

Developing Cross-regional English Teaching and Research Communities in Border Minority Areas in Yunnan through Support for Expert Teacher Workshops

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Project team

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Project overview

This project forms part of a suite of projects funded by the British Council that aim to explore the options for the professional development of English language teachers in rural and under-developed areas of Yunnan province. The project represents a cooperative collaboration between UK-based researchers at the University of Warwick and China-based researchers at Yunnan Normal University. The research focused on supporting expert teachers of English to become facilitators of professional learning communities (PLCs) for schoolteachers in Yunnan. It aimed to understand what expert teachers needed to support their provision and facilitation of online PLCs for English teachers in the province and to develop online support materials that can be used for ongoing support for expert teachers.

The basic format and aims of the project were developed by the team at Yunnan Normal University as a starting point to secure UK partners, through the British Council. The aim for the program was for the UK-based team and the Yunnan-based team to work collaboratively to

- support the professional development of expert teachers as teacher trainers in their use of PLCs
- guide and develop the skills of expert teachers in supporting frontline teachers through online workshops
- explore opportunities for cross-regional teacher collaboration, development and research that can support and include rural teachers' development in diverse parts of Yunnan province.

This initial design of the project was further developed by the University of Warwick team and refined in collaboration with the Yunnan Normal University partners. The final version of the project consisted of a needs analysis to identify the professional development needs of expert teachers as teachers of English and as teacher educators working with PLCs, a series of four online workshops for a network of expert teachers established by Yunnan Normal University, and an online resource developed from the workshops.

Expert teachers and professional development

Expert teacher (名师) in the Chinese context is a formal title granted by the local education committees to teachers who have considerable teaching experience and have made a significant contribution to education. Expert teachers has been integrated into a national professional development program initiated by the Ministry of Education – 名师领航 (Developing Expert Teachers to Become Professional Leaders) (Ministry of Education, 2018). The primary goal of the program is to support outstanding teachers to develop further and to take on professional leadership roles in regional and national education. Expert teachers thus have two responsibilities. The first is to take responsibility for their own professional development and the second is to foster the professional development of other teachers.

Within schools, expert teachers are a local resource for professional development, and they may be involved in mentoring programmes and demonstration teaching. They may also be given the role of leader of a Teaching Research Group (TRG 教研组) and so have a role in providing professional development for teachers in their specific discipline (Qian & Allan, 2021). TRGs are made up of teachers in the same subject and play an important role in in-school professional development for teachers in China. TRGs are structured into the educational system at the national, provincial, city, district, and school levels, to facilitate teachers' professional activities and so are a top-down

mechanism for creating learning communities in schools. It is common for schools in China to allocate a regular two-hour block of time for TRG meetings (Paine & Ma, 1993). In TRGs, teachers may prepare lessons collectively, share their teaching experiences, and gain mutual support in developing their professional practice (Gao, Barkhuizen, & Chow, 2011). Additionally, TRGs may enable the sharing of resources and organised discussions of articles and lectures related to teaching (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). A widely used activity in TRGs is the ‘open lesson’ (公开课), in which a teachers’ lessons are observed by their peers, especially by an expert teacher if one is present in the school, and the teacher receives feedback and comments during post-lesson conferences (Wong, 2010). Feedback typically focuses on aspects of teaching design such as lesson structure, classroom activities, teaching objectives, and lesson plans, pedagogy (classroom management strategies, instructional strategies, and teacher’s use of language), teaching resources, and students’ engagement (Chien, 2017; Liu, 2022; Ma, Xin, & Du, 2018).

However, not all schools have expert teachers on staff and expertise is not evenly distributed through the educational system. It is more likely that schools in urban areas will have expert teachers on staff than schools in rural areas (Zhao, Zhu, Zeng, & Yu, 2023). Expert teachers are therefore expected to undertake professional development outside their own schools and to contribute more widely to the development of teacher expertise in their locality. In leading professional development for other teachers, expert teachers use their expertise in a variety of ways, but the most common approaches seem to be delivering workshops and observing other teachers in open lesson formats. Their contribution is often made through local TRGs, when the expert teacher is invited in as an external participant to contribute expertise to the local group of teachers.

Inviting outside experts into schools is one way to open the local context to new ideas from the outside. Bringing new expertise into schools can be important for developing successful school-based professional development (Qiao, Yu, & Zhang, 2018; Wong, 2010), it can also have negative consequences given that the prevailing understanding of professional development is a transmission model in those with more expertise communicate it to those with less expertise. This means that external expertise can come to dominate the professional development process and this may limit the school community members’ ability to identify their own specific learning needs and prevent the formation of sustainable learning communities (Richmond & Manokore, 2011).

The TRG model can make significant contributions to teachers’ development (Gao et al., 2011; Sargent & Hannum, 2009), but the model has been criticised. The first criticism is the top-down integration of TRGs into organisational structures means that collegial work may be superficial and less effective because it is a contrived collegiality rather than genuine collegiality (Wang, 2015). The second criticism reflects more specifically on the ways that expert teachers may be involved in TRGs and how the presence of an expert teachers can influence the dynamics of such groups. It relates to the effect of hierarchy on the operation of such groups and the ways hierarchy leads to top-down practices of disseminating knowledge in which those with higher hierarchical positions, such as expert teachers, may have greater control over the focus and functioning of the TRG. One consequence of this may be reproducing the practices of more dominant teachers, and preventing new teachers from introducing or leading innovation, and maintaining the status quo of traditional teaching (Paine & Ma, 1993; Paine, 1990). The importance of hierarchy appears to be reinforced by Chinese cultural values such as ‘respecting authority and conflict prevention’, which may lead to ‘unfavorable interpersonal relations and superficial collaborative cultures’ (Zhang & Pang, 2016, p.

20). These issues with the functioning of TRGs mean that they may or may not operate as collaborative professional learning communities and a lot depends on the local context, including the impact of the school culture and leadership on the internal approaches taken in professional development (Qian & Allan, 2021; Qiao et al., 2018).

Localised, collaborative, exploratory models of professional development are recognized as important in supporting teachers as they respond to the growing complexity of teaching in the face of theoretical and policy developments. In this sense, school-based professional learning communities have an important role to play in the future of teacher professional development. While TRGs could provide a structure for the development of PLCs, and in some cases they already do, there are some problems in existing models that need to be addressed. There is a need to better entrench a professional development culture in which PLCs function as “a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way” (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006, p. 223). This entails that a PLC involves collaborative work by teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their own local context by collectively investigating and reflecting on their own practice. It is a teacher-led approach to professional learning that identifies needs and seeks to find contextualised ways of responding to them (Admiraal, Schenke, De Jong, Emmelot, & Sligte, 2021). Nonetheless, even highly collaborative groups require leadership to function effectively (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Porter, 2011). Given their role in leading teachers’ professional development and their positions with the hierarchies of the local educational culture, expert teachers have a significant potential role in creating and facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs). However, given the existing models of PLCs may not be fully collaborative and the expert teacher may be positioned in schools as an external expert transmitting knowledge to others, they require support in developing their role and capacity in working in PLCs.

Needs analysis

Methodology

Teacher questionnaire

Participants

The participants for the needs analysis questionnaire were expert teachers of English from a network of expert teachers established by Yunnan Normal University. This network is the focus of the professional development activities designed by the project. A total of 43 teachers responded to the survey. Of these teachers the majority was female (34) with only 9 male teachers responding. This reflects the gender profile of the network as almost all participants in the network responded. Most teachers held a bachelor degree and a smaller proportion also held a master degree (see Table 1).

Degree	Bachelor	Masters	Doctorate
Number of teacher	34	9	0

Table 1: Qualifications

The teachers reported a range of self-assessed proficiency in English (see Table 2), with most teachers reporting intermediate level of English or higher, although with few teachers reporting advanced levels of English.

Basic	4
Low intermediate	4
Intermediate	21
High intermediate	11
Advanced	3

Table 2: English proficiency

The results for qualifications and proficiency in English suggest that becoming an expert teacher may not be connected with qualifications or English language abilities but rather with experience in teaching. As expected for a group of expert teachers, the participants were highly experienced (see Table 3) with most participants (67%) having taught for more than 10 years. The least experienced participant had been teaching for 6 years and the most experienced for 33 years.

<5 years	6-10years	11-15 years	16-20 years	>20 years	Total
0	3	10	13	7	43

Table 3: Teaching experience

The majority of the participants identified as Han Chinese (38) and 5 as members of ethnic minorities. This means that ethnic minority members were under-represented in the group, as the population of Yunnan is made up of approximately one third ethnic minorities (Guo, Bulag et al., 2015). These expert teachers occupied high-level positions within the education system and all participants were in the top levels of the teacher title system (see Table 4).

Title	Professor senior teacher	Senior teacher	First-level teacher
Number of teacher	6	20	17

Table 4: Teaching title

The majority of the participants had been expert teachers for five years or less (see Table 5), with many of them being relatively new to the role. A small number had been expert teachers for an extensive period, with one participant having been and expert teacher for 26 years.

1 year	2-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	>15 years	Total
12	17	8	3	4	43

Table 5: Experience as an expert teacher

Despite the majority having between 10 and 26 years' experience of teaching English, most expert teachers have been so for 10 years or less, with high number (27%) having been expert teachers for only one year. This suggests a long lead-in time to becoming an expert teacher and perhaps the need for some direction in how to carry out their role as expert teachers.

Data collection

The needs analysis employed an online bilingual questionnaire and focus groups. The questionnaire was published in bilingual form on wjx.cn. The questionnaire had two types of questions 1) questions with Likert scale answers to prompts and 2) questions with open answers. All question prompts were developed in English and the questionnaire items were discussed collaboratively by the Warwick and Yunnan Normal University teams before being translated into Chinese. All questions and instructions were translated into Chinese, and the translations were checked first by a bilingual member of the Warwick team and then by members of the Yunnan Normal University team. Once the translations were agreed, the questions were published in both languages on the survey platform. The questionnaire was based on a questionnaire developed by the UK team in an earlier project to identify the professional development needs of teachers in China (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2019). It was revised with reference to the European Profiling Grid (EAQUALS, 2013) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2008) to develop a more comprehensive set of questions.

The questionnaire collected information in relation to four main topics. The first section focused on demographic information, information about their teaching context, general issues relating to teaching methodology, and open questions about the sorts of difficulties teachers faced in teaching English in their context. The second part collected information about the expert teachers' perceptions of their role using open questions and their experiences of leading professional learning using a combination of open questions, yes/no questions, a four-point Likert scale about the frequency with which they delivered particular types of professional development activities (never-rarely-sometimes-often) and a series of questions about their confidence in leading types of professional development activities measured using a 3-point Likert scale (not confident-confident-very confident). The remainder of the questionnaire focused on aspects of teaching practice. It elicited information about the frequency of particular teaching practices using a five-point Likert scale (never-rarely-sometimes-often-very-often). These teaching practices related to teaching writing, reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and language knowledge, and teachers' use of various types of resources. These questions contained an 'other' category to allow teachers to list additional activities they used, but few answers were given to this prompt. The questionnaire also investigated teachers' knowledge and abilities by asking teachers to respond to a series of statements about classroom management, assessment, using technology, and creating and using resources. This was collected using a four-point Likert scale (strongly disagree-disagree-agree-strongly agree).

