English for Education Systems

Research into Core Curriculum Design of Postgraduate Core Courses for Prospective English Teachers in Southwest China

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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 Yunnan-based researchers at Dali University. It focuses on establishing key needs and providing referenceable findings and frameworks for professional learning that support English teachers both pre-service education and aims to investigate ways of enhancing the curriculum for pre-service education and to provide insights for policy makers and decision makers for both the short and long term. Specifically, this project was commissioned to support the creation and design of a core postgraduate course module for English teachers that specifically meets identified needs of English teachers in rural and remote areas of Yunnan province.

The basic format and aims of the project were developed by the team at Dali University as a starting point to secure UK partners, through the British Council. The project scope developed by the Dali University team aimed:

1. To investigate the specific needs of English teachers in rural areas against current postgraduate course offers in selected local university colleges to seeks to identify gaps in current module provision that would specifically support teachers in rural areas. These identified gaps will inform the second part of the project;
2. To provide a bilingual, principled curriculum outline for one new core postgraduate module that can enhance and/or supplement current provision. Where possible formats should be in line with local expectation.

This initial design was further developed by the University of Warwick team and refined in collaboration with the Dali partners. The final version of the project consisted of a literature review to understand the shape and nature of pre-service teacher education in China, a needs analysis targeting teachers and teacher education students in Yunnan province and the design of a module for inclusion n the Master of Education program at Dali University. The module design consists of a curriculum overview and a teachers' guide to support teacher educators in implementing the module.

Preservice teacher education for teachers of English in China: A review of the literature

Introduction

Over the past 40 years since the introduction of China's reform and opening-up policy, China has made significant achievements in many aspects of its teacher education, including addressing the long-standing shortage of teachers and building teaching quality. In terms of the qualifications of high school teachers, the proportion of full-time teachers with master's degrees has increased from 1.8% in 2007 (Guan, 2007), to 5.0% in 2012, and to 12.4% in 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2022b). This achievement has been made largely through the introduction of Master of Education (M. Ed) programs since 1996. Liu and Qin (2017) point out that M. Ed. graduates have become an important force to promote the smooth development of the current basic education reform. In order to understand the development of M. Ed. Programs in China and some of the issues that face post-graduate education for teachers, this section will provide an overview of their development of time and review the literature that has address current problems with educational provisions and suggested possible

solutions, with special reference to programs for teachers of English. It will also briefly present an outline of pre-service teacher education for teachers of English to provide context for understanding post-graduate provision.

Pre-service English language teacher education in China

Pre-service teacher education in China may take place either in either Normal Universities, which are specialised teacher education institutions, or in other higher education institutions that may integrate teacher education pathways into other degree programs. For example, it may be the case that students undertaking a major in English will also take a sequence of education related modules in the English course that constitute a form of pre-service teacher education. Students at Normal universities are eligible to obtain teaching licences immediately upon graduation while students form other higher education institutions are able to apply for a teaching licence if they submit a certification showing they have completed credit hours in education and psychology and also pass a national teachers' qualification examination (Gong, 2018; Liu et al., 2015).

According to He (2015), the current provision of pre-service English language teacher education program in Normal universities has four main dimensions. First, pre-service language teacher education programs are required to have knowledge of the history development of teacher education and curriculum design in Western cultural contexts and be aware of the possible curriculum design implications for China. Second, the program should investigate the problems and challenges that pre-service teachers may have in course and their practical teaching experience. Third, programs should place more focus on teacher education curriculum design from practical and applied perspectives, rather than form purely theoretical perspectives. Finally, drawing on the practical teaching feedback from the primary, junior, and high school teachers, teacher education program should explore effective pedagogy and teaching strategies. This view of teacher education emphasizes practice, but this view is not always realized in pre-service programs. Cheng and Sun (2010) have argued that Normal universities in China are pursuing a process of de-normalization as part of the process of competition within higher education in China that has seen normal universities move from being specialist education universities to becoming more comprehensive universities to counter potential threats to their student pool and income. This has meant that, teacher education programs in China have been gradually abandoning parts of their traditional emphasis and putting more on theoretical courses rather than practical courses.

Currently, the program design in pre-service teacher education usually overemphasizes subject knowledge and includes insufficient training in pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills (Pei et al., 2017; Yan, 2016; Yuan, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015; Yuan & Zhang, 2017). Zhan (2008) argues that such programs fail to meet student teachers' learning needs and often have a negative effect on student teachers' self-efficacy and confidence in delivering teaching and can affect their motivation to join the language teaching profession (Pei et al., 2017; Yuan & Zhang, 2017). Moreover, the instruction on English language pedagogy is limited to the superficial engagement with theoretical knowledge. This is manifested in two regards. Firstly, the instruction usually takes a knowledge-transmission lecturing mode and treats learners as passive receivers of abstract knowledge (Pei et al., 2017; Zhan, 2008). It usually fails to recognize the influence of student teachers' prior learning history in which they have socialized into an educational culture of rote-learning, examination-oriented, and teacher-centred approaches to language teaching (Hong & Ling, 2018; Zhan, 2008), which hinders student teachers from developing a profound understanding of theories (Yan, 2016; Zhan, 2008). In

addition, the pedagogy-related courses tend to overwhelmingly focus on Western-centric theoretical knowledge and treats it as if it could be applied verbatim in the Chinese context. Pei et al. (2017) argue that such theories may be neither practical nor relevant to the local contexts until efforts are made to "glocalize" them but this work of glocalization is not a feature of most programs.

The dominant teacher-centred instructional mode may also be detrimental to student teachers' motivation for professional learning. Yuan and Zhang (2017) reported that when student teachers do not have effective scaffolding that helps them engage in depth with theoretical knowledge, many may have expectations of a negative outcome for their professional learning, and so feel worried about external constraints like exams and cynical about the feasibility of applying new theories.

The history of English M. Ed. programs in China

The development of M. Ed. programs for English teachers can be divided into two key periods. During the first period, from 1996 to 2009, the focus was on developing the qualifications of current teachers. At this time, M. Ed. programs were offered only in normal universities and only targeted at frontline schoolteachers from primary school to high school education, who were under the age of 45 and had over three years teaching experience. From 2009, however, the scope of M. Ed. Programs was expanded, and universities started to enrol a more diverse range of students, including recent graduates with bachelor's degrees alongside schoolteachers desiring to pursue a master's degree. The range of universities offered M. Ed. Degrees was also expanded and students could enrol to as a full-time or part-time students.

