *"meeting"* (3) and *"further study"* (1) were legibly recorded, suggesting a limited developmental environment on offer for many. Without a systematic approach to CPD post-training this could potentially have had an impact on teachers' motivation to become , or act as , trainers and would likely affect the quality of the work they can provide regardless of their opportunity to train.

Teachers in the Training Group were asked how they could have been better supported after the training. Of the 30 respondents, 13 had no suggestions. 6 respondents stated that they would have liked more opportunities to share what they have learned in different ways, while 4 respondents stated that they felt they required more training and guidance. Other suggestions included *"support with English language", "further research activity",* and watching videos of good practice. Of the total number, 21 (70%) participants from the Training Group stated that they had already shared what they have learned with others in 'some way'. This may include in both formal and informal settings. The remaining 9 stated that they had not done so. This number corresponds closely with the total number who also stated they had not trained in the past 5 years.

The data raises some questions about teachers access to mediums of sharing and this may need further investigation as each institutional context will differ. Respondents were asked about this in the survey and 29 teachers (97%) from the Training Group and 27 (93%) teachers from the Control Group stated the did not have access to a "community of global or local trainers" where they can share ideas.

However, when asked if they would be interested in joining such a community only 25 teachers (83%) from the Training Group and 19 teachers (66%) from the Control Group stated they would. Therefore,

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[22] Other external training or speakers were listed by some participants but in no detail. These included Oxford, TESOL, EC 4+4, visiting professors

perhaps more formally organised peer or local authority-led trainer Communities of Practice at district level would be of some value to ensure that trainers' experience and ideas can be shared effectively and impactfully to both new and experienced trainers, and to ensure future training expertise and skills are sustained.

Perceived teacher needs

Five years is a significant period of time, but undoubtedly development and learning can be life-long. With this in mind, it was important to consider not only the CPs' past experience but also current issues relating to teachers and trainers in the local context. For this, it was thought useful to compare the views of the Training Group with those from the Control Group to see if there are any major differences in their thoughts in reference to 10 identified areas of teaching[23] and where teachers and trainers may need support.

Respondents were asked to rank 10 statements from 1 – 10, with 1 being the most needed support for teachers. Results were collated in a line graph See: **Fig 7; 8; 9; 10.**

Training Group (n=30)

Figure 7: Training Group responses on <u>teacher needs</u>
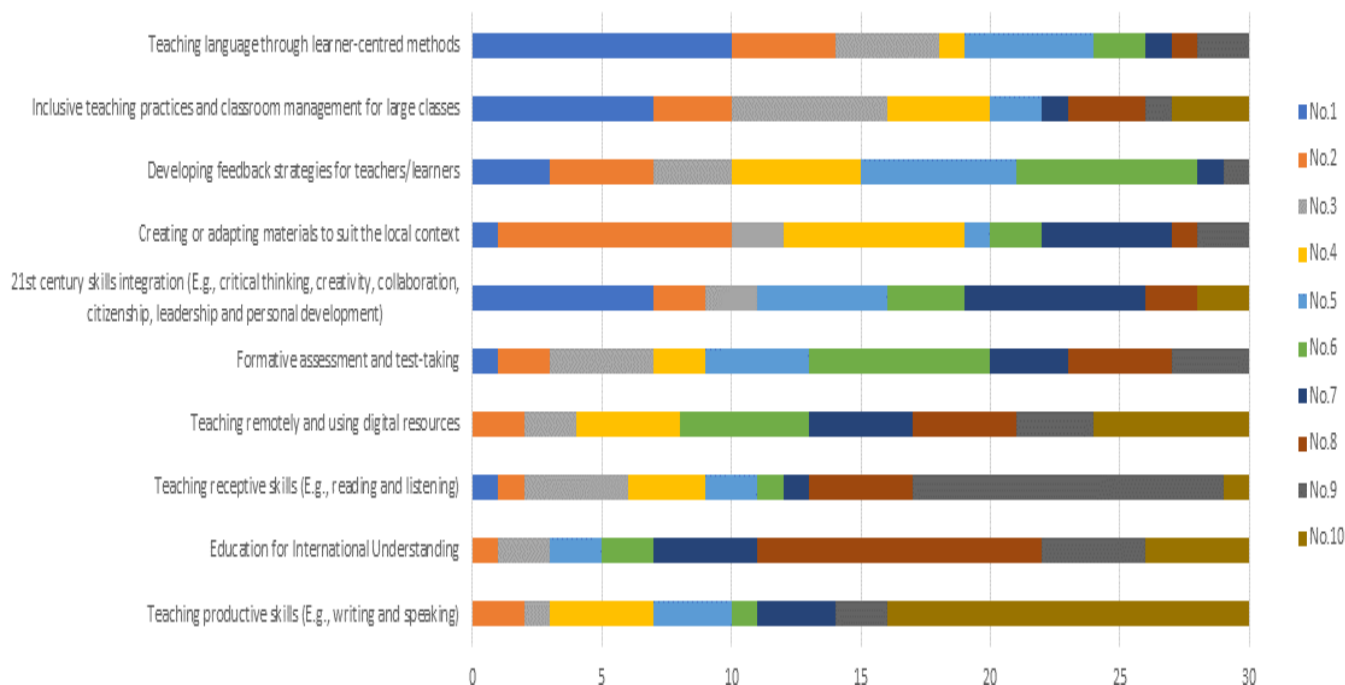
We can see from the line graph highlighting the ranking of the Training Group that *"Teaching language through learner-centred methods"* (18), *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes"* (16), and *21st century skills integration* (11) were seen to be most needed by teachers and

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[23] The 'need areas' presented were based on previous needs analysis results and localised experience within the Chinese public sector

placed in the top 3 of many respondents' choices. However, of note, in the case of 21st century skills there was also a clear split in opinion as approximately 50% of teachers did not place this in even their top 5 choices, while conversely 7 (23%) made it their first choice. *"Creating and adapting materials to suit the local context"* was also an area that respondents attached some importance to and was the second choice of 11 respondents (37%).