Teacher focus groups

Data collection and participants

The teacher questionnaires were supplemented by focus groups to develop greater nuance and to understand key dimensions of teachers' needs in more depth. Online groups were chosen mainly for reasons of practicality. Travel was difficult at the time because of Covid-19 related travel restrictions but online groups also allowed for participants from different parts of Yunnan to be brought together in the same focus group, and for participants to communicate who would not normally have been able to travel to a central location because of difficulties of travel from remote areas.

The focus groups we conducted in Chinese by members of the Yunnan Normal University team. The meetings were held online and recorded using the recording facility in the app. The focus groups lasted for about an hour and a half on average, with the shortest taking 86 minutes and the longest 102 minutes. They were recorded using the recording tool in the conference app and recordings were transcribed and translated into English for analysis.

The focus groups were kept small following recommendations for conducting online focus groups (Daniels, Gillen, Casson, & Wilson, 2019; Kite & Phongsavan, 2017; Lobe, 2017) with an ideal number of five participants in each group. This number was large enough to allow for an exchange of views and ideas but small enough to be manageable in an online environment and to address problems observed in other online studies, such as the need for more time to generate discussion and problems in facilitating more naturalistic turn-taking with larger groups. The details of the focus group participants can be seen in Table 6.

	Participant	Gender	School level at which teaching	Experience as a teacher	Experience as an expert teacher
FG1	Teacher 1	Female	Primary school	25	10
	Teacher 2	Female	Junior high school	24	8
	Teacher 3	Female	Junior high school	27	12
	Teacher 4	Female	Senior high school	22	9
	Teacher 5	Female	Senior high school	18	8
FG2	Teacher 1	Female	Primary school	23	11
	Teacher 2	Female	Junior high school	20	9
	Teacher 3	Female	Junior high school	20	8
	Teacher 4	Female	Senior high school	24	11
	Teacher 5	Female	Senior high school	26	13
FG3	Teacher 1	Female	Primary school	21	9
	Teacher 2	Female	Junior high school	26	14
	Teacher 3	Female	Junior high school	23	8
	Teacher 4	Male	Senior high school	22	8
	Teacher 5	Male	Senior high school	27	15
FG4	Teacher 1	Female	Primary school	22	9
	Teacher 2	Male	Junior high school	22	10
	Teacher 3	Female	Senior high school	26	14
	Teacher 4	Female	Senior high school	23	10
	Teacher 5	Male	Senior high school	28	16
FG5	Teacher 1	Female	Primary school	23	12
	Teacher 2	Female	Junior high school	21	9
	Teacher 3	Female	Junior high school	25	14
	Teacher 4	Male	Senior high school	25	12
	Teacher 5	Female	Senior high school	28	17

Table 6: Focus group participants

Findings: Teacher questionnaire

Teaching context

The teachers were teaching across a range of levels of education from primary school to high school, although none had taught at university (see Table 7). Most teachers were teaching at junior high school and senior high school levels. Some teachers had taught at more than one level, mostly spanning junior high and high schools.

Primary school	10
Junior high school	20
High school	21
University	0

Table 7: Level at which teaching

<20	0
21-40	1
41-60	39
>60	3

Table 8: Average class size

Almost all of the expert teachers teach in very large classrooms, with none having classes with an average size of under 20 students and only one teaching classes with under 40 students. One teacher reported teaching classes averaging over 100 students.

Most teachers (38) reported teaching ethnic minority students indicating that teaching minority students was the norm for teachers in Yunnan province. The proportion of minority students in classes varied (see Table 9) but the majority of teachers reported they were teaching classes where ethnic students made up less than a quarter of the class. Only a few expert teachers were teaching in contexts of high to very high numbers of ethnic minority students.

<10%	12
10%-25%	19
25%-50%	4
50%-75%	2
Unsure	1

Table 9: Proportion of ethnic minority students

Only three teachers reported problems in using Chinese to teach ethnic minority students and most teachers commented that their students Mandarin levels was not a problem, many noting that the students had moved to large cities and used Mandarin as their normal language.

Understanding of the role of expert teachers

The participants were asked to indicate what they believe the main priorities or roles of expert teachers and the responses revealed that these expert teachers understood their role in a range of different ways.

The most commonly identified role was that of facilitators of professional development role of expert teachers (32 participants): e.g., 培育专业优秀教师 ‘Nurturing professional excellence in teachers’ (T14). One teacher linked this role to mentoring: 教师成长, 应承担导师的角色 ‘Teachers’ growth, they should assume the role of mentors’ (T33), while another emphasised the expert teachers’ role is

a facilitator of collaborative learning: 带领其他老师一起学习进步 ‘Leading other teachers to learn and improve together’ (T36). Some of the teachers expressed the teacher development role in terms of providing models for teaching practice or guidance for teachers. Most teachers presented their teacher development role as being oriented to the field as a whole. However, eight of the participants indicated that their teacher development work was primarily related to supporting early career teachers: e.g., 自我提升的渠道, 有效指导帮助青年教师成长 ‘Effective guidance to help young teachers grow’ (T34), 引领英语教师 (尤其是青年教师) 成长 ‘Leading the growth of English teachers (especially young teachers)’ (T40). Two teachers stated that their role was linked to spreading reform to other teachers indicating a teacher development role that was linked specifically to educational change rather than general teacher development.

The teachers also identified leadership and related activities as central to their role. Thirteen participants nominated leadership itself as the role, usually without commenting on the purpose of that leadership. However, for some teachers their leadership role was closely associated with professional development of teachers as in the quotation from T36 and T40 above and so these more general statements about leadership may have a similar intention.

Another commonly identified role of was that of researcher (14 participants). While most participants did not expand on what was entailed in the sort of research expert teachers did, some participants did indicate that the role of research was linked to maintaining the currency of their professional knowledge: 教材研究, 课标研究, 命题研究 ‘research on teaching materials, curriculum standards and assessment’ (T3), 研究不同的英语教材 ‘research on different English textbooks’ (T35), 教学方法研究, 学生管理研究 ‘research on teaching methods and student management’ (T26). The focus on research therefore seems to link with the idea of maintaining and developing one’s own professional knowledge.

Some of the teachers also identified their own classroom practice as central to their expert teacher role (6 participants), although for four of these this role was linked to other responsibilities relating to the teaching profession. For two participants however, classroom practice was the only element listed as a priority or role of expert teachers. One of these teachers expressed her view of the expert teachers’ role in the following terms:

关注学生英语语言应用水平的提升和学生综合知识水平成长; 关注社会热点、新闻, 带领学生以英语为媒介接触广泛的知识, 从而构建学生的世界观, 提升学生思维意识。英语教师应该承担语言传播者、知识传授者和文化交流者等身份。同时也应该成为学生的朋友和引领者, 带领学生感悟语言之美和世界之美。Focus on the improvement of students' English language use and the growth of their overall knowledge; focusing on social issues, news and leading students to a wide range of knowledge using English as a medium, so as to build students' worldview and enhance their awareness of thinking. English teachers should assume the role of transmitters of language, transmitters of knowledge and communicators of culture. They should also be friends and leaders of their students, leading them to appreciate the beauty of language and the beauty of the world.

These teachers focused on the idea of the expert teacher as having expertise in teaching and teaching in a high quality and committed way.

Professional development work

Experience of leading professional development

Given that the focus of this project is to support expert teachers in facilitating professional learning communities, teachers were asked about their experiences in working in such communities where teachers led the direction and focus of their professional learning. A large minority of the teachers (30%) reported never having participated in such a community. Most of the teachers (60%) had no prior experience of facilitating such learning communities.

The experiences of the teachers in leading professional development varied (see Table 10) and this would seem to reflect the large proportion of teachers who had been in the expert teacher role for less than a year.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Professional development workshops	16%	16%	26%	42%
Conference presentations	7%	25%	40%	28%
Professional learning communities	14%	19%	42%	26%
Demonstration teaching	2%	5%	58%	35%
Action research	7%	23%	47%	23%
Teaching competitions	2%	7%	70%	21%
Mentoring junior colleagues	0%	2%	26%	72%

Table 10: Experience of expert teachers in leading professional development

The only professional development activity that all teachers had experienced was mentoring junior colleagues. Most teachers had provided demonstration classes, and, after mentoring, this was the most commonly practices form of professional development with 93% of the teachers saying they had done this at least sometimes. Teaching competitions had also been important for these teachers in their professional development work with 91% having done these sometimes or often. Such competitions are a central element in Chinese education and select and reward teachers who are considered to be excellent in their practice as a way of presenting that practice more widely (Zhang & Liu, 2021). Other forms of professional development activity were less common with 68% of teachers saying they had led workshops, presented at conferences, or participated in professional learning communities at least sometimes. The results for professional learning communities differs here form the question about participation in teacher-led professional learning as only 14% said they had never participated in such communities, while a further 19% said they had done so rarely. The difference here may be attributable to participation in professional learning communities that were not teacher led professional learning communities in China may have top-down rather than bottom-up structures (Qian & Allan, 2021).

While teachers had varying levels of experience in leading professional development they generally felt confident in undertaking most of the activities identified in the questionnaire, although relatively few identified themselves as being very confident except in mentoring junior colleagues (see Table 11). The teachers were least confident in facilitating professional development workshops (21% not confident), action research (21% not confident), and professional learning communities (19% not confident). Professional learning communities also had the lowest ‘very confident’ response.

	Not confident	Confident	Very confident
Professional development workshops	21%	60%	19%
Conference presentations	14%	67%	19%
Professional learning communities	19%	65%	16%
Demonstration teaching	5%	65%	30%
Action research	21%	60%	19%
Teaching competitions	9%	65%	26%
Mentoring junior colleagues	7%	49%	44%

Table 11: Confidence of expert teachers in leading professional development

The teachers had used a range of different modes for delivering professional learning but had mostly used face-to-face delivery (see Table 12). Given the timing of the data collection during the Covid-19 pandemic when there were few opportunities for face-to-face teaching, the proportion of teachers who had never or rarely delivered professional development online may reflect a lack of opportunities to facilitate professional learning in recent years.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Online	2%	14%	56%	28%
Face-to-face	0%	5%	40%	55%
Bended online and face-to-face	0%	14%	56%	30%

Table 12: Experience of expert teachers in using different modes for professional development

The teachers also expressed high levels of confidence in using all modes (see Table 13) but were slightly more confident in using face-to-face modes.