M. Ed. programs 1996-2009

In the early 1990s it was decided that the curriculum of pre-service education could no longer meet the needs of a developing learning society, and that the teaching content of pre-service teacher education was outdated and impractical (Zhang & Zhao, 2012). As a result, many primary and secondary school teachers failed to meet the new requirements for primary and secondary education when taking up their posts. To tackle this problem, in April 1996, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council passed a resolution to set up a master's degree in education for all subjects, and in 1997 the pilot work of enrolling students began (Liu, 2011).

Broadly speaking, the establishment of the master's degree was to meet the needs of the country's educational development by developing a new remedial mechanism for in-service training for basic education teachers to address the problem of low quality of teachers that resulted from existing basic education (Zhang & Zhao, 2012). In addition, these efforts were also believed to be beneficial for addressing the demands of a learning society and for promoting teachers' lifelong education and professional development (Lü, 2009; Wang, 2009). In particular, the M. Ed. program aimed to create high-level teachers for primary and secondary education by providing a solid theoretical foundation, and an international vision, and developing strong practical abilities (Guan, 2009).

According to Zhang and Zhao (2012), the M. Ed. program for English during this period could be characterized as practical, helping students solve the real problems of teaching and the management of basic education; as open, in that it implied cooperation with other departments providing basic education to meet the needs of students with different previous training experiences; as complex, in that it provided students with a solid understanding of teaching and pedagogy; and as being bilingual, in that it catered for students' preferences for an English-language environment. The quality of the M.

Ed. programs was seen in the extent to which they allowed in-service teacher-education students to transform themselves as practical education experts as quickly as possible after graduation.

M.Ed. programs from 2009 to the present

In the second period, the focus moved from remedy the abilities of existing teachers to a focus on the professionalisation of teachers, which was predicated on the professionalisation of teacher education (Guan, 2009). Studies of teacher quality had indicated that the English teachers trained by normal colleges were still not well equipped for their work, and the relatively low quality of teaching was identified as the biggest obstacle facing the reform of foreign language education in primary and secondary schools (Ren, 2008). Against this background, the Ministry of Education decided that starting from 2009, M. Ed programs in English language teaching would begin recruiting recent graduates from bachelor's programs (Xun, 2012). The task of the M. Ed. program was to be the development of graduates who would be high-quality primary and secondary English teachers, equipped with modern educational theories, strong education and teaching practice, and research capabilities (Academic Degrees Office of the State Council, 2009; Tang, 2016; Xun, 2012; Zhang & Wu, 2019). The focus of the M. Ed. thus moved from being in-service education to develop current teachers to a greater emphasis on pre-service provision to prepare teachers to enter the workforce.

There is evidence in the literature that the revision has had some success in establishing new models of teacher education which have the potential to create a solid foundation for long-term development of a professional master's degrees in education into the future (Zhang et al., 2014). Liu and Qin (2017) argue that during this period, the many of the problems of the previous education programs have begun to be addressed including the over-emphasis on academic rather than practice-focused learning, with an emphasis on theory rather than practice. However, despite the achievements for far, research has also identified some problems associated with the M. Ed in English programs. Xun (2012) concluded from a survey that problems with English language learning during the M. Ed in English programs has led to the lack of confidence among pre- service teachers. In addition, a large body of literature has critiqued the current course design of M. Ed in English programs at various universities because of an imbalance between academic content, English language development, and teaching-focused courses, a failure to cater for the variability of their students' learning preferences and academic backgrounds, and a lack of training in educational research methodologies (Lei & Chen, 2020; Wu, 2019; Xun, 2012; Yang, 2013; Zhang & Wu, 2019).

Problems in existing provision in M. Ed. in English Language Teaching

The problems of current programs that have been identified in literature mainly cover the four issues: course design, pedagogy, practicum, and assessment, and resources.

Course design

In M. Ed. in English Language Teaching (M. Ed. ELT), students are expected not only to have a good command of the knowledge and skills required for teaching, but also to develop the ability to integrate subject knowledge with academic research. However, many studies have reported that language teacher education programs have largely not changed in the past decades and have not sufficiently and effectively responded to the new demands of the globalized era and of curriculum reform (Pei et al., 2017; Yan, 2016; Zhan, 2008). The problems identified in literature about the course design for the M. Ed. ELT include:

- A limited emphasis on language modules
  It is a prerequisite for an English teacher to have a good command of English language (Bachman, 1990). However, research on post-graduate teacher education for teachers of English has indicated that there is limited emphasis on language development in current course design for M. Ed. ELT. According to Zhang and Wu (2019), M. Ed. students believe that the current design fails to meet their needs for developing integrated English language abilities due to the imbalance between education modules and language modules, with too much emphasis on education modules and too little on language modules. In particular, students are concerned that the current courses do not help them to achieve their goal in developing their oral English ability (Xun, 2012).

- A lack of accommodation to students of different backgrounds
  The backgrounds of students who pursue a degree in M. Ed in English language teaching vary. They can be recent graduates with a bachelor's degree in English or another majors, and they may include both experienced English teachers and those with no previous experience. It is, therefore, imperative to have a course design that is flexible enough to cater for their significantly different needs. Recent graduates from English programs need basic pre-service education to help them become teachers of English. Graduates from other majors need both pre-service teacher education and significant language development. Experienced teachers need to deepen their understanding a theory and practice. However, studies have shown very few of the M. Ed in English language teaching courses currently available in China have differentiated offering to cater for different cohorts (Guo, 2011; Zhang & Wu, 2019).

- A gap between theory and practice
  Studies (Lei & Chen, 2020; Pei & Hou, 2019; Yang, 2013) have shown that despite the progress in the development of the M.Ed. ELT program in recent years, the gap between theory and practice in teacher education is still a frequent problem, indicating that a key goal of the recent forms is not being met by these programs. There is evidence that take many theory courses, the meaning and purposes of which they do not appreciate, and have few opportunities to consider how theory is relevant to teaching practice or to develop practical teaching abilities (Lei & Chen, 2020). Another factor that relates to the gap between theory and practice is a gap between what is taught in educational programs and the requirements for classroom teaching (Pei & Hou, 2019).

An absence of attention on (practitioner) research

As mentioned above, one of the purposes for establishing M.Ed. ELT programs was to develop high quality primary and secondary English language teachers with research abilities that they could draw on to develop their own practice. This emphasis on research is also one of the key characteristics that distinguish Master-level programs in teacher education from undergraduate programs (Liu & Qin, 2017). It is therefore essential to develop students' engagement with research and their research skills, including reading and reflecting on research. Developing students' capacity to read research, in particular, has received significant attention in the research literature on teacher education in China. Meng and Chen (2016) argue that teachers' engagement with research reading is a prerequisite for teachers to be able to participate in research. Liu and Ma (2000) argue that teachers' engagement in research reading will not only have a positive impact on their own learning but will also have an

influence their future students. However, research has pointed out that there is an absence of a focus on research, especially practitioner research, in the current M.Ed. ELT programs (Meng & Chen, 2016; Zhang & Wu, 2019).