Seen as being of least importance from the selection were *"Teaching productive skills"* and *"Education for International Understanding",* with *"Teaching receptive skills"* also regarded as being of less importance or need for teachers in the area. 14 teachers (33%) placed teaching productive skills as their last choice, while 19 teachers (63%) of teachers placed "*Education for International Understanding*" in their last 3 choices highlighting that these areas are not regarded as a priority compared to other areas.

There is also the possibility the Education for International Understanding is not a clearly defined or understood concept and therefore it has ranked lowly.

Control Group (n=29)

Figure 8: Control Group responses on <u>teacher needs</u>
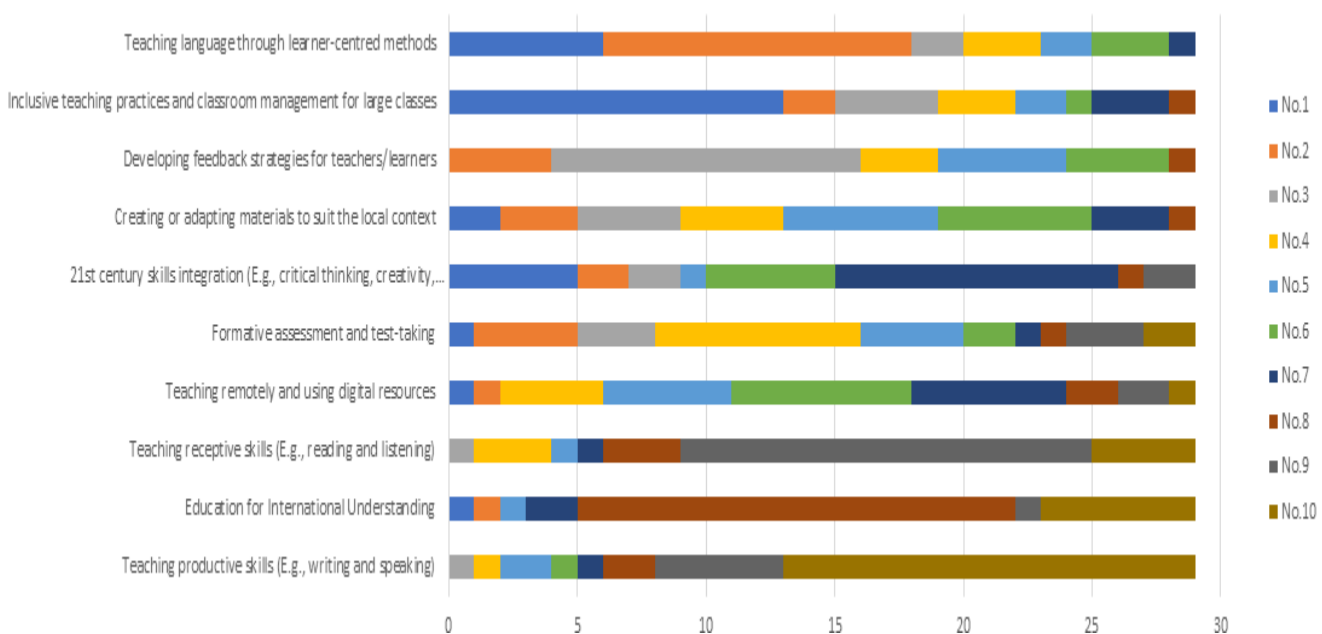
For the Control Group there was some similarity in the answers. *"Teaching language through learner-centred methods"*, *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes"* both featured strongly as a perceived #1 need, as did *"21st Century skill Integration",* although a number of teachers clearly did not feel this way with 14 respondents (48%) ranking this at #7 or above, denoting low perceived need. It was clear however that the Control Group felt more support was needed for *"Inclusive Teaching Practice and classroom management for larger classes"*, with 19 teachers (66%) placing this in their top 3 needs.

"Teaching productive skills" ,*"Education for International Understanding"*, and *"Teaching receptive skills"* all emerged as the lowest of the perceived needs, similar to that of the Training Group. Teaching productive skills was the #10 choice of 16 (55%) teachers and notably all 3 areas were in the last 3 choices of 79% (23) – 82% (24) of Control Group respondents.