	Not confident	Confident	Very confident
Online	12%	79%	9%
Face-to-face	9%	68%	23%
Bended online and face-to-face	12%	74%	14%

Table 13: Confidence of expert teachers in using different modes for professional development

In their online teaching, most teachers reported having used more than one platform and all the platforms used were developed in China. TenCent was the most widely used and most preferred platform for professional development activities. Two teachers did not nominate a preferred app, but said they preferred working face-to-face.

	Used	Preferred
DingDing	13	10
QQ	6	2
TenCent	22	20
WeChat	11	6
Other (single mentions)	6	2
None	1	2

Table 14: Expert teachers use and preferences for online apps

Problems in delivering professional development

The expert teachers identified a number of problems they faced in delivering professional development activities for teachers in Yunnan. The main problem identified by the expert teachers in the questionnaire was having time for professional development work, and this also emerged as an issue in focus groups (see below). In all, 21 of the teachers identified time pressures as being the most significant problem they faced, although it was not always clear from the questionnaire results whether the problem was time available to the expert teachers to facilitate professional development, or time available to teachers to participate in activities. Many of the responses simply stated the problem was ‘time’ (时间) or a shortage of time (T2: 没有充足的时间 ‘not enough time’, T11: 工作任务繁重, 分身无术 ‘heavy workload, no time to spare’), which could apply either to themselves or to other teachers. In some cases, the participants referred more specifically to teachers’ work as in: T43: 老师的工作量日与俱增, 课下时间越来越紧张, 课堂教学任务也面临更大的压力等 ‘The workload of teachers is increasing day by day, time is getting tighter in the classroom, and classroom teaching tasks are under more pressure, etc. However, as all of the expert teachers also worked as classroom teachers, it is difficult to interpret whether or not they referred to their own time pressures, other teachers’ time pressures, or even both.

The next most common problem that the expert teachers raised was unambiguously specific to themselves and related to their own level of professional knowledge. This was raised by 13 participants. Most of the comments were generally focused as in T26: 专业知识需要进一步学习 ‘Professional knowledge needs further study’, and T9: 自己的专业化 ‘Own professionalism/specialisation’. However, some of the comments related specifically to the issue of converting theory into practice: T32: 前沿的理论知识如何有效用于教学实践 ‘How cutting-edge theoretical knowledge can be effectively used in teaching practice’. Related to this idea of a lack of professional knowledge were comments by four teachers that they lacked guidance or mentoring in their role: T3: 缺少师傅, 时间精力有限 ‘Lack of a mentor, limited time and energy’, T24: 专业指导 ‘professional guidance’. These sets of comments suggest a feeling of lack of preparation for the role and may reflect the number of less experienced expert teachers in the questionnaire group.

Three participants also commented on problems related to the teachers who they needed to work with for professional development. T27 referred to participants’ lack of motivation and participation (学员的参与度和积极性), while T35 commented on teachers’ limited English language abilities blaming these on a decline in standards in English language teaching: 由于长期从事比较基础的英语教学专业知识流失较多可能在听说技能方面比较欠缺导致学习当中接受信息的能力比较薄弱 ‘Due to the loss of professional knowledge in teaching English for a long time, they may be lacking in listening and speaking skills, resulting in a weak ability to receive information during learning’.

In addition, one participant commented that financial support was a problem (T21: 资金支持) but did not add anything more specific. One teacher simply stated that there were many problems without elaborating (T13: 很多), while two further participants were not able to identify problems. These latter participants were from the less experienced members of the group and this may reflect a lack of familiarity with the role.

Teaching methodology

The questionnaire asked teachers to comment on general issues in teaching methodology before responding on specific areas of teaching practice. This section of the questionnaire included

questions related to five topics: issues relating to the language focus of teaching, issues relating to culture in language teaching, issues relating to how teachers understand and adapt to their students, issues relating to organising classroom activities, and issues relating to the impact of their teaching context of their practice (see Appendix 1). More than 85% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the prompts across all aspects of teaching with one exception. Only 69% of teachers agreed that they felt confident enough in their teaching to depart from the textbook and this provides further evidence that these teachers may have a very textbook-focused approach to teaching. The high level of agreement with the other prompts indicates that the teachers felt able to address most general aspects of English language teaching.

Teaching practice

Teachers responded to a number of prompts about specific aspects of their teaching practice to develop an understanding of what teachers do in their classrooms and what aspects of their practice may need further support. Teachers were asked to indicate how frequently they used different teaching activities and/or resources using a five-point scale (never-rarely-sometimes-often-very often).

Writing

The range of writing practice used by the teachers varied considerably (see Appendix 2). The most widely used forms of teaching writing were textbook exercises and exam questions (91% and 87% of teachers stating they did these often or very often). Grammar-based activities were also widely used (80% of the teachers using these often or very often). The least widely used tasks were more communicatively oriented activities such as essay writing (used often or very often by 28% of teachers and rarely or never by 32%), creative writing, i.e., stories and poems (used often or very often by 22% of teachers and rarely or never by 47%) and writing games (used often or very often by 27% of teachers and rarely or never by 45%). Letter writing was used often or very often by 47% of the teachers, although short texts such as emails were used by 67%, and integrated and integrated writing tasks by 50%. These results indicate that the teaching approach adopted by most teachers for teaching writing was structure focused and strongly based on textbooks and exams.

Reading

The most widely used ways of teaching reading (see Appendix 3) were reading comprehension tasks (96% often or very often), using pre-reading activities (91% often or very often), and reading aloud (91%). The least used activities were reading authentic materials (50% often or very often) and reading games (37% often or very often). The small proportion of use of authentic materials may reflect the textbook orientation found for teaching writing. In the open response category for this question, one teacher listed using picture books created by peers as a reading task, that shows a possibility for linking reading and writing tasks.

Speaking

The most commonly used ways of teaching speaking focused mainly on drilling and pronunciation practice (see Appendix 4): whole class drilling (89% often and very often), individual practice (86% often and very often), pronunciation practice (72% often and very often). While there was a common focus on pronunciation, stress and intonation were less commonly taught (49% often/very often). It appears that teachers did not make much use of online materials for speaking practice (31% often/very often, 37% rarely/never) or set individual targets with students for their speaking

development (37% often/very often, 44% rarely/never). Communicatively focused speaking tasks were used by around half of the teachers often or very often: discussion and debates (49%), presentations (42%), group assignments (50%), and speaking games (53%).

Listening

All of the listening activities in the questionnaire were used often or very often by at least two thirds of the teachers (see Appendix 5). The most used activities were dictation (85%) and pre-listening activities (84%). Listening games were the least used (68%).

Viewing

Viewing is a recent addition to the Chinese curriculum for English and there is evidence that this aspect of teaching had not been well integrated into the practice of these expert teachers (see Appendix 6). Only two of the text types included in the curriculum were used by more than half of the teachers often or very often: video (70%) and animations (56%). These texts have had a more established presence in language teaching than other multimodal texts. Other text types were much less commonly taught: tables (46% often/very often, 18% rarely), charts (26% often/very often, 39% rarely/never), and diagrams/ figures (24% often/very often, 39% rarely/never). In the open comments, one teacher added using menus and travel brochures, while another included picture books. The overall results suggest that expert teachers may need support in developing this new element of the curriculum both in their own practice and in supporting the practice of others.

Language knowledge

The practice of these expert teachers focused strongly on the structural aspects of language (see Appendix 7), with almost all teachers focusing on grammar (88%), vocabulary (92%), and pronunciation (83%) often or very often. These responses show that the teachers had a traditionally focused approach to language education that stressed knowledge of language forms. In the open comments one teacher added pragmatics and discourse to this list. One teacher added a comment that indicates how these expert teachers may understand the role of language structure in their teaching, saying:

县域学校基础薄弱，我们课堂主要还是在基础知识方面花的时间比较多。[County schools have a weak foundation, and our classrooms still spend more time mainly on the basics.]

This indicates a view that other types of learning can only be introduced once students have acquired knowledge of languages structures and links this more conventional practice in language teaching explicitly to the language level of the students, which was a commonly raised problem for teachers in rural and remote areas of Yunnan.

Resources

The teachers used a wide range of resources in their teaching (see Appendix 8). The most commonly used resources were textbooks (95% often very often) and common classroom equipment such as blackboards/white boards (91% often/very often), and interactive boards (83% often/very often). Other technology was also widely used to support teaching, with 81% of teachers saying they used internet resources often or very often, 78% using social media, 72% using mobile phones, and 67% using laptops, indicating that most teachers had access to such technological resources in their classrooms. The least used resources were those developed by the teachers themselves, such as video recordings (61% rarely/never) and audio recordings (49% rarely/never). Self-produced handouts

were more commonly used (61% often/very often), but overall, the teachers seem to be more reliant on materials produced by others than materials they produce for themselves.

Knowledge/abilities

Classroom management

The teachers expressed high levels of knowledge about all of the topics for classroom management (see Appendix 9) with most responses scoring about 90% for agreement or strong agreement. The lowest score was in relation to the prompt ‘the assigned textbook limits my ability to promote authentic classroom communication’ which received 72% agreement or strong agreement, suggesting that most teachers do not find the textbook limiting. This is consistent with the results above that suggested a very textbook focused teaching approach among this group of teachers.

Assessment

The teachers expressed high levels of knowledge for all items in the assessment part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 10) with most prompts received at least 80% agreement or strong agreement. The items that fell below 80% were only slightly below and concerned using formative assessment, using assessment to motivate students, and designing assessment tasks that measure the achievement of course objectives, all of which received 78% agreement or strong agreement.

Technology

Almost all teachers expressed agreement or strong agreement with all of the prompts for using technology in their teaching (see Appendix 11), with all receiving above 85% agreement. This indicates that the teachers do not perceive problems in using technology.

Resources

Reflective Practice and Professional Development

For the reflective practice and professional development questions, teachers expressed high levels of agreement with all the statements, with many receiving 100% agreement or strong agreement responses. Only two responses scored below 85% agreement: being able to present at professional conferences (79%) and knowing what opportunities for professional development existed outside their own institution (82%). This suggests that the expert teachers were well-developed in terms of their own professional learning approaches and their ability to reflect on their practice as teachers.

Findings: Teachers focus groups

Understanding the expert teachers’ role

The expert teachers talked about their role as a mission to improve the quality of English teaching in China. They saw their role as developing both teachers’ thinking about language teaching and also developing their practical abilities. In Extract 1, the teacher expresses this using the metaphor of a Taoist dualism between ideas and application.