Pedagogy

In the climate of the globalization and internationalization, there has been a concern among language teacher educators and researchers about whether English language teachers have the requisite level of proficiency and competence to help learners develop the ability to engage in communication in the global economy (Hong & Ling, 2018). Meanwhile, the nation-wide reform in English language education also places more emphasis on language learners' practical abilities, especially the ability to use English to communicate effectively (Pei et al., 2017; Zhan, 2008). The latest English Language Curriculum Standards issued by Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2022a) advocates for a student-centred approach to English language teaching and places a great emphasis on students' capability of using and practising English productively as a means for communication. It requires the ability for teachers to go beyond the traditional teacher-centred knowledge-transmission model of teaching to the constructivist approach to language teaching and learning (Zhan, 2008). These changes, in turn, present a need for pre-service language teacher education programs to develop in student teachers the ability to implement the new syllabus.

Research on students' views of the M.Ed. ELT programs indicates that the majority of students are not satisfied with how they are being taught during the program, with 80% of the teaching is dominated by teacher-centred modes such as lecturing (Yang, 2013). Xun (2012) reports that students' preferred ways of learning are more student-centred, such as discussion, combining theory learning with hands-on learning; sharing knowledge between students, with comments from the teacher, and observations of teaching practice. The teacher-centred approach of education programs also contributes to the gap between theory and practice in the M.Ed. ELT programs as schoolteachers are required to adopt more student-centred modes of teaching.

Practicum

It is stated in the official teaching guidelines for M.Ed. ELT programs that the time for practicum should be over half a year to prepare the students for the teaching profession (National Steering Committee for Postgraduate Education for Professional Degrees in Education, 2017). However, studies of students' experience suggest that the requirement has not been well implemented in programs (Xun, 2012; Yang, 2013; Ye et al., 2019), with only very limited research reporting students' positive feedback on their practicum experience (Yin, et al., 2019). Overall, the findings reveal that the nature and management of the practicum is highly variable and that there are a number of issues that affect the overall quality of the practicum. First, there may be no arrangements in place for students to undertake a practicum or the arrangements in place may not function well (J. Xie, 2011; Xun, 2012). Secondly, there may be problems with the management and supervision of the practicum, with students report a lack of supervision and overall management of their practicum experience (Wu, 2019; Xun, 2012; Yang, 2013). Thirdly, the practicum may be a very constrained experience. Studies have identified institutional challenges, including limited opportunities for to pre-service teachers to teach during the practicum (as opposed to observing), and a lack of autonomy in classroom teaching that constrains the pre-service teacher experimentation with their own ideas and approaches. The practicum may also be overshadowed by the heavy academic coursework that may not connect well to the reality

of the schools and classrooms (Lei & Chen, 2020; Xun, 2012; Ye et al., 2019). Finally, there may be problems with the overall quality of the practicum experience because the practicum is viewed as a formality to satisfy graduation requirements, rather than being viewed as a central part of teacher education (Tang, 2016; Xun, 2012).

Assessment and resources

Other problems identified for the current M.Ed. ELT programs include the lack of comprehensive system for assessing teacher education students and insufficient academic resources to support students' learning and development. One study of students' views on the current assessment system (Yang, 2013) reveals that over half of the students surveyed were not satisfied due to the gap between institution's assessment regulations and the actual assessment practice, and students' lack of involvement in the designing the assessment, which is determined by the teachers. In terms of academic resources available for masters students, most libraries in Chinese universities only have access to databases of literature in Chinese, and access to professional journals and books in English is limited and hard for students to access online (Wu, 2019). The situation reported in the literature is not in consistent with the requirements specified by National Steering Committee for Postgraduate Education for Professional Degrees in Education (2017), which states that students in M.Ed. ELT programs should have a total reading allocation of no less than 150 thousand words of reading in English.

Conclusion

A number for key issues for teacher education in the study of M.Ed. ELT programs across China and the research to date reveals a situation in which education programs focus on theory rather than practice and do not adequately articulate with the needs of teachers in schools. The research to date has mainly focused either on China as a whole or on specific institutions and there has been little research that focuses on Yunnan, although there is evidence that the problems may be more acute in South-western China, because of wider social and economic disparities between the south-west and other areas of China, and that problems are found especially in rural and remote areas (Huang, 2018). It is therefore necessary to understand better the situation in rural and remote areas of China and to consider how teacher education can best meet the needs of future teachers.

Needs analysis

Methodology

Teacher questionnaire

Participants
A total of 102 teachers responded to the survey. Of these teachers the vast majority was female (83) and only 17 male teachers responded. Only two early career teachers identified as male (32 female). Two teachers did not record their gender. While all teachers had experience in teaching (see Table 1), the respondents ranged from less-experienced teachers (5 years or less) to very experienced teachers (more than 15 years), with the most experienced teachers reporting 31 years of teaching experience (2 teachers). Of these teachers, the most relevant are the less-experienced teachers who completed their studies recently, and these are given special attention in the following analysis.

Less-experienced 1-5 years	Experienced		Total
	6-15 years	>15 years	
34	32	36	102

Table 1: Teaching experience

Just under a third of teachers identified as members ethnic minorities (30 teachers, of whom 9 were early career teachers). This proportion reflects the overall ethnic profile of Yunnan province (Guo et al., 2015). The teachers held positions at a range of levels in the education system (see Table 2). As expected, the experienced teachers were clustered in the higher levels while the less-experienced teachers were in the lower levels. A further 5 teachers did not report teaching titles as they were working in Universities where this system did not apply.

	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
Professor senior teacher	0	1	1
Senior teacher	0	20	20
First-level teacher	0	36	36
Second-level teacher	19	8	27
Third-level teacher	0	0	0
None	12	1	13

Table 2: Teaching title

Most teachers held a bachelor degree and a smaller proportion also held a master degree (see Table 3). One experienced teacher held a doctorate.

	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
Bachelor degree	21	49	70
Master degree	13	18	31
Doctorate	0	1	1

Table 3: Qualifications

	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
Basic	1	7	8
Low intermediate	2	6	8
Intermediate	22	32	54
High intermediate	9	19	28
Advanced	0	4	4

Table 4: English proficiency

The teachers reported a range of self-assessed proficiency in English (see Table 4), with most teachers reporting intermediate level of English or higher, although with few teachers reporting advanced levels of English.