Another other area of note was *"Developing feedback strategies for teachers/learners"* which 16 respondents (55%) placed at #2 or #3 in their ranking, suggesting strong perceived need.
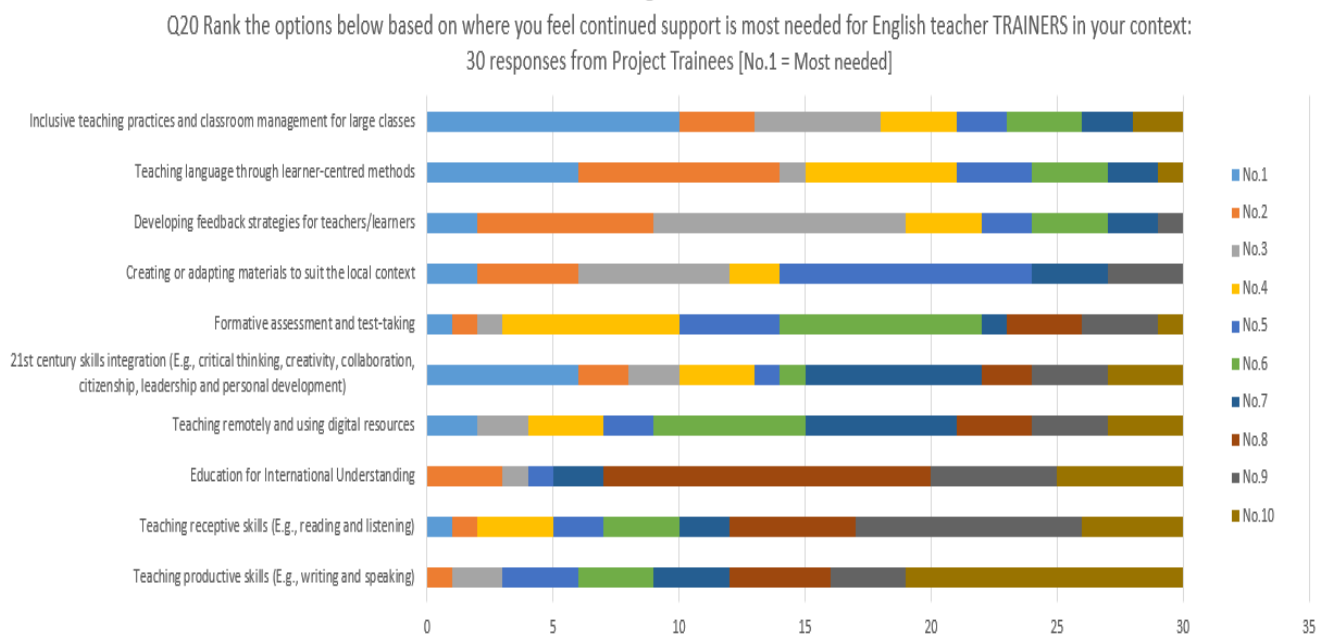
Perceived trainer needs

A similar ranking question was then asked to explore areas where *teacher-trainers* need most support (E.g., training, support, materials, CPD options etc). The same categories were used for consistency, with some minor alterations to reflect the different audience.

Training Group (n=30)

The results here were very similar overall to the suggestions made for English teachers' needs. Statistically, with 18 teachers (60%) placing it in their top 3 answers and 33% placing it at #1, *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes,"* seemed to be the main area where support is needed. However, this was closely followed in perceived need by *"Teaching language through learner-centred methods" (15/50%)* and *"Developing feedback strategies for teachers/learners." (19/63%[24]).* All 3 areas were in approximately 70% of respondents' top 4 choices.

Figure 9: Training Group responses on <u>trainer needs</u>

Q20 Rank the options below based on where you feel continued support is most needed for English teacher TRAINERS in your context: 30 responses from Project Trainees [No.1 = Most needed]

Here *"Teaching productive skills"* and *"Teaching receptive skills"* were once again regarded as least necessary when it came to teacher-training support with 11 teachers (33%) placing the former category as their 10th and final choice. Relating to both categories, a total of 18 teachers (60%) featured them in their final 3 ranked choices. It is also worth noting that *"Education for International Understanding"* was placed in the bottom 3 choices of 23 respondents (77%) highlighting a very low perceived need (or understanding) from a trainer support perspective in relation to the other choices.
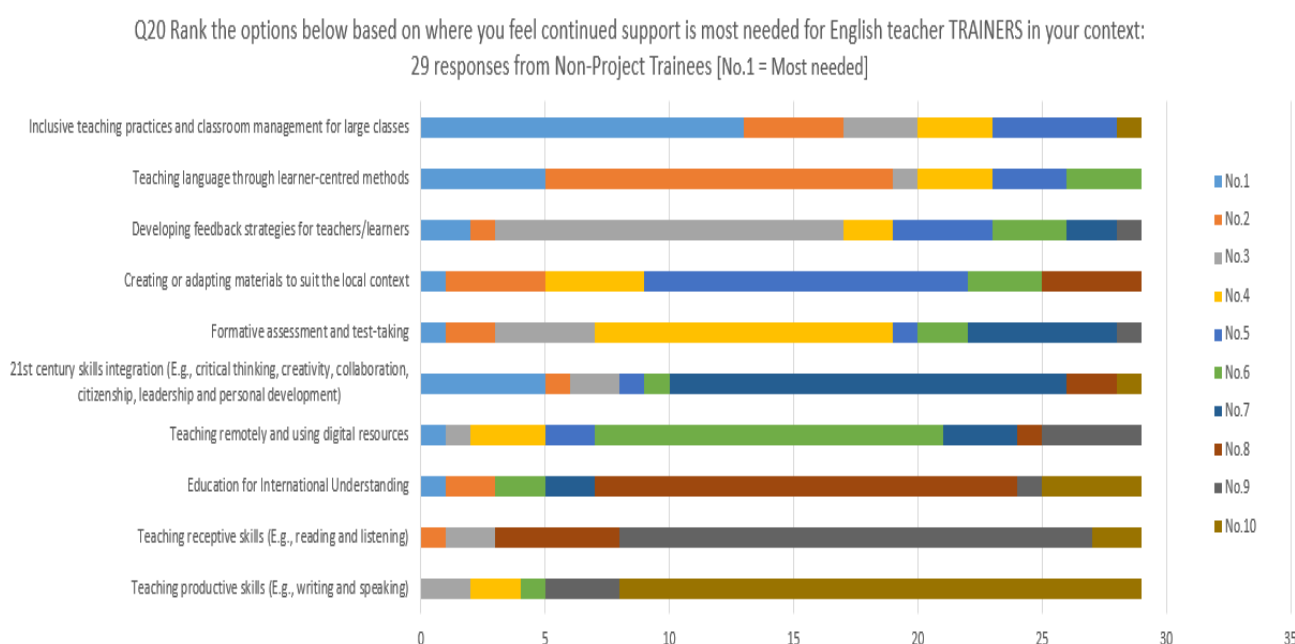
Control Group (n=29)

To check the needs of the Training Group against those of the Control Group and to see if there were any strong universal feelings towards perceived needs the same questions were posed to the Control Group.