Extract 1: FG3 T1

- T1: 那么在这个工作当中，为这个工作是为教师提供哪些支持呢？因为从我们这个相对来说，这个农村学校的话，我觉得其中两个方面的支持，第一个方面呢，就是这个所谓道术，

道术的话，就是在道，道的这个方面，我觉得要给这些老师们有一个理念更新的一些培训或者一些活动。So in this work, what kind of support is provided to teachers for this work? From our perspective, in terms of rural schools, I think there are two aspects of the support. The first aspect is what is called Tao. Taoism. In this aspect of Taoism, we need to give the teachers training or some activities to update their ideas.

Researcher: 嗯。Mhmm.

T1: 这个是从理念上来说，那么首先你基本上思想上的问题解决了，那么在术方面，就是在技术层面方面呢，我觉得，就是要给这些老师一个专业知识的一个培训的引导，然后教学能力的这个引导。This is from a conceptual point of view, so first of all you basically solve the problem of ideas. Then in terms of technique, that is, in terms of technique, I think it is to give these teachers a practical knowledge and a training guide, and then guide their teaching ability.

For this expert teacher, the professional development role involves both teaching theory and practice, but most importantly helping teachers to bridge theory and practice. This is something that came up often in the focus groups and for many of the participants, part of their work as classroom teachers was to work through ideas in their own practice and then transmit their insights to others.

The teachers often focused on the need to develop their own capacities, as in Extract 2, but also saw this as part of being a leader of the field and contributing to the general development of English teaching.

Extract 2: FGI T2

那么在担任英语老师的过程当中逐渐的了解了这个角色。背后的一些需要承担的责任，努力和付出等等。那么在想有了，首先是有了这个情怀的基础在。那么，想把这个事情做好，对这个职业角色也非常的感兴趣，所以这就是一个最主要的基础。那么在做的过程当中，慢慢的发现，随着时代的一个变化，中国英语教育特别是我们做中学这一块英语教育的改革，不断的在更新成长的过程当中，发现我们作为老师，更需要成长。要做的承担一个引领的角色，才能赋予学生更好的一个教育，那么所以就想着既然这个责任在使命在，那么就促使自己，更要不断的前行。In the course of my time as an English teacher, I gradually learned about this role. Behind some of the responsibilities that need to be taken on, the effort and dedication required and so on. Then when I thought about it, first of all, there is a basis for this feeling. So, I want to do this well and I am very interested in this professional role, so this is one of the main foundations. Then in the process of doing it, I slowly found that, with the change of the times, English education in China, especially the reform of English education in secondary schools, is constantly in the process of updating and growing, and found that we, as teachers, need to grow even more. We need to take on a leading role in order to give students a better education, so I think that since this responsibility is part of the mission, then I should push myself to keep moving forward.

In this quote, Teacher 2 talks about taking on the role of expert teacher as the consequence of a realisation that English teaching was changing and that teachers had a responsibility to develop with those changes and to take on leadership roles to improve the quality of teaching.

The role of expert teacher grew out of their engagement in professional development activities in their school and is largely an extension of their roles within their own institutions into the wider field of English language teaching in Yunnan. The teacher in Extract 3 describes the typical pathway for these teachers.

Extract 3: FG2 T1

那我先说吧, uhm, 就是我觉得作为这个角色, 并不是说一开始呢, 我并不是想要成为这个角色, 我是认为当时就是说学校叫我任教研组长的時候, 我只是觉得我想要改变一些, 以前的那种教研组活动, 就教研组的活动。So let me start by saying that I think that as this role, not that I wanted to be in this role at the beginning, I think that when the school asked me to be the head of the teaching and research team, I just thought that I wanted to change some of the activities of the teaching and research team, just the activities of the teaching and research team.

因为以前我们教研组就是改试卷, 分分人就可以啦, 然后再一起改一改试卷就够了, 所有的教研组活动就只是这样, 然后后边到我的时候, 我就觉得教研活动, 教研组长只是这种职责的话, 是不是太太那种了, 然后我就自己想了很多东西来进行, 嗯...反正也就是说小改革吧, 教研组的, 然后在这个过程中发现自己才发现很多能力都不足, 特别是说在教学方面, 方法也好, 还有自己对教学也是一知半解的, 然后知识也跟不上, 各种方面基本功这些好像都觉得很浅, 就没有办法去做更深入的事情, 后边不是遇到国培吗? Because in the past, our teaching and research group was for correcting the test papers, and then we could divide up the people, and then we could correct the test papers together, and all the activities of the teaching and research group were just like this, and then when it came to me, I felt that the teaching and research activities, the teaching and research group leader only had this kind of responsibility. It was too much. And then I thought of a lot of things to on my own. ...anyway, that is to say small changes, the teaching and research group, and then in this process I found myself in this process lacking a lot of abilities, especially in terms of teaching, methods, and my own knowledge of teaching is incomplete, and then my knowledge cannot keep up, all kinds of aspects of basic skills seem to feel very shallow, there is no way to do more in-depth things, I'm not sure if I'd encountered the National Training Program back then.

遇到国培, 然后去你们那里培训了三个月之后, 我才认识到了, 原来老师你要做一些事情的话, 必须是自己要强大起来, 不说是强大到哪里去, 至少的话, 你的基本功是要过关, 我是这么认为的。然后我自己呢, 就努力的去把自己做好, 做好之后, 嗯, 然后去影响我身边的人, 回来之后呢, 就去影响我身边的人, 然后带着身边的人呢, 试着做一些各种各样的事情, 并不是当时呢, 也没想着要做什么名师, 也不是说要做什么, 反正就这么一路走过来, 做了很多实际性的工作嘛, 就是在这个过程中, 嗯, 反正不断的去想, 不断的去探究一些东西, 慢慢的好像就形成了无形之间就是一个, 好像有几个人特别好学的, 就跟着你就这么的无形之间就。形成了一种反正就是那种小团体, 然后县里边。I came across the National Training, and then after three months training with you, I realized that, in order to do something, you must be strong yourself, not to say to be strong, but at least you have to be good at the basics, I think. And then I myself, then I try to do a good job, after I have done a good job, well, and then I try influence the people around me, after I came back, then I tried influence the people around me, and then I tried to do some things with the people around me. At that time, I did not think about becoming an expert teacher, nor about what I'd do, it's just that I've been doing a lot of practical work, and in the process, well, I've been thinking about it, and I've been exploring some things, it slowly seems to have formed in the background. It seems like there are a few people who are particularly good learners, and they follow you just without you seeing.

不是在一九, 2014 年的时候, 见里边就成立县级的名师工作室, 因为我在我们学校英语教研组带着他们就这么走过来, 然后大家也看着, 然后学校就报了我, 就这么就从县级名师工作室, 然后一直到今天, 就是慢慢的一直一直在不断的摸索, 不断的过程当中。并不是说一开始, 并不是说想要成为这种角色, 只是觉得想要做一点事情, 改变一下, 就是这么过来的, 我的大致想法就是这样。It wasn't in 19-, 2014, when the county-level expert teacher workshop was set up, because I was leading English teaching and research group in our school, and everyone

saw it, and then the school nominated me, and so I went to the county-level master teacher workshop, and then all the way to today, it's just slowly been a constant process of figuring out, constantly. It's not that at the beginning, it's not that I wanted to be in this kind of role, I just thought I wanted to do something for a change, that's how I came about it, that's my general idea.

This teacher recounts a pathway of taking on a leadership role in her own school and wanting to develop her own knowledge and abilities further, participating in training programs and using her new knowledge to influence the work of others. It was this local work in developing teaching that led to her nomination to the expert teacher by her school leader role as a form of recognition of her local professional development work. There is thus a sense that the expert teacher role is part of a longer-term trajectory of leading teachers to develop their teaching abilities. As they view their role as sharing experience and knowledge with others, the teachers saw their own personal expertise as the main resource that they draw on in their work as expert teachers.

The focus of expert teachers' work

The expert teachers identified a number of key focuses where they felt they needed to build the capacity of the teachers they worked with. They identified both general needs in teachers' approach to teaching and professional growth and particular topics that they felt were significant for teachers.

The expert teachers felt one of the central needs for teachers was to develop a reflexive approach to their practice. For teacher FG1 T1 (see Extract 4) reflection is central to the ways that a good teacher works in the classroom, while for teacher FG1 T3 (see Extract 5), reflection was central to any process of a changing practice as

Extract 4: FG1 T1

这就是非常就是对于老师的一个,嗯,为什么要老师就是要关注他的这个课堂,要以学为主。他的设计的理念实际上就是他学习他平常思考反思,包括就是总结自己的一些内容。不断的更新自己的教学的一些理念的。那课堂上的发生了任何行为过程,这个过程就是老师,优秀老师要反映的过程。嗯,我认为是这样的。This is very much a, well, why teachers should be concerned about their classrooms, to be learning oriented. Ideas for their design are actually what they learn from their usual reflection including summarising their own content. They continuously update their teaching philosophy. The way of behaving in a classroom is for good teachers to reflect. Well, I think that's the case.

Extract 5:FG1 T3

在运用于我们这个课堂的这个实践当中,还需要一定的这个磨合和提升。那么在之后,我们觉得要最重要一点,就是要引领这个老师进行一个教学反思之后,进行一个自己对自己的一个行动研究计划。这个我觉得应该是很有必要的。In applying this to our classroom practice, there is still a certain amount of refinement and enhancement required. After that, we feel that the most important point is to lead the teachers to reflect on their teaching and to carry out an action research plan for themselves. I think this is very necessary.

While both teachers saw reflection as central to teaching practice, they recognised that many teachers needed to be brought to a reflective stance in relation to their teaching and that this could only happen through supported professional development. For teacher FG1 T3, reflection was not a process for its own ends but a prelude to action research, and the need to develop a research focus in

teachers was a theme that other teachers echoed. Some of the teachers talked about using exploratory research processes as a way of doing professional development, as in Extract 6.

Extract 6: FG2 T3

那么到今年的话，通过对老师们的一个问卷的一个调查，我就发现老师们的一些困惑，因此呢，我们就确定了主题意义下的一些研究，比如说主题意义下的词汇教学研究，主题意义下的语篇教学。那么我今年呢，给老师们的一个主题呢，就是主题意义下的小学英语实践活动策略的研究。我们就觉得。我们如何把这种什么经常听到的什么活动观，这些我们如何实实在在的落实到我们的课堂当中。This year, through a questionnaire survey, I found that teachers were confused, so we decided to conduct some research about topics, for example, vocabulary teaching as a topic and discourse teaching as a topic. This year, one of my topics for teachers is the study of English practice strategies in primary schools. We thought... We are thinking about how we put into practice ideas about this activity that we have often heard about.

In addition, to general features of teacher development such as reflective practice and action research, the focus groups identified two main areas of developmental need for the teachers: using technology and localising theories and materials.