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 Dali 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 Dali 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 across a number of 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 the teachers faced in teaching English in their context. The second collected information about teachers' practices eliciting 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. It 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 Dali University team. The meetings were held online and recorded using the recording facility in the app. The focus groups lasted for about an hour on average, with the shortest taking 40 minutes and the longest 75 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 et al., 2019; Kite & Phongsavan, 2017; Lobe, 2017) with an ideal number of three to four 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. However, because of practical issues including the function of the of the online system, some focus groups ended up consisting of only two teachers. The details of the focus group participants can be seen in Table 5.

Focus group	Participant	Gender	Major	School level	Years of experience
FG1	Teacher 1	Female	English	Junior high school	2
	Teacher 2	Female	English	Junior high school	2
	Teacher 3	Female	English	Junior high school	2
FG2	Teacher 1	Male	English	Junior high school	2
	Teacher 2	Male	English	Junior high school	1
FG3	Teacher 1	Female	English	High school	2
	Teacher 2	Female	English	High school	2
FG4	Teacher 1	Female	English	High school	3
	Teacher 2	Female	English	High school	2
	Teacher 3	Female	English	High school	3
	Teacher 4	Female	English	High school	2
FG5	Teacher 1	Female	English	Junior high school	1
	Teacher 2	Female	English	Junior high school	2
	Teacher 3	Female	English	High school	2
	Teacher 4	Female	English	High school	2
	Teacher 5	Female	English	Junior high school	2
FG6	Teacher 1	Female	English	High school	0.5
	Teacher 2	Female	English	Junior high school	3

Table 5: Focus group participants

All participants were in the early stages for their teaching careers and taught at junior high school and high school levels. Most participants were female, and this reflected the gender distribution of teachers in other parts of the data collection.

Student questionnaire

Participants
The student questionnaire was distributed to students currently enrolled in a Masters-level course in English language teacher education at two universities in Yunnan province. A total of 89 participants completed the questionnaire, for these 88 were female and one was male. Most students identified as Han Chinese (66) although a sizable minority identified as belonging to ethnic minorities (23). This is consistent with the ethnic diversity of Yunnan province, where about one third of the population identify as belonging to ethnic minorities (Guo et al., 2015). A majority of students had experience as teachers of English enrolled in the M. Ed. program had experience in English language teaching before taking the course (51). The remaining students were new to English language teaching (38). The respondents planned to teach at all levels of education; primary school 16, junior high 48, senior high, 52, and University, 20. This means that the program needs to accommodation quite different levels of experience and a diverse range of teaching contexts ranging from you learners to adult learners.

The previous undergraduate studies of the respondents in show in Table 6. The majority of students had studies English in the undergraduate degrees, and of these a small proportion had previously studied English language with a focus on education. Students however came from a range of backgrounds, including non-language disciplines.

Undergraduate major	Number	Comments

English	72	Degree types:
		    English teacher education = 12
		    Business English = 5
		    Translation = 2
		    English for Academic Purposes = 2,
		    English with Burmese, Thai, Vietnamese = 1 each

Business	5	
Tourism	2	
STEM	4	
Education	3	
other	3	Majors: Nursing, Korean, Spanish
Total	89	

Table 6: Undergraduate programs of respondents

As can be seen in Table 7, most of the students chose their majors because the enjoyed the subject, although there were a number of students who had different, largely extrinsic motivations. A small number of students had less agentive reasons for choosing their majors, most of whom were 'reallocated' (调剂, 14 overall, 7 in English degrees). Reallocation is a strategy selected by students who wish to enrol in a particular university and the students are allocated to majors not listed in their preferences as a way for universities to meet quotas when supply and demand for majors do not match. (Heger, 2017). The remaining students expressed motivation such as parental choice, although none of the students enrolled in English degrees identified this as a motivation, or indicated they chose their degrees at random (both students stating this were enrolled in English degrees).

Reason	All degrees	All English degrees	All education degrees
Like the subject	39	31	
Good at the subject	12	9	
Employability	14	12	
Wanting to be a teacher	13	12	7
Non agentive reasons	14	7	
Total	92	71	7

Table 7: Reasons for choosing a major (Note: numbers are greater than 89 as some students gave more than one reason)

A minority of students chose their majors with a career in education in mind. Most of those who did choose their major with the aim of becoming a teacher were enrolled in English degrees and about half of these students were enrolled in education degrees and all but one in English language education

degrees. The majority of students entering an M. Ed. program do not therefore have education qualifications, although they may have experience in English language teaching and a minority of students do not have qualifications in either English language or education.

Data collection

The student questionnaire aimed to understand students' experiences of post-graduate study in a teacher education program. Including current students allowed the study to identify issues in current provision that influence student teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching. After collecting demographic data, the questionnaire asked students to identify three things that they thought made for a good teacher of English and to explain why they thought these were important. It then asked students to rate their confidence in enacting a number of aspects of English language teaching drawn from the teacher questionnaire. Respondents were also asked to indicate how well they felt that their post-graduate course had prepared them for these aspects. The questionnaire concluded with questions about how their course had been structured and delivered. This questionnaire was also published in bilingual form on wjx.cn and the same procedures were used for developing the questionnaire and translating it into Chinese as were used for the teachers' questionnaire.

Findings: Teacher questionnaire

Teaching context

The teachers were teaching across the full range of levels of education from primary school to university (see Table 8). Most teachers were teaching at junior high school and senior high school levels.

	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
Primary school	1	10	11
Junior high school	16	41	57
High school	17	25	42
University	3	2	5

Table 8: Level at which teaching

Most teachers reported that their average class size was large to very large, with one teacher reporting teaching classes of between 90 and 100 students on average (see Table 9).

Number of students	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
<20	1	2	3
21-40	6	3	9
41-60	12	58	83
>60	2	5	7

Table 9: Average class size

Most teachers (88, of whom 27 were less-experienced teachers) 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 10) but, the majority of teachers reported they were teaching classes where ethnic students made up more than a quarter of the class.

Proportion of ethnic minority students	Less-experienced	Experienced	Total
<10%	6	7	13
10%-25%	3	17	20
25%-50%	3	18	21
50%-75%	4	9	13
>75%	11	9	20

Table 10: Proportion of ethnic minority students

Most teachers (66) reported not having specific issues in using Mandarin in teaching ethnic minority students, with some teachers saying that their students had good levels of Chinese and one teacher saying that their ethnic students did not speak their heritage language. However, 23 teachers stated that their learners' Chinese levels was not adequate for them to understand what was happening in class. A further 7 teachers commented on students' pronunciation problems as a source of difficulty in teaching in Chinese.

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.