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[24] Fewer respondents chose this as their #1 answer – Only 2 (7%)

The results were similar. *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes"*, *"Teaching language through learner-centred methods"* and *"Developing feedback strategies for teachers/learners"* all featured strongly in the respondents' top 3 choices at 20 teachers (69%), 20 teachers (69%) and 17 teachers (59%) respectively. In total, 13 respondents also stated that *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes"* was the #1 area of need for trainer support.

While only 1 teacher chose it as their top choice, *"Formative assessment and test-taking"* featured in the top 4 choices of 19 teachers, accounting for 65% of the respondents. This seems to highlight a relatively strong feeling that support in assessment and feedback of other teachers is needed and may reflect issues of confidence in these areas.

Figure 10: Control Group responses on <u>trainer needs</u>

Q20 Rank the options below based on where you feel continued support is most needed for English teacher TRAINERS in your context: 29 responses from Non-Project Trainees [No.1 = Most needed]

At the opposite end of the scale, once again *"Teaching productive skills"* and *"Teaching receptive skills"* were not regarded as particularly important, with 22 teachers (75%) placing the former as their last choice and 26 teachers (90%) placing the latter in their final 3 choices. *"Education for Educational Understanding"* was also seen as less important with 22 teachers (76%) placing this in their final 3 choices. 21st century skills integration once again provided an interesting contrast with 5 teachers (17%) placing it as their first choice while 20 teachers (69%) did not place it in their top 5 choices at all.

Challenges as a trainer

After considering the areas where respondents believe teachers and trainers need support the Training Group were also asked to: "*List the 3 greatest challenges for you as a TRAINER in your context (that you have found in your experience)"*

The answers here were open, and respondents provided some very specific replies. From these, through a simple text analysis and grouping, 4 key themes emerged that appear to

consistently provide a challenge to trainers in the local context. Sample responses are provided below to illustrate the identified themes.

Theme 1: Interest and motivation (amongst other teachers)

"The teacher's attention"

"some teachers may not interested"

"not engaging trainees"

"To let teachers accept new teaching theory"

"confidence to carry it out"

"To let teachers accept new teaching theory"

Theme 2: Logistical issues

"time is limited"

"Time and workload"

"there are so much work to do in school"

"Too many teachers"

"lack of time / heavy work load"

"Lack of chances to practice the theories"

"too busy with daily work"

"what we have to teach vs. what we want to teach"

Theme 3: Providing feedback

"how to do feedback in time"

"class management"

"To let teachers follow the way you suggest"

"providing feedback"

"how to exam the training effect"

Theme 4: Need for further support

"how to express myself by using more specific examples"

"I need more guidance"

"How to adapt" [25]

"Design tasks for mix learning style learners"

"My qualification to be a trainer"

"I do not have enough knowledge to be a trainer"

"most teachers are too shy to share their ideas with others. this may be the greatest challenge one for me."

"Design tasks for mix learning style learners"
"organizing activities"

"Training skills"

In summary the responses and themes highlight a mix of low confidence in personal agency, a stressful and 'time-congested' environment not conducive to providing considered, quality training delivery, and a need for further support to build trainer capacity. This also highlighted, somewhat expectedly, that the 4-stage training alone is not sufficient to produce rounded cascade trainers who can simply go forth and train independently and indefinitely without further support and structured CPD opportunities.

Curiously, there was also mention of trainers having difficulty in expressing themselves in English which was not expected as it was assumed that trainers would use L1/Mandarin. This may have been an unintentional consequence of the cascade delivery being in English and deserves further attention to ensure the training has not unintentionally encouraged a practice that may be detrimental to trainees.

Interview data

To delve deeper into teacher ideas from the Training Group online interviews were scheduled with those who agreed to take part. The data and insight collected can be found below.

Interviews with individual teachers were conducted approximately 2-3 weeks after the survey data had been compiled. In total, 17 teachers had expressed interest in the follow up interview but upon contacting these teachers only 8 were available to schedule semi-structured interviews for different reasons. All were from the Training Group. Most interviews were held through MS Teams with some conducted through Wechat due to technical issue. The interviews were held in English between August 11th and 17th 2021. No recordings were made of the interviews.

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[25] Mentioned more than once

Set questions used, rationale & results

For consistency, each interview consisted of the same 10 questions. Questions were selected based on 1.) A desire to better understand the teachers' own experiences and 2.) To follow up on identified areas and responses from the survey. The questions were as follows:

1. **Tell me a bit about the training you do.**
2. **Why do/don't you train?**
3. **Who organises the event or content? You, school, district?**
4. **How does your school help?**
5. **How much choice do you have in this/training?**
6. **Has the 2016-2017 training helped you as a trainer? How?**
7. **What could have been provided to help you more?**
8. **Why do you think there are fewer male trainers or teachers than female?**
9. **Do you train in English?**
10. **What would you want from a trainer community?**

Questions were rephrased and followed up where necessary to elicit more details, and notes were made during the interview by the interviewer. At times the order of the questions changed based on the conversation to ensure flow.