Technology was seen as an issue because the expert teachers felt that most teachers had access to technology but did not have the knowledge base to use it properly as shown in Extract 7.

Extract 7: FG3 T3

前不久呢，我做了一个调查，就是对老师们信息化使用的这块，因为不是现在那个课标里头，也就就是很强调的差不多有六处，就是我们一标里头对小学对这个一信息技术的这块的要求呢，他提出了一些明确的，就是你要怎么做，然后通过什么，然后可以达到。我就做了一个调查，就发现其实老师们他们每节课都在用信息技术手段，但是他们的最大的困惑就是如何非常有效的来使用这些资源，而且如何来整合这些资源，这是大家现在面临的最大的一个挑战。Not long ago, I did a survey on the use of information technology by teachers, because the current curriculum standard highlights six items. In the requirements for information technology, it puts forward some definite requirements, that is, what you need to do, what you need to pass, and then you can achieve it. I did a survey and found that the teachers are actually using information technology in every class, but their biggest confusion is how to use these resources effectively and how to integrate these resources. It's one of the biggest challenges faced.

In responding to Extract 7, teacher FG3 T1 emphasised the increasing amount of technology available to the teachers and the difficulty of engaging with the volume of technology on offer.

Extract 8FG3 T1

我这边呢，我是觉得这个，云南英语教师专业学习设计的挑战呢，我主要是，刚刚 Teacher 3 提到一个信息技术的这方面的这个运用，那么现在有效地运用信息技术呢，其实对我们老师呢，确实提出了挑战，那么同时因为这个信息技术大数据，云平台的这些各种教学资源的出现。那么其实我觉得对这个。教师的专业能力和专业素质能力提出了更高的要求，那么也提出了很大的，对教师本身的这个提出了一个很大的挑战，这个是我觉得这个是一个，第二个呢，是我觉得这个挑战呢，是因为信息技术，现在资讯这么发达，那么我们。的挑战就是我们怎么样在这么多五花八门的这些东西里边，资源里边怎么来整合我们的教学资源，还有学习，学生学习的这个资源，也对我们自身的这个能力呢，提出了一个很大的挑战。那么我们怎么把这些东西呢？把它挑出来整合。我觉得呢，主要就是就是信息量和 Teacher 3 也觉得信息技术这个发展以后，对我们的这个冲击其实是很大的，主要是这个方面。I think the

challenge of professional learning design for English teachers in Yunnan is mainly the use of information technology, which was just mentioned by Teacher 3, and the effective use of information technology is actually a challenge to our teachers. It has led to higher requirements for the professional competence and professional quality of teachers. It has also put forward a great challenge for teachers. Secondly, I think this challenge is due to information technology and the fact that it is so advanced nowadays, so our challenge is how do we integrate our teaching resources, and learning resources, with the resources for student learning in so many kinds of things, which also poses a great challenge to our own ability. So how do we integrate these things? By picking them out and integrating them. I think it is mainly the amount of information and Teacher 3 also thinks that with this development of information technology, the impact on us is actually very big, mainly in this area.

It therefore appears that accessibility of technology in classrooms puts pressure on teachers to develop their teaching approaches to best use this technology. The use of technology may have been a particular focus for these teachers, given that many teachers were needing to teach online during the Covid-19 pandemic, although Covid-19 was not the major focus of the discussions. The issue seems to be more about the integration of technology into more conventional teaching programs and maximising the use of technology in the classroom.

The expert teachers also recognised that there is a need to support teachers in adapting ideas from outside to their local contexts. These may be ideas from outside China or local requirements of policies and textbooks that need some form of modification to fit local needs and contexts.

Extract 9: FGI T3

这个挑战我就要说一个经历。那么我以前跟((colleague))我们到英国那个就是参加这个云南省的这个公派留学项目，到了英国的一个学院，我们学习一段时间。我们觉得那个老外教的这个英语，跟我们教的确实有很大的这个不同。首先在教育理念，它强调的是 *critical thinking*。还有这个批判性的一些思维，还有创意创新精神等等。它很多一些非常好的方式。但是我们学回来以后，自己在开展课堂设计的时候，就发现了，就是刚才说的一个挑战，就是应该一个本地化的设计，它还涉及到学生的这个基础，还有这个接受能力等等。这个是一个，因为语言这个学习，它是要以它的实际当中为载体，这个不是说简单的一个一个知识的一个传授。实际上，我们现在开展的各种这个 *task-based learning* 也好，还有 *communicative language learning* 也好，还有一些这些，它都是虽然以语言为载体，但是的还是让学生在真实的这个情境当中效果才更好。所以我们觉得从外面学会的理论，当时觉得特别特别好。个个都想摩拳擦掌，但是后来我们也看了，2014年带回来，仅仅八年的时间，已经把原来学的那些没有被更好的用，而是被本地被被被被磨得很。就是那些很很好的，很先进的东西，拿回来觉得用不上。就是没有设计好这个，这是一个，现在我们的教材也存在这么一个问题，就是编得很好，但实际上没有达到这个编者的目的，就是在使用上，进行一个本地化。本地化的这个改造，尤其是要经过老师的这个消化吸收，哪种设计才适用于最好。他自己所面临的这个学生，就我认为是一个最大的挑战。This challenge, I'm going to talk about an experience. So I used to go to the UK with ((colleague)) and we were participating in this Yunnan Province's public study abroad program and we went to a college in the UK and we studied for a period of time. We felt that the English taught by the locals was indeed very different from what we were taught. First of all, the educational philosophy emphasises critical thinking, and this critical thinking, and a creative and innovative spirit and so on. It has some very good ways. But when we came back from our studies, we found that when we were designing our instruction, it was a challenge to localise the design, as it also involved the students' foundation, and their receptivity. This is one of the challenges, because language learning is not simply a matter of imparting knowledge, but of using it

as a vehicle. In fact, we now carry out a variety of task-based learning, and communicative language learning is also good. In fact, the various kinds of task-based learning, communicative language learning and so on, are all language based, but they are still more effective when students are in real situations. So we felt that the theory we learned from outside was particularly good at the time. But then we also looked at it, and brought it back in 2014, and in just eight years, it had already been worn out by the local community instead of being used better. It's those very, very good, very advanced things that we brought back and felt unusable. It's just not designed for here. This is... There is also a similar problem with our textbooks now; they are well compiled, but in fact they do not achieve this editor's aim, which is to be localised in terms of its use. The localisation is an adaptation, after it has been digested and absorbed by the teachers, of the design which is best for the students they are facing. I think it's one of the biggest challenges for me.

This teacher talks at length about ideas that she learnt while studying in the UK and the difficulty of applying those ideas in China where the abilities, experiences and contexts of students and schooling are different. She also finds these problems with Chinese textbooks for English, which again need to be adapted to the needs of the learners. Given the finding above that even these expert teachers may not feel comfortable in deviating from their textbooks, localisation is potentially a significant issue for teachers' professional development. Teachers need support in working with the ideas and materials available to them in ways that are best adapted to local contexts and needs.

In discussing how they undertook their work, the expert teachers described their professional work as covering a number of main areas of work with teachers.

Presentations: These could be presentations by the expert teachers themselves or they might be by invited external experts, who could address teachers on relevant topics. One expert teacher described an activity in which teachers themselves facilitated workshops by selecting topics and the presenting on them to their group:

Extract 10: FG2 T1

主题研修活动呢，就是也是一个一个月一次，我布置一个任务下去教这个老师这一个主题，比如说思维导图在课程当中的运用，读写课怎么样来上，或者说听说课怎么样来进行听的，听的这种教学设计等等，反正一个月一次 Topic study activities, that is, once a month, I assign them a task to teach, each teacher has a topic, such as the use of mind maps in the curriculum, how to do reading and writing lessons, or how to do speaking and listening lessons, listen to this kind of teaching design, etc., anyway, once a month.

These are largely single episodes of one-way dissemination in which teachers are introduced to ideas and practices. One shortcoming of such presentations is that, while teachers may develop their knowledge of the topic, they may not use this knowledge in their future practice.

Reading groups: Reading groups are activities in which teachers collectively read articles or other documents relevant to their teaching and discuss the ideas they have encountered in the reading. The teachers felt that collaborative reading was more engaging than independent reading and that teachers were more motivated to read research if it was part of scheduled professional development work. One participant who had used collaborative reading argued, however, that it was useful for developing teachers' theoretical knowledge but that it was not very practice focused and ideas may not be implemented once they were learnt.

Demonstration classes: demonstration classes were very commonly used as ways of disseminating examples of good practice. These classes were often taught by the expert teachers; however other teachers with recognized good practice may also be selected to teach a demonstration. Demonstration classes were usually followed by a discussion of the practice being demonstrated. These classes were felt to be popular with teachers because they saw them as being practical and providing implementable ideas.

School visits: The participants spoke of frequently visiting other schools as a way of working with teachers and supporting the professional practice of individual teachers. During school visits, classroom observation and feedback was the main form of professional development work:

Extract 11: FG3 T2

然后一个就是上上那个示范课、公开课，就通过听评课的方式。来找出这个老师存在的优点以及不足，然后在评客过程当中呢，再来找出一些对策，帮助老师解决一些问题。And one is to take a demonstration class or an open class, by observing and evaluating the class we can find the strengths and weaknesses of this teacher, and then in the process of evaluation we can find some countermeasures to help the teacher solve any problems.

The expert teachers may also meet with schools teaching and research groups to discuss their work and provide feedback on the issues they were considering. While all participants discussed the benefits of school visits and providing feedback as an effective way of influencing individual practice, many felt that it led to a fragmented approach to professional development as it focused on lower-level techniques and practices and did not really develop teachers' knowledge and understanding.

Projects: The participants also worked with teachers in schools to develop projects with a specific focus. Projects were felt to be particularly useful as they engaged the teachers in experimentation and reflection on their practice and gave focus to professional development work that could otherwise be piecemeal and scattered. Projects took different forms but mostly they involved forms of action research. One participant presented a model she had used in her own work model in which the teachers would select a theme (e.g., autonomous learning) and have teachers observe a lesson that embodies this, followed by some theoretical learning that led to one teacher experimenting further, and then finally everyone putting the innovation into practice.