In responding to the language focused prompts, both groups of teachers generally indicated that they had the ability to implement all of the aspects of practice surveyed. More than 75% of all teachers indicated that they were able to address fluency and accuracy in their teaching, encourage authentic student interactions, teach grammar communicatively and integrate the macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The results here for integration, however, do not reflect the results for integration elsewhere in the questionnaire, which indicated that integrated tasks were not used frequently. The one issue where teachers were less assured in their knowledge was in developing students' real-life communication skills, even if these were not included in the textbook (67% less-experienced, 73% experienced). This may indicate that some teachers, may be reliant on the textbook to teach authentic communication.

Teachers said that they felt able to integrate cultural content into their teaching (88% from each group) but were not as confident in their ability to integrate intercultural skills into their teaching with 73% less-experienced and 79% experienced teachers agreeing. This may have consequences for the implementation of the intercultural element in the new curriculum for English.

Teachers also expressed a high level of agreement with the prompts relating to working with students with more than 75% of teachers in each group agreeing that they create opportunities for and engage

students in independent learning. Teachers appeared to be less able to address issues relating to students learning styles with 68% of less-experienced teachers and 70% of teachers saying they were able to identify students' learning styles. The responses here may relate to limitations in their ability to determine learning styles or, given that most teachers are teaching in large classes, may indicate problems in identifying learning styles in such large groups. Less-experienced teachers were less likely to agree that they could adapt their teaching to students learning styles than experienced teachers (72% less-experienced, 83% experienced).

In their responses to the items about organising classroom activities teachers indicated that they had the ability and knowledge to organise most of the activities described with over 80% of teachers in each group agreeing with the statements. Teachers were able to engage students in free and controlled practice and to move between these types of practice, they could set up and incorporate small group work in their teaching and use games as part of their overall teaching approach. Teachers expressed less ability to implement roleplays and drama with 70% of less-experienced teachers and experienced teachers saying the had the opportunity to use these techniques, and 61% of less-experienced teachers and 76% of experienced teachers expressing confidence in using roleplay and drama to promote students' learning, indicating a possible gap in the professional development. The most problematic aspect for these teachers was in teaching without the textbook, with only 34% of less-experienced teachers and 52% of experience teachers expressing enough confidence in their teaching to depart form their textbooks. This indicates that the teachers as a whole are quite dependent on textbooks for organising their teaching and that most less-experienced teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach independently.

In statements relating to their teaching context, the teachers indicated that they have adequate time to cover the curriculum teachers (88% less-experienced, 86% experienced teachers agreeing) but identified some possible constraints on their practice. Less-experience detachers seems less able to balance creativity in their teaching against the expectations of their school and peers, with only 64% of teachers stating they could do this. However. 81% of experienced teachers felt they could address this balance. A majority of teachers in both groups identified that the assessment system placed limits on their practice teachers (68% less-experienced and 71% experienced teachers agreeing)

General difficulties in teaching English

The respondents were asked to identify the main problems they faced in teaching English in their context by completing an open question asking them to identify three main issues. The issues faced by teachers showed some consistency across the range of responses with the following being the most commonly cited difficulties in rank order of frequency:

1. Lack of teacher knowledge: Lack of professional knowledge was the main issue identified by teachers, especially by less-experienced teachers, but this response spanned the continuum of experience. Sometimes this was expressed as a general lack of knowledge but often teachers identified particular issues where their knowledge was lacking. The most common issues identified were teaching grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Some teachers also identified their own lack of knowledge of English as a problem for this teaching, especially in teaching the spoken language.
2. Students lack an adequate foundation in English: this was usually expressed as a general comment on low levels of English language attainment by students and involves a criticism of

prior learning experiences of students that have not sufficiently prepared them for learning at their current level. One teacher articulated this as a conflict between students' existing levels of English and lack of time to develop their knowledge to meet the needs of their current level.

学生基础太差，需要从零开始，但是教学时间没有那么多，导致高中教学过程艰难 Students' foundation is so poor that they need to start from scratch, but there is not that much teaching time, which makes the teaching process difficult in high school. (T99)

3. System factors: Some teachers expressed constraints imposed by the current education system as problems for their teaching. These included the exam-oriented education, which was in conflict with teaching needs or teaching resources, a general lack of control over curriculum, and large class sizes.
4. Students' lack of motivation: lack of motivation or interest in learning English was indicated as a widespread problem for teachers.
5. Classroom management: teachers did not usually expand on the nature of classroom management problems, although a small number of teachers indicated problems in dealing with disruptive students.
6. Lack of learner autonomy: Teachers commented on a general language of learner autonomy usually in the form of taking responsibility of their own learning and working independently outside the classroom.
7. Students' passivity: Some teachers indicate that students were passive in class and that it was difficult to create an active learning environment.
8. Lack of suitable teaching resources
9. Problems in providing differentiated learning: teachers expressed problems in teaching to classes where students had different levels of English, and in designing in-class and homework tasks for students at different levels.

Although the most commonly cited problem for teachers was their lack of professional knowledge, most of the factors identified by teachers are factors external to the teachers themselves, either student factors such as students' lack of prior learning, their motivation, their lack of autonomy and their passivity or situation factors, such as the educational culture or lack of resources.

Teachers' 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). As the teachers rarely used the end points of the scale, the results were grouped as never/rarely, sometimes and often/very often.

Writing
The results for writing showed that teachers practice focused on only a part of the range of activities presented in the questionnaire (see
Appendix 2). The most frequently used writing tasks reported by the most teachers as being used often or very often were workbook/worksheet exercises (71% less-experienced, 83% experienced), grammar/structure-based exercises (71% less-experienced, 77% experienced) and exam paper questions (74% less-experienced, 86% experienced). Textbook exercises were also reported as being

used often or very often by a large proportion of the teachers, but their use differed across the two groups, with 81% or experienced teachers using these often or very often but only 58% of less-experienced teachers, indicating that the latter group may be less reliant on textbooks than their more experienced peers. Communicative and meaning-focused writing tasks were used much less. The most used communicative task was letter writing, used often or very often by 52% less-experienced teachers and, 51% experienced teachers, with shorter texts activities, such as texts for electronic and social media being less used (44% less-experienced, 49% experienced). Other communicative texts were much less used: stories or poems (14% less-experienced, 19% experienced), essay writing (35% less-experienced, 30% experienced), writing games (18% less-experienced, 23% experienced). Integrated writing activities were little used by less-experienced teachers with 35% saying they used them rarely or never and only 26% using them often or very often. Experienced teachers used these more (46% using them often or very often).