A summary of responses and key points are highlighted below

1. **Tell me a bit about the training you do.**
    Rationale: This was asked first to put the interviewee at ease and allow them to describe any training they have done, in any form, over the past 5 years. This was followed up by the interviewer to find out more about their experience.

    Insight: A number of respondents had not trained, as previously stated. However, approximately half of those who did have had the opportunity to train as part of the central government's wider, ongoing *Fupin* (*Targeted Poverty Alleviation Programme*) programme originally promoted in 2016 to encourage eastern provincial support[26] for rural and under-developed areas in the west of China. Teachers' involvement has been supported and coordinated through the local district and schools. Teachers were dispatched to different parts of Guizhou province, with whom some Guangzhou Districts are partnered. It is encouraging to hear that skills developed on the 2016 - 2017 training are now being used to benefit national programmes and helping to meet the needs of teachers in less developed contexts through a localised model of engagement. This utilisation of skills may offer a sustainable future for the cascade model if such programmes continue and should be explored further.

    Prior to these recent initiatives, opportunities were limited for new trainers and often the respondents' schools did not utilise the trainers' newly developed skills or allow opportunity for further practice in-house beyond informal meetings and some lectures. Very few trainers who noted experience had actually designed workshops with their primary method of training being

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[26] Support is not only in language education and includes education, health, science and technology, culture, social work, and other fields

one-off lectures, demo classes, chairing meetings and giving on-the-spot feedback to both experienced and new teachers.

2. Why do/don't you train?

Rationale: Some respondents had trained, and others had not. This question tried to uncover relevant reasons for this at the individual level and identify any emerging themes.

Insight: The main reason stated for not training was because little opportunity is given to train by the district or, more pertinently, the school. A second reason provided on a number of occasions was the lack of time to prepare and take part in such activities given their main role as teachers, and as with this teaching role came other time-consuming academic and pastoral responsibilities. Other reasons provided for not training included family commitments, changing school and a perceived lack of confidence and experience.

For those who did train, most were motivated by helping other teachers and providing new teacher support. In some cases where they had been asked to take part as a trainer or group leader there was a feeling of obligation to do so.

3. Who organises the event or content? You, school, district?

Rationale: This question was asked to find out where most of the training opportunities emerge and whether teachers have any control over this.

Insight: Teachers noted that it was very difficult to organise formal trainings outside of their own school and therefore most of these external events would be organised by the district. From responses, teachers' schools offered few opportunities to train others in-school beyond internal meetings and discussion, but some schools did take part in central government initiatives supporting other provinces and allowed their teachers, from numerous disciplines, to participate. Overall, teachers were quite complimentary of the opportunities for teachers to focus on their Continuous Professional Development, but there were few opportunities to do so as a trainer.

4. How does your school help?

Rationale: This question was intended to find out more about teachers/trainers' situation on the ground, specifically in their day-today workplace, and how this affects their ability to train. As the cascade training was originally intended to focus on their own environment this insight would be important.

Insight: Almost unanimously respondents highlighted that there was little to no support as a trainer from their school. When trainings were to be conducted for the district or the school itself, there was no reduction in duties and teachers were expected to prepare materials and plans in their own time. This is somewhat concerning as the schools should have been the first point of cascade delivery for participating teachers. However, most schools did facilitate meetings where teachers could discuss their teaching and a number of schools appeared to support

localised Communities of Practice and sharing meetings, often chaired, and led by members of the Training Group[27].

5. How much choice do you have in this/training?

Rationale: This further explored what choice teachers/trainers had, either to volunteer for training or to refuse opportunities of they were asked to do so.

Insight: This was an evenly split answer and explored both participating in and conducting training. Some teachers noted that they had been "told" to join the previous 2016 - 17 training, while others said they had had a choice. It was noted that, generally, when asked to conduct training there is a choice, but should teachers choose not to take part they may have fewer future opportunities, therefore there is potentially an unseen cost to saying "no" that could add unintended pressure to any request.

6. Has the 2016-2017 training helped you as a trainer? How?

Rationale: This question tried to find out more about how the training had helped those who attended. Initially as a teacher/trainer , but this extended to teaching as well given the overlap in skills and knowledge - and as some teachers had not trained.

Insight: Almost unanimously teachers said that they had found areas of use from the training, either in teaching or training, and that it had been a valuable experience. This corresponded with the end-of-course feedback in 2017. However, many of the teachers noted that given the limited opportunity to train the main value had come through integrating ideas into their own teaching rather than training or supporting other teachers.

Key areas that teachers noted were of use in training contexts included: methods for eliciting and giving feedback while listening to different opinions, encouraging teachers to adapt materials and find their own way, using clear and concise language[28] and writing clear objectives for their plans. Some teachers noted they had used some of the activities and games directly to help motivate trainees and this had been well received by teachers across different contexts[29] In one case, the teacher noted that the training had given them a "new angle" on what they can achieve in the classroom.

7. What could have been provided to help you more?

Rationale: This question explored what teachers/trainers felt they had needed to support them as teachers/trainers in the longer term, beyond the term of the training itself. This could inform how the training arrangement may have been improved for more sustainable impact and how both the district and the British Council might have better supported the new trainers.