Extract 12: FG2 T4

就是实践，理论实践再到理论的这样的一个模式，就是我们的实践的第一步，就是给一个主题。然后让所有的老师，所有的学员抛出这样的一个课堂，比如说我们要研究我们自主。自主型的课堂，那么就根据自主型的课堂，你可以随意的选你的课型，我们就听课，听了课以后，根据这个老师的课堂呈现的问题，我们会做一些理论方面的学习，自主学习，或者说是请专家来讲座，或者是合作探讨，然后。给出一个相对好一点的方案之后，再要求我们的学员老师再去进行具体的实践，然后最后大家实践了成型的东西，我们就作为我们工作室的一个典型案例，然后再让老师把他写成论文的形式，写成课后反思的形式，也就到一个理论的提高和定位吧，是这样子的。It is a model of practice, theory – practice and then theory. The first step of our practice is to set a topic and then let all the teachers, all the participants, offer such a class, for example, we want to study autonomy – autonomous classrooms – then according to the idea of the autonomous classroom, you can choose your class type at will, we will listen to the class, after listening to the class, according to the problems presented by the teacher's class, we will do

some theoretical learning, independent learning, or invite experts to lecture, or collaborative discussion, and then after making a relatively good plan, we then ask our teacher to carry out the specific practice, and then finally everyone practices what we have developed. We will be using it as a case study of our teacher community, and then let the teacher write it up in as a paper or an after-class reflection, so we can improve the theory and orientation. This is how it works.

This participant describes a collaborative process of learning and experimentation that not only contributes to improving practice for the teachers involved but also produces a resource that can contribute to wider learning. The project model described is one that attempts to link theory and practice and also aims to ensure that new ideas are implemented by the teachers involved.

Problems in delivering professional development

One of the key problems the focus group participants identified was knowing how to mediate between theory and practice.

Extract 13: FG 2: T2

就像刚才这位老师所说的，其实我们一线的教师，缺乏的很多理论的东西，但是理论的话呢，就是太高深的那种，我们好像也就是一来我们也不是太感兴趣，第二呢，也就是可能很难把它和我们的教学实践结合起来。所以我们一线教师就说是更想要的，更需要的就是这种。理论还有这种实践能够很好地结合起来。然后呢，就是可以对我们的教学有很好的这种促进作用的这样一个东西，我们是老师最想得到的，最感兴趣的。As the teacher just said, in fact, our front-line teachers lack a lot of theoretical things, but the theory is too profound, and they seem not to be too interested, and secondly it may be difficult to combine it with our teaching practice. So what our front-line teachers want and need more is for the theory and the practice to be well integrated. And then, it is something that can have a good effect on teaching, which is what we want most and what teachers are most interested in.

Here Teacher FG2, T2 articulates the problem she faces in that teachers need a stronger theoretical base, but the theory is both too complex for them and difficult for them to operationalise. The problem expert teachers face, therefore, is to integrate theory and practice in ways that teachers can take up and implement. Moreover, she believes that teachers would be more motivated to participate in professional development if they could see direct links to their own practice.

Teacher FG2 T4 argued that teachers could come to value theory once they saw that it was practical and operationalizable.

Extract 14: FG2 T4

就是不断的这个调整，那么我们很多老师就发现这个理论学习不是一个很抽象的理论，他发现他其实有很强的实践性、操作性在里边，所以我就觉得可能就是我很喜欢这样的理论学习，我们很多年轻老师，包括就是不是连我们中学老师最大的缺陷就是理论方面是高度不够，但是太高的理论，太抽象的理论，其实对我们来讲它操作性不强，其实我们也是不爱听的，是这样子的，因为学了就过了，没有什么意义。It is constantly this adjustment, then many of our teachers have found that this theoretical learning is not a very abstract theory, they found that it actually has a strong practicality, and operability, so I think it is possible that we like this kind of theoretical learning. The biggest shortcoming of many of our young teachers, including teachers in secondary schools, is that they do not have enough theory, but if there is too much theory, too

abstract theory, in fact, it's not very practical and we don't like to listen to it. It's like this, because it is meaningless to learn it and not use it.

Thus, if theory is to be meaningful for teachers, it must be translatable into practice and professional development leaders need to make theory accessible to practitioners.

The expert teachers believed that teachers needed to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the practice because without theoretical knowledge, teachers could not develop effective practice. However, they also realised that teachers needed to develop their practice and just developing theoretical knowledge was not adequate.

Extract 15: FG2 T4

可能这个理论和实践结合了嘛。我个人的观点，一节课要想上好掉，每个步骤模仿性很强，但是其实最大的问题就是要一节有灵魂的课，它是要有理论支撑的，要有理念支撑的。 Maybe this theory and practice can be combined well. In my personal opinion, if a lesson is to be good, I think it's a good idea to imitate each step, but in fact, the biggest problem is to have a lesson with a soul, which must be supported by theory and supported by ideas.

In Extract 15, this teacher is arguing that a good lesson can be produced by imitating technique, but that this lesson is lacking, as it does not have an underlying conceptual base.

A further issue that these expert teachers confront is engaging teachers in professional development.

Extract 16: FG1 T3

然后就是还有一个就是第三点，就是成员的积极性不是很高，好像大家都有一种职业倦怠到我们这种年龄，我们学校老师的这种平均年龄是达到 47.6，你你也是清楚的，((researcher))，所以。而且现在这种各种方面的因素，所以老师的这种职业阶段很强烈，然后很多老师好像对于教学，过得去就行了，都有这种，有的时候你在做起事情来的时候觉得挺难的，好像要不说是以前呢，是刻意要去改变它们，但是能改变的都改变了，改变不了的也只是这样，所以好像我就觉得现在的工作室就是好像没有进展的感觉。就是有一点停滞。 Then there is a third point, that is, the motivation of participants is not very high. It is as if we have a kind of career fatigue in terms of age. The average age of teachers has reached 47.6. You also are clear about this ((researcher)). So, and now this sort of factor, there's a very strong career phase for teachers and many teachers have a problem with just getting by and sometimes they find it difficult to do things. It seems like you're deliberately trying to change them, but what you can change has been changed so I feel like there's no progress in the workshops now. It's just a little bit stagnant.

There is thus a perception that the majority of teachers have reached a point where their focus is more on keeping going as they are than on developing their teaching practice and that there is a limited return for the professional development that is offered. There is thus a need to engage teachers in professional development to have teachers see it as part of their professional identity and as continuing throughout their career.

There is a perception among the teachers that it is easier to facilitate professional development in some areas of Yunnan than in others, and in particular, it is much easier to work in cities than in rural and remote areas, as Extract 17 shows:

Extract 17: FG1 T3

我们只是说能够做到引领，或者做一个示范啊，让那些老师能够愿意来。那么这时候，可能我们就是发达一些地方的话，这个教教师的这个观念，学习的这个自我发展的意识比较强，但是在一些县，或者是一些更更边远落后这个学校，这个实际的问题是非常难以操作的。We are just saying we can lead or do a demonstration and teachers might be willing to come. At the moment, in some places the concept of teaching teachers and the awareness of development one's own learning is relatively strong but in some prefectures, in some remote schools the practical problem is more difficult to deal with.

In Yunnan, having people from remote areas participate in learning is problematic, either because a tradition of ongoing professional development has not been established or because there are practical difficulties that prevent them from participating. Engaging teachers from rural and remote areas is thus important for their work.

In addition, the expert teachers perceived a number of challenges for their work that related to how their professional development work was organized and managed by the education system in Yunnan. One significant challenge that emerged in the focus groups was the issue of time, both for the expert teachers to support professional learning and for teachers to participate in it.

Extract 18: FG2 T2

还有一个就是工作量，本身自己的教学任务工作量太重。有的时候你想要去做更多的东西，但是因为你的课时比较多嘛，然后教学任务比较重，你真没有办法去做，真没有更多的精力、时间去做更多的事情。There is also the workload, the teaching load itself is too heavy. Sometimes you want to do more, but because you have a lot of class time, and then you have a heavy teaching load, you really don't have the means to do it, you really don't have the energy or time to do more.

Later, this same teacher talked about the impact of time pressures on her work:

Extract 19: FG2 T2

那么也做了一些很有意义的事情，但是呢，就是现实来说，确实是矛盾重重，这种思想理念，还有这种课时压力太大了，这个对于我们下面来讲，真的啊，确实我们是很少有这种时间和精力。所以我们开展的活动相对来讲，可能一个学期就是那么两到三次，就真的已经很了不起了，确实是没有办法去投入更多的时间。Then we have done some very meaningful things, but in reality, there are many contradictions. This kind of thinking, and the pressure of class time are too much for us underneath. It's true that we have very little time and energy. So, the activities we carry out are, relatively speaking, maybe two to three times a semester, it is really not possible to devote more time to them.

It appears that the way that expert teachers' work is organised does not coordinate the different areas of responsibility well, with the result that their work as teachers and their work as teacher educators is in conflict. The result is that they limit their professional development work, as the demands of teaching limit what they can achieve in their other areas of work.

The issue of time also has an impact on the teachers that the expert teachers wish to work with as the demands of their teaching work do not allow much time for them to develop their practice.

Extract 20: FG3 T2

因为在现在的这个教学工作当中，特别是在初中和高中这一块，这个教学升学压力是非常大的，我们老师呢，更多的是把时间放在如何提高学生的成绩这个方面，在很多时候呢，就忽略了自己的这个教研能力的提升。Because in the current teaching work, especially in junior and senior secondary schools, the pressure of teaching and promotion is very high, we teachers are more focused on how to improve students' performance in this area, and in many cases, we neglect to improve our teaching and research skills.

Time pressure therefore has a negative impact on both the facilitators of professional development and on its recipients. This negative impact of time pressure on teachers of English has also been observed in tertiary education contexts in Yunnan (Liddicoat, Murray, Zhen, & Mosavian, 2022; Murray, Liddicoat, Zhen, & Mosavian, 2020) and appears to be a very significant obstacle to professional development at all levels of education constraining what teacher can do and are willing to do in changing their practice.

The teachers also expressed problems in administering their professional development activities. All of the groups commented on the lack of administrative support for their work and stated that this lack of support had a negative impact on their work.

Extract 21: FG3 T3

我带的是区级的工作室。在这个过程中，其实我就发现，作为一线老师来带工作室其实太难了，因为我们没有一些，比如说就是行政上的一些支持。I lead a studio at district level. I actually found that it was actually too difficult to lead a workshop as a frontline teacher because I didn't have, for example, some administrative support.

As Extract 21 reveals, this lack of support makes it difficult to exercise leadership in English language teaching, which they saw as being one of the key elements of their work as expert teachers. The teachers also argued that without some sort of administrative backing, it was often difficult for them to convince schools to release teachers for professional development activities.

One of the particular administrative problems the participants identified was the organisation of funding for professional development as an obstacle for their work. The issue of funding seems to have been the administrative procedures related to funding rather than the presence of funding itself and the participants discussed the cumbersome organisation of the financial systems they needed to work with.

Extract 22: FG2

然后就是(.)怎么说呢，就是经费上的管理。太严格，就是那种有的时候本来正常的开销的话，那我就觉得是。审批的(.)那种程序太繁琐。And then there is(.) how can I put it, it is the management of funds. It's too strict, it's just that there are sometimes normal expenses, then I think it is approved(.). That kind of procedure is too cumbersome.