Reading

Both groups of teachers made frequent use of reading comprehension tasks (72% less-experienced, 86% experienced) and pre-reading tasks (73% less-experienced, 75% experienced); see Appendix 3. Experienced teachers often used reading aloud tasks (81% reporting using them often or very often), but this was less likely to be used by less-experienced teachers (55% using them often or very often). The least used tasks were reading games (42% less-experienced, 42% experienced) and reading authentic materials (25% less-experienced, 42% experienced). The very much smaller proportion of less-experienced teacher s using authentic materials suggest that these teachers may have difficulties locating and/or using such materials.

Speaking

In teaching speaking (see

Appendix 4), the majority of teachers stated that they did various forms of controlled practice in the classroom often or very often, but that were less likely to carry out free and communicatively oriented speaking tasks. The most common task-types that were used often or very often across the teachers were whole class drilling (59% less-experienced, 83% experienced), individual practice (50% less-experienced, 67% experienced), pronunciation practice (50% less-experienced, 59% experienced), and homework/self-study tasks (63% less-experienced, 83% experienced). The tasks that were used never or rarely were free discussions and debates (40% less-experienced, 32% experienced), speaking games (40% less-experienced, 38% experienced), presentations (56% less-experienced, 42% experienced), online assignments (65% less-experienced, 58% experienced), and individual target setting (41% less-experienced, 33% experienced). Overall, less experienced teachers seemed to use all task types less frequently than their experienced colleagues and this may indicate that there was less focus on speaking activities in their classrooms.

Listening

The listening tasks (see Appendix 5) that were most commonly reported by teachers as being used often or very often dictation (81% less-experienced, 70% experienced), and pre-listening tasks (84% less-experienced, 66% experienced), with listening and note-taking also being used frequently (65% less-experienced, 68% experienced). Listening games (42% less-experienced, 44% experienced) and integrated listening activities (34% less-experienced, 49% experienced) were less likely to be used.

Viewing

Viewing is a relatively recent addition to China's curriculum for English language teaching and teachers were asked about their teaching of the types of multimodal texts named in the new curriculum document (see Appendix 6). Of these text types only video and animation were taught often or very often in class by a majority of teachers: video (65% less-experienced, 58% experienced), animation (52% less-experienced, 43% experienced). Animation was, however, less likely to be taught frequently by experienced teachers. Other text types were not widely taught, with tables, charts and diagrams not taught frequently or often by the majority of teachers: with tables (31% less-experienced, 46% experienced), charts (26% less-experienced, 27% experienced), diagrams (19% less-experienced, 23% experienced). This indicates that teachers of English in Yunnan are likely to need more support in implementing the curriculum for viewing.

Language knowledge

A majority of teachers said that focusing on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation was something that they did often or very often (see Appendix 7): grammar (67% less-experienced, 84% experienced), (80% less-experienced, 88% experienced), (70% less-experienced, 75% experienced). These results suggest that teachers had a very strongly code-focused view of language learning.

Resources

Teacher used the full range of resources outline in the questionnaire, but some resources were used by most teachers and others were used by only a few (see Appendix 8). Moreover, there were different patterns of use between experienced and less-experienced teachers. The most used resources were textbooks – 94% less-experienced, 81% experienced used these often or very often. Some experienced teachers claimed to use textbooks rarely or never, but all less-experienced teachers used them at least sometimes. Although textbooks were widely used, teachers used the accompanying teachers' guides less frequently and less-experienced teachers were less likely to use these often (66% less-experienced, 74% experienced). Teachers also frequently used workbooks (76% less-experienced, 74% experienced teachers using them often or very often. This demonstrates a very text-based approach to resources. Most teachers also used white/blackboards often or very often (84% less-experienced, 82% experienced) and most also used smartboards (79% less-experienced, 76% experienced). Almost all teachers reported using these, indicating wide-spread access to such equipment for teachers in Yunnan schools.

For other technology-based resources, there is considerable variation and a general tendency for less-experienced teachers to sue these more frequently than experienced teachers. Commonly used technological resources included video, which was used often or very often by 77% of less-experienced teachers and 60% of experienced teachers. Twenty percent of experienced teachers reported using video never or rarely, which is surprising given the inclusion of viewing in the Chinese curriculum for English. All less-experienced teachers reported using video at least sometimes. Audio was generally less used than video with 64% of less-experienced teachers and 51% or experienced teachers using audio often or very often. Again, some experienced teachers did make much use of audio (16% never or rarely) while all less-experienced teachers used audio at least sometimes. The internet and social media were used more frequently by less-experienced teachers than by experienced teachers, 81% and 62% of teachers respectively reporting using internet resources often or very often and 75% and 56% reporting using social media often or very often. Twenty-one percent of experienced teachers reported using social media never or rarely. These differences seem to reflect a generational difference in

technology use between the two groups. Other devices were used less often. Mobile phones were used often or very often by 48% of less-experienced teachers and 53% of experienced teachers, with 33% of less-experienced teachers and 16% of experienced teachers reporting using them rarely or never. Given the high penetration of mobile phone ownership and use among children and adolescents in China (Duan et al., 2021), this may be a missed opportunity for supporting language learning. Use of other technologies is limited 39% or less-experienced teachers and 44% of experience teachers reported using laptops often or very often, with 33% and 16% respectively reporting using them seldom or never. This may be a issue of access to the technology because children are less likely to own a laptop and more likely to use a mobile phone to access the internet (Duan et al., 2021). Resources developed by teachers tend to be less used: 24% of less-experienced teachers rarely or never used self-produced handouts, compared to 14% of experienced teachers, 47% and 55% rarely or never used self-produced audio resources, and 45% and 60% never or rarely used self-produced videos.

Teachers' knowledge/abilities

A further set of prompts asked teachers to identify their knowledge and ability to implement a aspects of their teaching. The responses were rated on a four-point scale (Strongly disagree-disagree-agree-strongly agree). As teachers did not frequently use the end points for most questions, these categories were collapsed into two (disagree-agree).

Classroom management
Teachers in both groups expressed good abilities to manage classrooms (see

Appendix 9), even though this was one of the issues that emerged in the general as a problem for teachers. This mismatch may be explained by the way that classroom management was understood in each section. The questions about classroom management in this section of question were largely about managing teaching and learning activities whereas the problems expressed in the earlier part of the question were more oriented to managing students' behaviour. This suggest that teachers largely have the ability to organise their classes but may need further support in dealing with behavioural issues. While most items in this part of the questionnaire received 90% agreement or more, there were a small number of issues that emerged as more problematic. One issue that teachers felt did impact on them was the assigned textbook which more than half of the teachers in each group felt limited their ability to promote authentic communication (55% less-experienced, 68% experienced) indicating problems with the design of the textbooks being used in schools. The lower result for less-experienced teachers may also indicate they are more guided by the textbook than more experienced teachers as a way of compensating for their lower levels of experience. The other question relating to promoting authentic communication also scored lower among broth groups as a large minority stated they did not possess the skills to promote authentic communication (23% less-experienced, 22% experienced).