Insight: The main answer from respondents was to have had arranged opportunities to practice training after the programme delivery. In most cases after the training it was left to the schools to provide these opportunities, which were rare, while the district could only arrange a limited

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[27] Such participation in their own school may is not unexpected as it is assumed that for teachers to have been selected for the initial training the teachers would have been regarded as either senior or wit some potential to train others.
[28] It is assumed this was in L1
[29] Contexts: both local and in rural areas and provinces where some teachers had trained teachers

number of 'real' training events. It was also noted by some teachers that upon trying to provide training in their schools many of the senior teachers were not open to new ideas or change and they would continue to approach teaching in a traditional manner, making it a daunting and challenging prospect for any new trainer. This highlighted an area where further advice, support and encouragement from key stakeholders would have been beneficial to provide solutions and avoid draining confidence.

Teachers also noted that they would have benefitted from more reading materials and resources, including example videos, follow up face-to-face training stages to build on what they had done, and further visits by the British Council trainer to support and encourage the new trainers.

8. Why do you think there are fewer male trainers or teachers than female?

Rationale: This questions stemmed from the fact that of 59 responses to the survey both from the Training Group and Control Group there were 4 male respondents. The questions aimed to dig deeper into the reasons for this based on experience on the ground and explore where further research may of value.

Insight: The answers provided were both honest and insightful. Many of the respondents suggested that English teaching was traditionally a female profession with men choosing other subjects as teachers, or indeed other "more ambitious" professions. It was also suggested that males are more sensitive to losing face if their language skills are not high and they are therefore reluctant to pursue language teaching as a career when their language level is not strong. It was also commented that modern teaching involves more than simply being in the class, with numerous pastoral duties being required, which seem more like a "mother's duty" and "males don't like to be mums."

One respondent, amusingly, referred to male teachers as the "giant pandas of English teaching" given their scarcity, although it was noted by a number of respondents that, like the giant panda, this number is now rising.

Notably, a number of respondents mentioned that salaries had been very low for an English teacher just over 10 years before and therefore it was traditionally regarded as more of a "second job", perhaps not one that could support a family. However, all teachers who discussed this noted that the situation had improved considerably in recent years. One teacher claimed that previously 19 positions had had around "600" candidates but now would have "3000" candidates meaning competition for places as a teacher is fierce. Disturbingly however, there was also suggestion that male teachers may actually find it easier to be hired or promoted from teaching positions with one teacher stating that she had been explicitly asked in an interview "do you plan to have a second child?"

The responses here certainly merit further investigation and research in future.

9. **Do you train in English?**

   Rationale: In the survey some teachers/trainers expressed low confidence in training due to their L2 language proficiency. This was unexpected, and this question was intended to find out more about what language teachers use or think they should use for training purposes.

   Insight: Most teachers stated that they use Chinese, particularly in the setting of their own school. However, surprisingly, a few teachers did use some English in their external training. In two cases as part of the training provided in rural areas through the *Fupin* programme, teachers used English for the training as they thought this would benefit the teachers through exposure. However, it was noted in both cases that on return visits they used Chinese primarily due to request from the participating local teachers, and secondly as the trainer had become less confident in their own

    English through lack of practice in their own context.

10. **What would you want from a trainer community?**

    Rationale: Almost every member of the Training Group answered that they would like to be part of a trainer community. The question intended to explore what teachers/trainers would hope to receive from such involvement.

    Insight: All respondents noted that they would like to join a community. The main reasons given were to share and receive ideas from other teachers and discuss specific teaching problems. Some teachers also expressed a desire to find out where more useful resources can be downloaded or referenced for future trainings, should they occur.

    Most respondents noted that they do take part in sharing meetings within their school and discussions are used to help both new and experienced teachers solve problems. However, within these environments perspectives and ideas tend to be fixed and limited, and there appears to be some appetite for other ideas – albeit most teachers noted that communities would be most beneficial to solve issues in their local context and therefore district or provincial level communities may be preferable as opposed to global ones.

    Of note, while most of the participants in the TDC training remain on a single Wechat group as a remnant of the programme logistics it was admitted that few keep in touch without the impetus or encouragement of a third party I.e., the British Council. Because of this, the majority of former trainees have rarely communicated beyond the completion of the face-to-face programme and a chance to share experience and support each other appears to have been wasted.

Conclusions

The follow up research presented several interesting insights that act as both learning points for any future interventions of a similar nature, and as a marker of how successful relatively intensive trainings such as the 2016-2017 Train-the-Trainer (TDC) programme have been.

From insight gathered the key questions that were to be addressed were:

Has the training resulted in greater opportunities to train and develop? How?

For most teachers in the Training Group there has been limited opportunity outside the scope of their own school and classroom. And, of these opportunities, most of the training has consisted of passive observation and feedback with some lectures and meetings held in relatively informal environments in their school. Importantly, little of this is replicable and reusable by other trainers and constitutes a lost opportunity to support wider trainer or teacher capacity.

Some teachers have had opportunities as workshop trainers in the last 1 - 2 years but much of this activity has been spurred by a central government policy that could not have been predicted in 2017, and therefore, as local opportunities are rare, this has been somewhat fortuitous and coincidental in providing opportunities for trainers to cascade to other rural peers. This opportunity may also offer a valuable pathway towards a justified, sustainable model for cascade training that can develop and support national priorities.

For those who did train through district activities, it seems that many of those trainers were already tasked with such responsibilities prior to the TDC programme and their roles were not changed significantly by the training itself. Ultimately, almost all participants' roles remain the same, predominantly as English teachers who are busy with teaching and other duties and have little time to prepare and deliver training in parallel.