One teacher reported real problems she had negotiating the financial system when she first became an expert teacher.

Extract 23: FG3 T3

第二个呢，就是我们的经济制度，就是经费的使用制度，这个一定要跟，教育局教体局，就是上级部门以及学校这个财务呢，一定要就是进行一个很好的前期的沟通。我记得，第一个工作室的时候就吃了很多的亏，就是再用那个经费的时候，有些好像就是觉得怎么都用不出去，怎么一到我这里就用不出去这些钱，后面在这个吃了几次亏之后呢，才发现，其实是自己没有很好的，就是可能我只执行了上级给我的这个经费管理制度，没有和学校的这个经费管理制度有一个很好的契合。The second is our financial system, the system for the use of funding. This must be done with the Education Bureau, the Education and Sports Bureau, which are the parent departments and the school's finance department. There must be a good preliminary communication. I remember, in the first expert teacher workshop, I suffered a lot of losses. When I used the funds again, some people seemed to think that I couldn't spend them. How come I couldn't use the money once it came to me? Later, after a few losses, I realized that I didn't have a good understanding of how to use the money. I realised I didn't do a good job of implementing the fund management system given to me by my superiors, but it didn't have a good fit with the school's fund management system.

This teacher recounts how using multiple, incompatible financial systems created problems for her in organising and managing her professional development work.

The issue of time and the lack of an administrative support structure also made it difficult for the expert teachers to organize their session in more practical ways, especially when the issue of time for teachers to participate in workshops becomes involved.

Extract 24: FG 3 T2

因为在真正的下面地州上呢，我们发现这个领导的支持是非常重要的，从这个问题上来看呢，所以允许工作的开展难度还是非常大的。所以我觉得如果从能够从需要支持的这些角度来看，一个就是时间，像我在下面搞这个工作坊，就发现那些成员。他们是不太支持他们的老师来参加这些活动，我们一般就是组织活动的时候，都会以教体局的名义下发文件，然后下来，但是呢，每次总会有很多老师，然后以各种理由，甚至领导都会打电话来给我请假，然后参加不了。We find that the support of the leaders is very important in the remote areas. From this point of view, it is still very difficult to get the work carried out. So I think if you look at it from the point of view of the need for support, one is time. Like I did a workshop out there, I found that those workshop members are not very supportive of their teachers participating in these activities. We generally organise activities, and we send out documents in the name of the Bureau of Education and Sports, and after that then every time there are always many teachers, and even the leaders, who call to me to withdraw for various reasons, and then they cannot participate.

The teacher states that they need to get support from school leaders, as they can be significant gatekeepers for allowing teachers to participate in professional development. The teacher uses the name of the Bureau of Education and Sports as a way of making the work more official but finds that this is not enough to overcome a lack of support among leaders.

Discussion

The needs analysis revealed a number of difficulties for the continued professional development for expert teachers. Some of the issues raised are structural and contextual, such as workload and time issues, and the lack of administrative support, and cannot be addressed directly through professional

development. There are also a number of areas of need for developing expert teachers' professional knowledge and practice.

Expert teachers have a leadership role in the field and there is a need for them to consider further what leadership of a professional learning community involves and how they can better exercise this leadership role. While some expert teachers seem to have a clear sense of ways of leading and have developed innovative ways of working with teachers, other teachers feel they need guidance in their role. This seems to be especially the case for those who are newer to the role and further reflection is needed about the nature of the expert teacher role and ways of developing their own expertise as a resource for leading a professional learning community. Expert teachers have taken a range of different approaches to professional development and have not all enacted their leadership in the context of professional learning communities. They would benefit from reflecting on what it means to be a leader in a professional learning community and what effective leadership of such a community needs. Expert teachers also need to consider further how to bring teachers working in different sectors together to form a functioning, effective and sustained professional learning community, with a long-term focus and goals.

There is a tension evident in the expert teachers' responses in both the questionnaire and the focus group between professional development as episodic responses to specific teaching problems and needs, for example in the form of observation and feedback on teaching practices, and sustained, ongoing activities with a common focus. There is also a tension between professional development that builds theoretical knowledge and professional development that shapes practice. This indicates that there is a need to build teachers' thinking about the nature, goals, and form of professional development, especially as it applies in professional learning communities. Some elements of this would include:

- Supporting expert teachers in building communities of reflective practitioners and integrating reflective practice into teachers' overall teaching approaches. There is a need for expert teachers to understand ways of developing teachers' capacity to draw effectively on their experience, reflect on their own practice, and implement change. This would include helping expert teachers develop their own reflective practice.
- Developing expert teachers' knowledge about the value of action research and exploratory research approaches in professional development and how to support action research projects by teachers.
- Developing expertise in delivering collaborative professional development in different ways and using different modes, especially in facilitating and sustaining professional learning communities in online and hybrid environments, including understanding the affordances and constraints of different online platforms for collaborative professional development.

The leadership role of expert teachers means that they need to stay up to date in terms of developments in policy and practice and expert teachers seem to have few opportunities for supported professional development to build their own capacity as teachers and as teacher educators. There is thus a need to enhance expert teachers' autonomy in developing their own knowledge and practice and to support them in developing strategies for autonomous and self-guided professional learning for themselves.

As participation and engagement of teachers in professional development appears to be a key difficulty faced by expert teachers, there appears a need for expert teachers to develop an advocacy role with teachers and schools. There is a need for expert teachers further to develop strategies for advocating for professional development and the relevance of professional learning communities for teaching practice, especially in rural and remote communities, and motivating teachers to engage in professional development.

Expert teachers also need to be able to support teachers in localising teaching and learning approaches and materials to their local needs and contexts. One important aspect of localisation will be adapting approaches and materials for teaching and learning to the needs of large classrooms in ways that ensure that individuals receive sufficient attention. This also requires supporting teachers to differentiate learning for students in large classes.

Teachers also need to be supported in thinking about how to reconcile innovations with the constraints imposed by the syllabus and set textbooks. One dimension of the need to reconcile change with existing constraints is to consider how teachers can cover course content adequately in the time allotted, and so meet expectations of others, while also implementing changes to practice.

Localising teaching and learning and dealing with the constraints of teachers' context are central to being able to sustain changes to practice over time.

The workshops and online resource

The needs analysis was used as a starting point for the collaborative development of four workshops and an online resource to support expert teachers in working with PLCs. The workshops were used as material for developing an online resource to support expert teachers and the two components of the project were thus developed in tandem. This section details the decisions and implementation regarding the PLC website and related resources. These collected resources are designed for expert teachers. They have two functions: to raise their awareness of choices and decisions in running professional development sessions, and to provide content that might be used in their future work with teachers. This section of the report begins with an overall rationale for the website. It then comments on the approach we engaged in with Yunnan Normal University. Finally, there is a list of the website's contents.

Rationale

In terms of the rationale, we wanted to develop a resource that did two things. It would help the individual expert teacher in the form of a guide by making available a set of resources. These resources will help expert teachers both consider their as an expert teacher in facilitating a PLC and provide some possible content for the expert teachers to run their PLC sessions. The original project requirements were to simply provide recordings of the four synchronous sessions. However, the team felt that this might be limited as a resource and so also wanted to provide additional video content and reading. It was also considered that a guide would be necessary to make sense of and navigate around the various resources. Once housed on a freely accessible from a China-based website, this guide will provide direct links to the video resources and some recommended books and articles. The guide also provides a short introduction to the concept of PLC and the value of getting teachers to work collaboratively. In summary, the project aimed to provide a resource that would have a positive impact on expert teachers' understanding and make their task easier by providing some ready-made materials for them to adapt to their training context.

An important part of the rationale for this project was using the four PLC sessions to model an active way of involving participants. This was principally achieved by designing tasks and breakout activities during the sessions which could be explicit about their developmental function. However, there were also tasks which needed to be completed in advance of sessions to establish coherence between sessions but also to establish the principle of flipped content. The tasks were also designed to link the four sessions organically.

Process

The core part of the process was the collaborative design and delivery of four training workshops for expert teachers. In 2022 and 2023 University of Warwick and Yunnan Normal University provided four online sessions. These were recorded, so that they form a key resource for other expert teachers. The collaborative process took the form of several online meetings to talk about the content and delivery of the four sessions. The Yunnan team were particularly interested in having input on leadership, making sessions active and including a session which might encourage teacher research.

The second element of the process was sharing ideas between the two teams about the development of the additional online resource. The team also wanted to include relevant reading written in both English and Chinese so that expert teachers had a choice about both content and medium. The Yunnan team were particularly keen that the additional videos would focus on skills (e.g. listening and speaking), research (e.g. action research) and ensuring learner-centred communication in the classroom (e.g. task based learning). This determined the choice of the ten additional videos included in the resource. In technical terms, a standardized introduction for all recordings and additional videos was developed. A PowerPoint was designed so that the videos would have a consistent look. These slides were integrated into the videos as screenshots/jpgs. The four recorded session videos also include some meta-commentary on the goals and objectives of each session.

Key elements of the PLC resource

The following are the key resources that were produced for Project 3:

- Four recorded PLC sessions (these can be used by expert to teachers to reflect on their aims and goals in working with their PLCs)
- Additional videos (these can be used as content/input for expert teachers' PLC sessions)
- Articles/books (these can be used for expert teachers to reflect on their role leading a PLC but some of them can be used to support the additional videos and can be read by teachers themselves)
- A Guide: an introduction to PLCs and their value

In more detail, the four recorded PLC sessions were as follows:

Recorded Session 1 (Topic: Leadership of PLC - sustainable CPD) Neil Murray, Yunjie Hou and Steve Mann. This session focuses on how to lead a PLC. It considers how expert teachers can use their role as to unlock the potential benefits of PLC.

Recorded Session 2 (Topic: Learner-centredness and experiential learning) Annamaria Pinter and Penny Mosavian with Yun Fang from Yunnan. This session establishes the importance of learner centredness, experiential learning and wellbeing in all classrooms and it demonstrates step by step how to implement experiential learning in any session.

Recorded Session 3 (Topic: Reflective practice and online offline) Steve Mann, Yuan Gang and Maricarmen Gamero Mujica. This session establishes the importance of reflection. It suggests ways to develop teachers' capacity to draw effectively on their experience, reflect on their own practice, and implement change. It also considers different platforms combining online and offline elements (e.g. hybrid learning and flipped content).

Recorded Session 4 (Topic: Teacher Research) Annamaria Pinter and Jason Anderson with Ruirui Wang. The session considers a wide range of possibilities for engaging in researching teachers' own classrooms, involving data collected from observations, recordings and learner feedback.