Assessment
Overall, most teachers expressed an ability to manage all aspects of assessment (see

Appendix 10) with most items receiving agreement from at least 75% of teachers in both groups. The exceptions to this were knowing how to use portfolios, where only 66% of less-experienced teachers and 77% of experienced teachers reported agreement, although this may reflect the fact that portfolios are not widely used for assessing English in China (Zhang, 2009). On interesting finding for assessment is that for a number of items the results show that more of the less-experienced teachers stated they knew how to use some assessment forms than experienced teachers and even where differences were small more of the less-experienced teachers tended state they possessed knowledge about assessment items. The largest difference was found for knowing how to assess real-life communicative ability (84% less-experienced, 67% experienced). There was also a large difference for using assessment to motivate students (91% less-experienced, 84% experienced). Differences were also found for items related to formative assessment – understanding how to use formative assessment (88% less-experienced, 80% experienced) and knowing how to use formative and summative assessment effectively (81% less-experienced, 73% experienced) and to a lesser extent peer assessment (81% less-experienced, 77% experienced). These differences may reflect developments in the teaching of assessment in teacher education programs.

Technology

Teachers did not express problems in using technology in their English language teaching with more than 80% of all teachers expressing agreement with all questions (see results in Appendix 11). Both experienced and less-experienced teachers produced similar results, although the experienced teachers expressed less agreement with the statement that their teacher education program had assisted them to think deeply about using technology. This difference may reflect changes over time in the inclusion of technology in teacher education programs.

Resources

Participants were also asked about their ability to develop their own materials

A majority of teachers reported that they had time to make their own materials, but fewer experienced teachers felt that they had time for this (78% less-experienced, 62% experienced). This indicates that for many teachers time pressure may be a reason for not developing their own materials. Teachers also reported that they had a suitable knowledge base for developing material with around 80% of each group agreeing with the more general knowledge-related statements. However, about two thirds of teachers in both groups felt less able to adapt textbook materials to promote authentic communication, although this could be more a comment on the textbooks than on teachers' knowledge per se. Both groups also felt less able to develop materials that promoted fluency rather than accuracy (77% less-experienced, 62% experienced) and this may indicate a gap in knowledge.

Reflective practice and professional development

The final set of questions related to teachers' experiences of professional development (see Appendix 13). Teachers in both groups generally agreed with all of the issues raised in the reflective practice and professional development dimensions of the questionnaire. They expressed strong levels of knowledge with most aspects of professional development, but there were three areas in which both groups of teachers expressed less agreement, and which seem to indicate problems for a considerable minority of teachers. These areas are knowing which journals to read to support their professional development (74% less-experienced, 79% experienced), knowing what opportunities exist for professional

development outside their own institutions (77% less-experienced, 79% experienced), engaging in research and classroom enquiry (77% both groups), and being able to present at professional conferences (66% less-experienced, 58% experienced). Not all teachers reported being supported by their schools in attending professional development conferences (81% less-experienced, 77% experienced) although this was a minority. The results show that the teachers were able to learn from their colleagues and from examining their own practice but were less able to identify and access professional learning outside their institutions.

Gaps in the teacher education program

Teachers were asked to identify the elements of their teacher education preparation that were most useful for supporting their career as future teachers. The teachers identified a range of different courses that they felt were useful, but a small number of topics recurred throughout the data.

- English language courses were the most commonly identified component of their studies in preparing them to become teachers. A small number of teachers included education-related courses along with English, but the majority of students indicating English was the most important component listed only English. This shows that many teachers felt that what was most important for them in becoming teachers was developing their knowledge of English. This emphasis on English could potentially have been affected by the available educational pathways for teachers as some teachers in the study may not have completed undergraduate or graduate studies with an educational component.
- Courses in pedagogy and instructional design were the second most commonly cited dimension of their teacher education that the teachers thought had prepared them well for their future work. This demonstrates an appreciate of practice focused courses in their preparation to become teachers.
- Practicum: The emphasis on practice-focused courses is also reflected in the citing of various aspects of the practicum as the third most useful contribution to their studies. In particular, participants nominated working alongside other teachers in schools and micro-teaching as the main things they valued in their practical work.
- The fourth most commonly nominated course was (educational) psychology.

A small number of participants (10) were not convinced that their university studies had prepared them for their future as teachers of English, mostly giving minimal responses such as 无 [none] as their answer; Participant T77 stated 感觉基本没用 [Feels basically useless]. It is difficult to interpret these findings as they may suggest that the participants did not feel that their studies had contributed to their development of teachers or that the participants had not received educational courses in their university programs.

The teachers were also asked what they thought was missing in their teacher education programs. The elements they identified have a strong overall with the elements that were identified by other teachers as being useful for their development and this overlap indicates an overall lack of consistency in teachers' professional development.

- The most commonly identified lack in teachers' preparation for teaching was educational content. This was often expressed in terms of pedagogy, but often the responses were more specific than those in which participants identified useful components. Preparation for the

teaching of speaking and listening were often identified as gaps in teacher preparation. The lack of practically relevant material was also identified as a gap with many of the participants wanting content that they could apply directly in class. Teachers also identified a lack of focus on how to teach the required curriculum.

- The second most commonly identified gap was English language development. The participants were especially focused on the lack of development of speaking, although all components of language were mentioned.

- Managing student-related issues was the third most commonly identified gap. These comments mainly dealt with three dimensions of teachers' work with students. The first of these involved dealing with psychological issues relating to students. A second issue was managing classroom behaviour, including developing good relations between students and teachers in the classroom. A third issue relates to motivating students in their language learning. These issues overlap with psychology, which was identified as a useful component previously, as the following quote indicates:

建议重点开设教育心理学，教我们处理学生的心理问题，与学生相处的技巧等 It is recommended to focus on educational psychology, teaching us to deal with students' psychological problems, skills to get along with students, etc. (T100)

- The next most widely cited lack was practicum, and again this was identified as a useful component elsewhere in the questionnaire. The fact that this is identified as both a strength and a weakness of teacher preparation probably relates to the different pathways for entry into English teaching, with some students coming from degrees with no educational content.

- The remaining two issues identified as gaps were not mentioned in students' descriptions of useful content, indicating that these could be considerable gaps in provision. The first of these is cultural content relating to the English-speaking world and the second is using technology in the classroom.