There have been further training opportunities for teachers to take part as participants with some, for example, joining the EC 2 + 2 training programme arranged through the University of Edinburgh and there is also a scholarship programme to send teachers to Hong Kong for PGCE[30] training, highlighting the districts continuing support of teacher CPD. However, such opportunities for developing trainers remain scarce.

Statistical data suggests that the Training Group do train slightly more frequently than the Control Group (I.e., other teachers) as a whole. In total, 74%[31] (22) of all Training Group respondents had some training experience compared to 48% (14) of the total Control Group despite both groups being of a similar number. Also, 33% of the total number of the Training Group are training more than 4 times per year compared to 24% in the Control Group. However, when we remove the teacher who have not trained from the statistics, and put percentages aside, we see that 10 teachers conduct training more than 4 times a year from the Training Group compared to 7 in the Control Group. This is far from conclusive, and further investigation may be required to find out if such small differences are because of the training and its legacy

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[30] Post Graduate Certificate in Education
[31] % are rounded up to the nearest percentage point

I.e., teachers being utilised more due to their participation, or simply because many of the Training Group who train now also did so before.

What challenges have teachers met as cascade trainers after the course?

In general, there appears to be little opportunity for the Training Group to train, and respondents noted that it was difficult to arrange external events for teachers without support from the district or school. This has meant that many teachers have had little opportunity to develop outside the scope and environment of their own school faculty and perhaps some exploration of networking of schools and school events should be considered. Issues for training arrangement are also compounded by pushback from some peers. Resistance to new ideas, particularly by more senior teachers, was noted by some respondents and ultimately certain hierarchies within the teaching faculty must be observed making innovative or new training methods difficult to implement.

Ultimately when asked directly about challenges, much of the feedback could be categorized into 4 thematic problem areas: *Interest & motivation (of teachers); logistical issues; providing feedback and a need for further support*. Many teachers expressed a current lack of confidence in their ability or experience as a trainer and subsequently felt they could not adequately motivate teachers in their training deliveries or provide the necessary guiding feedback to support them. It was intimated that this low confidence and perceived lack of experience may have been exacerbated by not having a dedicated resource to turn to for advice and support given the training programme had ended.

How have the perspectives of the participating teachers changed since the training?

There is little evidence of changes in teachers' attitudes or perspectives based on the training programme or subsequent actions, and many ideas are similar to those of the Control Group. This, of course, must be considered in the context of most teachers simply not having the opportunity to develop as trainers after attending the 2016 – 2017 TDC training, although many teachers noted that they had adapted some ideas into their teaching successfully to the positive reaction of their students. Through their own experimentation with their students some noted that they had started to look at their own classes differently. While this is positive, whether, over time, this reflection has any impact on their work as a trainer remains to be seen.

Most teachers felt their roles remained largely as a teacher with few identifying as a trainer in any form. While some respondents had the opportunity to guide and train, the majority remained in the same context and role as before, with many CPs not having the confidence or encouragement to develop beyond the initial stages of the training.

Certain respondents, who did have some opportunity to conduct training, expressed pleasant surprise at their ability to conduct the training and the positive response to some of the techniques learned, albeit in many cases this was due to infrequent participation in larger government sanctioned programmes in other provinces, outside the pressures of their local context, rather than through any regular involvement in teacher training. On the flip side, during individual interviews it was highlighted that teachers did not feel comfortable presenting training

workshops in their environment due to the engrained ideas of certain senior staff and their reluctance to accept other ways of thinking or teaching, therefore methods and beliefs of both participants and their peers remained largely unchanged.

Further reflection and findings

When analysing the responses of the Training Group and the Control Group we see that many of the ideas and perceived needs are similar. There are, of course, some minor differences in the statistical representations but largely the perceived needs of trainers and teachers remain the same for both groups, highlighting similar perspectives overall.

In both groups we found that teachers believed that support for teachers in *"Teaching language through learner-centred methods"*, *"Inclusive teaching practices and classroom management for large classes"*, and *"21st century skills integration"* was generally needed[32] while *"Teaching productive skills", "Education for International Understanding"*, and *"Teaching receptive skills"* emerged as the lowest of the perceived needs for teachers in both groups. This similarity in result could possibly relate to strong coverage of these areas in previous trainings, and subsequently increased confidence as noted during the interviews, or indeed in the case of the latter category there may be unfamiliarity with the concept of *"Education for International Understanding"* in English. This may require further investigation.

The Training Group also highlighted that *"Creating and adapting materials to suit the local context"* was an area that might also be of interest, while the Control Group strongly felt more work on 'inclusive practices' might be needed. The latter area is of interest as it is assumed – without further background information[33] - that the Control Group come from a more traditional background, having not had the benefit of the TDC training course input. More investigation on where these ideas are emerging from and what support could be given in this area is needed and should also be further explored.

Overall, a general correlation between both groups does suggest a certain level of unanimity in the areas highlighted, and this provides interesting insight into what teachers on the ground feel they need. These key areas should be considered for any future intervention or future training.