The additional provide content and input for expert teachers' PLC sessions. The videos cover three main areas: skills, Communicative Language Teaching, and research for teachers:

- Guiding groups of teachers - communities of practice
- Integrated skills
- Listening skills
- Speaking skills
- Action research
- Reflective practice
- Classroom dynamics
- Differentiation
- Task-based learning and teaching
- Group work

The online resource thus provides materials to support expert teachers in thinking about establishing and facilitating PLCs and also support them in addressing some of the key topics that have emerged from the needs analysis as being areas where there is a need for future professional development. They also serve as examples of sessions with varied viewing, discussion and reflection tasks that could be easily adapted or developed further.

Appendices

Appendix 1: General questions about methodology

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Language				
I feel able to give sufficient attention to fluency in class, compared to accuracy	0%	12%	55%	33%
I know how to develop language fluency as well as accuracy in the classroom	0%	12%	56%	32%
I am familiar with techniques that encourage authentic student interactions	0%	10%	49%	41%
I feel I have the knowledge and skills to develop students' real-life communication skills even if this is not included in my textbook	2%	18%	55%	25%
I am able to integrate different language skills (Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing/Viewing) in my teaching	2%	9%	60%	29%
I am able to teach grammar communicatively	0%	5%	69%	26%
Culture				
I am able to integrate cultural content into my language teaching	0%	5%	52%	43%
I understand how to develop intercultural skills as part of language learning	2%	12%	53%	33%
Learner				
I feel able to engage my students in independent learning	2%	5%	69%	24%
I know how to create opportunities for my students to learn independently	2%	2%	69%	27%
I am able to identify the learning styles of all of my students	0%	17%	59%	24%
I am able to adapt my teaching according to students' different learning styles	0%	9%	64%	27%
Classroom organisation				
I have the opportunity to engage students in free practice rather than controlled practice	0%	5%	37%	58%
I am familiar with techniques for moving from controlled student practice to free practice in lessons	2%	10%	55%	33%
I feel able to incorporate small group work into classroom activities	0%	5%	59%	36%
I have the skills needed to set up and facilitate effective small group work	0%	8%	56%	36%
I have the opportunity to use role play and drama in the classroom	2%	13%	55%	30%
I feel confident using role play and drama to promote my students' learning	2%	13%	52%	33%
I have the opportunity to use games as a learning tool	0%	8%	55%	37%
I know how to use games effectively as a learning tool	0%	13%	49%	38%
I feel confident enough in my teaching to depart from textbook teacher manuals	2%	29%	40%	29%
Context				
I am able to cover the curriculum in the time available	2%	13%	48%	37%
The way in which students are assessed limits what I feel able to do in my teaching	0%	25%	45%	30%
I am able to be creative in my teaching while at the same time meeting the traditions and expectations of my school/peers	2%	12%	52%	34%

Appendix 2: Writing

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Textbook exercises	0%	2%	7%	49%	42%
Workbook/worksheet exercises	0%	2%	21%	56%	21%
Short-text activities (messages, notes, emails, etc.)	0%	5%	28%	44%	23%
Grammar and other structure-based exercises	0%	0%	20%	57%	23%
Essay writing	9%	23%	40%	19%	9%
Letter writing	2%	20%	31%	30%	17%
Stories or poems	9%	38%	31%	15%	7%
Writing games	2%	43%	28%	20%	7%
Exam paper questions	0%	0%	13%	58%	29%
Integrated writing activities	0%	16%	34%	34%	16%

Appendix 3: Reading

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Pre-reading activities	0%	2%	7%	42%	49%
Graded reading	0%	7%	28%	42%	23%
Reading aloud	0%	2%	7%	48%	43%
Reading games	5%	16%	42%	23%	14%
Group reading	0%	11%	29%	40%	20%
Reading comprehension	0%	2%	2%	52%	44%
Integrated reading activities	0%	7%	21%	50%	22%
Reading authentic materials	0%	21%	29%	33%	17%

Appendix 4: Speaking

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Whole-class drilling and repetition	0%	6%	5%	63%	26%
Individual practice	0%	2%	12%	65%	21%
Pronunciation practice	0%	13%	15%	57%	15%
Stress and intonation practice	2%	14%	35%	40%	9%
Controlled speaking activities	5%	2%	27%	45%	21%
Speaking games	5%	17%	25%	42%	11%
Free discussion, seminars discussion and debates	2%	16%	33%	30%	19%
Presentations	2%	27%	29%	29%	13%
Homework/self-study tasks	2%	8%	19%	50%	21%
Group assignments	0%	11%	39%	32%	18%
Online assignments	8%	29%	32%	27%	4%
Individual target setting	2%	42%	19%	28%	9%
Self-evaluation	6%	25%	20%	34%	15%

Appendix 5: Listening

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Pre-listening activities	0%	4%	12%	41%	43%
Listening and note-taking	5%	8%	12%	36%	39%
Listening games	2%	14%	16%	47%	21%
Dictation	0%	6%	9%	36%	49%

Integrated listening activities	0%	7%	23%	49%	21%
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Appendix 6: Viewing

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Tables	0%	18%	36%	34%	12%
Charts	7%	32%	35%	18%	8%
Diagrams/Figures	2%	37%	37%	16%	8%
Video	0%	7%	23%	48%	22%
Animations	0%	16%	28%	42%	14%

Appendix 7: Language knowledge

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Grammar	0%	2%	10%	46%	42%
Vocabulary	0%	2%	6%	32%	60%
Pronunciation	2%	7%	8%	53%	30%

Appendix 8: Resources (use)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Video	0%	5%	31%	45%	19%
Audio	0%	5%	46%	36%	13%
Self-made audio recordings	16%	33%	35%	18%	14%
Self-made video recordings	22%	39%	33%	21%	7%
Overhead projector	7%	12%	25%	28%	35%
White/blackboard	0%	2%	7%	40%	51%
Interactive whiteboard/smartboard	0%	5%	12%	32%	51%
Laptops	2%	12%	21%	32%	35%
Mobile phones	5%	7%	21%	43%	29%
Other mobile devices	7%	23%	37%	19%	21%
Internet resources	2%	5%	14%	58%	23%
Social media	5%	7%	15%	55%	23%
Textbooks	0%	5%	0%	40%	55%
Teacher guides	0%	7%	21%	42%	30%
Workbooks	0%	5%	21%	47%	27%
Self-produced handouts	0%	7%	32%	42%	19%
Reference books (dictionaries etc)	0%	9%	24%	41%	26%
Language games	2%	25%	35%	35%	5%
Flashcards	14%	32%	23%	32%	13%

Appendix 9: Classroom management

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have the skills needed to promote authentic communication in the classroom	3%	3%	64%	30%
The assigned textbook limits my ability to promote authentic classroom communication	2%	26%	53%	19%
I feel able to use Chinese in the classroom in order to promote learning	0%	2%	72%	26%
I feel confident knowing when to use Chinese and when not to.	0%	11%	63%	26%
I know how to control the pace and timing of classroom activities	0%	6%	60%	34%
I understand how to signal transitions between the stages of a lesson	0%	3%	69%	28%
I am able to make effective use of available resources and equipment	0%	3%	71%	26%
I know how to give effective instructions to students	0%	7%	65%	28%
I am able to adjust my language to the language level of my students	0%	7%	67%	26%
I am able to monitor learner engagement in order to maintain learner motivation	0%	7%	70%	23%
I am able to identify learning opportunities and adjust my learning plan accordingly	0%	7%	67%	26%
I know how to explain learning objectives in a way that promotes student motivation and engagement	2%	11%	64%	23%
I am able to plan lessons in collaboration with other teachers	0%	9%	53%	38%
I believe that planning lessons in collaboration with my colleagues is important	0%	5%	49%	46%

Appendix 10: Assessment

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand how to use formative assessment	0%	22%	61%	17%
I am able to identify students learning needs at the beginning of a course	0%	11%	68%	21%
I am able to design end-of-course assessments that enable me to monitor my students' learning	0%	3%	61%	36%
I know how to employ work portfolios in order to measure students' learning	3%	13%	65%	19%
I know how to use peer assessment	0%	13%	68%	19%
I know how to use formative and summative assessment effectively	0%	19%	65%	16%
I am familiar with different modes of assessment	0%	19%	62%	19%
I feel able to assess students' real-life communicative ability.	0%	19%	65%	16%
I am able to design my own assessment tasks	0%	19%	65%	16%
I know how to use assessment as a way of improving my course planning and teaching	0%	16%	65%	19%
I know how to direct learners to assess their own work and progress	0%	16%	68%	16%
I am able to use assessment as a way of motivating my students	9%	13%	65%	13%
I know how to design assessment tasks that measure the achievement of course objectives	6%	16%	62%	16%

Appendix 11: Technology

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of technological resources that can support my teaching of English.	0%	14%	65%	21%
I have suitable access to technology for teaching English in my school.	0%	14%	65%	21%
I am able to choose technologies that enhance my teaching approaches.	0%	14%	63%	23%
I am able to choose technologies that enhance my students' learning.	0%	14%	63%	23%
My teacher education program helped me to think more deeply about how technology could influence the teaching approaches I use in my classroom.	0%	7%	59%	34%
I am able to think critically about how to use technology in my classroom	0%	7%	65%	28%
I can adapt the use of the technologies to different teaching activities.	0%	9%	68%	23%
I feel confident using technology to support my teaching	0%	9%	63%	28%

Appendix 12: Resources (knowledge/ability)

	Strongl	Disagre	Agree	Strongl
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	y Disagre e	e		y Agree
I am able to make time to create my own materials	2%	23%	58%	19%
I have the understanding and skills needed to develop my own materials	0%	12%	63%	23%
I am able to create materials that promote opportunities for student interaction	0%	2%	72%	21%
I am able to adapt textbook materials in a way that maximises authentic communication	0%	16%	58%	19%
I am able to create materials that emphasise fluency as well as accuracy	0%	19%	58%	16%

Appendix 13: Reflexive practice and professional development

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have opportunities to observe and be observed by colleagues	0%	3%	25%	72%
I know how to reflect on my own and others' teaching practice	0%	0%	38%	62%
I am able to analyse my own teaching objectively	0%	0%	42%	58%
I know which journals can best facilitate the development of my theoretical and practical knowledge of English language teaching	0%	11%	47%	42%
I know how to work with colleagues in ways that develop me professionally	0%	3%	39%	58%
I know what opportunities exist for professional development outside of my institution and how take advantage of them,	3%	15%	47%	35%
I am able and willing to incorporate colleagues' feedback on my teaching	0%	0%	37%	63%
I am able to engage in research, reading and other forms of classroom inquiry,	0%	5%	55%	40%
I am able to present at professional conferences	3%	18%	58%	21%
My school supports me to attend professional conferences	0%	3%	62%	35%
Participation in teaching competitions is helpful for my professional development	0%	5%	47%	48%

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