When the needs of trainers were addressed the responses were very similar to those highlighted on teacher needs. There may be a number of reasons for this that can't be dismissed. I.e., possibly the following answers on trainers were influenced by those given previously for teachers; perhaps there was a lack of clarity in the distinction between the two questions or, quite possibly, there is a strong feeling that trainers also need support in these same areas. However, beyond the answers that were repeated from the teacher needs questions the Training Group also highlighted a need for trainer support in *"Developing feedback strategies for teachers/learners"* while the Control Group believed *"Formative*

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[32] There was some disagreement on the importance of 21st century skills, particularly in the Control Group
[33] The Control Group may have had other CPD trainings highlighting this area and government policy does promote more holistic education practices（I.e.素质教育）therefore this observation can only be based on assumption.

assessment and test-taking" to be important. This may indicate an area specific to trainers, involving assessment and providing feedback to peers, that might require further attention and development in future and could be explored in any future research, or indeed, should any follow up trainer support to be organised.

Overall, the 2016-2017 TDC Train-the-Trainer programme was well received by its participants and the district in which it was held. Clearly a number of course participants were reluctant to adopt the role of trainer after completion of the programme, but others were happy to have the opportunity to do so with many teachers stating that they had confidence in their ability to train others.

The word "opportunity" is perhaps a key term that has emerged from the research. Some teachers have had the opportunity to develop as trainers, and, as has become clear from feedback they have also had numerous opportunities to develop as teachers with some overlap between the two often occurring. Others have not.

However, crucially, upon completion of what was a relatively short training period with only 14 days of face-to-face work over a duration of 4 – 6 months there was little planned opportunity for the teachers to develop at a district level and little 'buy in' or support from the teachers' school to develop CPs further in this role in the months that followed. Because of this, many teachers have reverted to their main role as a teacher, as was suggested might happen in the original programme Needs Analysis (2016), and the idea of training has gradually faded along with any confidence and motivation they once had. This, of course, gradually reduces the effectiveness the original training has had against one of its key objectives:

I.e., *To enhance participants' skills, **confidence** and ability for cascade workshops' planning and delivery*

This diminishing return raises concerns about the impact and sustainability of such programmes in future, whether they be Train-the-Trainer or for specific areas of teacher CPD. Without clear and consistent 'buy in' from the teachers, and, importantly, from their schools to support and sustain training initiatives, and, without a planned schedule of support to maintain motivation and a sense of ongoing development, the wider benefits of the training may be largely lost.

That is not to say that there are no transferable skills that teachers have acquired, and indeed some teachers have had a chance to share ideas and experiences in their local environment, but this is generally both informal and unsupported and does not include any replicable workshop design as specifically provided for in the TDC training.

It is certainly clear from interviews and survey responses that teachers have taken a great deal from the training, and after almost 5 years there are concepts and activities that remain both popular and effective in their classrooms, according to feedback. However, improving their own teaching practice was not the primary objective of the training. While positive, we must also consider how in future cascade deliveries that ultimately seek to expand the reach and impact of the training programme beyond the limited scope of its recipients to their schools, and potentially the district or beyond, it can provide a more sustainable strategy for localised teacher development. Such an outcome can only be achieved through more effective collaboration, cooperation and support of the training provider, the local district or partner and the school over

a longer period. Without this the intensive nature of the train will almost always be limited in its effectiveness and scope.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

From the data and insight collected through survey and follow up interview responses recommendations for future Train- the-Trainer interventions that may be conducted in similar circumstances have emerged. There have also been key lessons learned. These are as follows:

Local authorities, oversight bodies and the British Council

1. Cascade training should be integrated with a longer-term strategy of support in terms of resources, building local trainer communities and utilising expert support where applicable; with clear milestones agreed for trainer development between a TDC training provider E.g., the British Council and local partner. An intensive cascade training model alone, without support, is insufficient to maintain teacher motivation or confidence.
2. There should be further investigation of how cascade programmes can support and integrate with central government initiatives, e.g., *Fupin* poverty alleviation, by providing CPD opportunities for teachers of English (and other subjects) in rural and under-developed areas. This can directly improve the quality of English language training provision for students in these areas whilst also developing sustainable, skilled, and effective local trainer cohorts. Such initiatives provide the opportunity for programmes to increase their positive impact by putting newly acquired training skills to immediate practical use whilst also providing replicable, quality training delivery that directly benefits rural contexts in line with national priorities.

Local authorities and oversight bodies

3. A clear follow up calendar of training opportunities should be agreed and scheduled for those trainers who would like the opportunity to develop as trainers, with feedback and support provided where applicable. This can help maintain momentum and confidence in what teachers have learned as trainers and encourage continued communication between the Training Group.
4. District wide trainer communities of practice should be facilitated I.e., not only within the same school 'echo chamber', and trainers should be encouraged to contribute and share their ideas. Platforms where replicable resources can be locally stored and shared would also support future training quality and reduce planning burdens.
5. Further training and support on areas of trainer need identified in the report above should be provided. These include, but are not exclusive to, more effectively giving feedback, providing formative assessment and guidance to peers and support in developing inclusive practices.
6. Local school support (I.e., providing time to develop materials and conduct training sessions) of new trainers, post-training should be confirmed in advance of their teachers' participation in cascade training.

Local schools

7. Local schools must commit to providing the time needed to research, prepare, and participate in follow up activities. Where possible internal and external trainings to share ideas and knowledge should be encouraged. Any resources designed could be shared and contributed to a larger trainer pool through active school networking or district support.

Suggested areas for further research

During the course of the research the following areas were noted as being of value for future follow up research.

- Analysis of case studies on individual teacher's contexts, particularly those who do train, to assess how the teacher-trainer CPD they have received is being utilised for positive impact in the training room;
- Exploration of the type of training, particularly workshops, local teachers are conducting both in-school and in-district;
- Exploration of how teachers are sharing and the communities they participate in;
- Further investigation of the status of English teachers in communities and the gender imbalance between male and female teachers in the profession.

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