In discussing their professional development after entering teaching, participants in the focus groups indicated that there is often a need to learn by themselves as a process of trial and error.

Researcher: 有什么样的改革帮助当地教师？就是什么样的改善是最能帮助当地这个教师英语？ What kind of reforms are there to help local teachers? What kind of improvement can best help this local English teacher?

T2: 我觉得。我觉得就是给我们派个师傅吧。像我们现在，像我们现在是没有那种。之前在一中的时候，我听说他们学校是有那种，就是结对子，老带新的那种，但是我们现在我们这个学校它是没有这种。这种的没有老带新这一项的，所以我觉得这个太需要了。I think. I think it's just sending us a mentor. Like we are now, like we are now we don't have that kind of thing. When I was in my first junior high school before I heard that they had that kind of school. I've heard that they do have a pairing of the old and the new, but we don't have that in our school now. There's no such thing as the old taking on the new. So I think this is so needed.

Researcher: 你们就进去以后自己。都然后自己。 You just go in and do it yourselves. All by yourselves.

T2: 自己摸索，对，都是一直自己在摸索。You're on your own, yes, you're on your own all the time.

This teacher talks about the need for mentoring of new teachers by more experienced teachers but says that such mentoring is not available, and the result is that teachers have to learn by themselves. This

sense of needing to learn as one goes was echoed by many of the focus group participants and also was mentioned in the surveys. While participants acknowledge the possibilities of learning from more experienced teachers, there was a sense that this was not possible for all participants given the time pressures of teachers in schools. Moreover, where recently graduated teachers' beliefs about good language teaching did not conform to those of the more experienced teachers in their school. While learning from more experienced peers can be useful, it can also work as a way of perpetuating existing ways of teaching rather than encouraging innovation.

Findings: Teachers focus groups

The focus groups identified a number of key problems in English language classrooms that teachers felt they were not well-equipped to manage. Three areas of particular need were identified by teachers students' lack of prior learning, their motivational problems, and their classroom behaviour.

Responding to students' lack of prior learning

In each of the focus groups teachers discussed the limited foundation in English of their students and identified this as the main problem they face in their teaching. For example, one high school teacher commented that she encountered students at high school who had not studied English in junior high school:

Extract 1: FG1, T3

> 是他们的基础确实很差，有的人就是我曾经问过一个同学，我说同学你什么时候开始学英语的，他跟我说，老师我高中才开始学。然后他连初中英语单词对，他连 26 个字母都没办法背全。their foundation is really poor, some people are-, I once asked a classmate, I said classmate when did you start learning English, he told me, teacher, I only started to learn in high school. Then he couldn't even memorize all 26 letters in junior high school English.

However, teachers at Junior High schools also expressed similar problems indicating that the problem existed across levels of education:

Extract 2: FG2: T2

> 然后学生呢？比较差，基本素质比较低，因为他们小学是没有接受过英语教育的，他们到了初中，初中初一七年级才是零基础开始。And then the students are relatively poor. The basic quality is relatively low, because they have not received English education in primary school, and they have reached junior high school, and the first year seventh grade of junior high school is the beginning from zero foundation.

There is thus a perception among the teachers that each level of education is failing to prepare students for the next. This reflects comments from the questionnaires, which also identified low levels of prior achievement as a significant problem for teachers.
The teachers indicated that this low level of prior achievement was especially related to the context of their schools in rural and remote areas.

Extract 3: FG1, T1

> 因为我们作为山区学校，其实学生基础比较差，然后同时学习成绩出不来的原因，我们做了一些思考，是觉得学生的这个单词基础不够 because we are a school in the

mountain region, in fact, the student base is relatively poor, and then at the same time this is the reason they cannot get academic results. We have done some thinking, and we think that the student's word foundation is not enough.

The students felt that they were left with the weaker students in these schools and that better students had options to attend other schools, with the weaker remnant coming to local schools.

Extract 4: FG3

> Researcher: 就是就是你认为好的都到咱们这个学校来了是不是？You think the good ones are coming to our school, right?
> T1: 对，其实这个县中里面的这个县中，他的生源其实也不是很好。好的全部去市里面了，都是去就是里面的那些高中，我们是称也是真的惨。Yes, in fact, in this county, the student population is actually not very good. All the good ones go to the city, they are all going into those high schools, and we say that it was is miserable.
> T2: 我们也一样。So do we

In responding to the low level of students, teachers need to modify their teaching to their teaching to the level of students by omitting parts of the required curriculum:

Extract 5: FG3

> T1: 我就是根据我们我这两个班的特点，因为他们基础比较差，一开始的话就是会，从比较简单的开始讲。基本那种难的语法的话，基本我是能跳过了就跳过了，然后就会讲一些单词，讲一些句子，然后基本都是挑容易的来说的。I'm just going to base this on the characteristics of my two classes. Well, no, I just based it on the characteristics of our two classes, because they have a poor foundation, and the first thing I do is start with the simple ones. Basically, if the grammar s difficult, I can skip it, and then I will talk about some words, and some sentences, and then basically pick the easy ones.
> Researcher: 这样学生更容易。This makes it easier for students.
> T1: 对。Right.
> Researcher: 咳。好，然后所以这也是一种经验吧，你觉得。讲或者也不能说不会讲，就是你觉得就是你讲的学生可能会听不懂。导致由于你缺乏经验呢，还是说由于我们这个，这个比如说以前上学课程培训的不够？Cough. Okay, and then so that's kind of the experience, right, you think. You can't say that you will speak or not you think that the students won't understand what you are talking about. Is this due to your lack of experience, or is it because you, for example, didn't have enough training in the previous school courses?
> T1: 两个都有吧。Let's say both.

For this teacher, responding to students who do not have the necessary background is problematic because she is inexperienced and because she was not supported in working with such students in her previous studies. Another teacher felt that her students' lack of prior learning made any form of innovation impossible in her teaching. Another teacher argued that this process of simplification is itself problematic.

Extract 6: FG4 T4

> 因为我觉得如果是学生好的话，比如说像你进行一个课堂，你可以把很多的时间交给他们，让他们自己弄出来。但是如果是学生基础太长，期把时间放给他们，

他们根本就进进行不下去，所以这也是很矛盾的一个点。在教学过程中你是想着说要把这个课堂是要教给学生的。但是，由于他们基础太差了，如果你把单纯交给他们，他们根本就没有按照你自己的想法说，让他们完成这个任务就完成这个。最简单的例子就是，讲述那个阅读的时候那个每个段落其实是先让他们先有一个整体的把握的话是要先看，但是好多学生在我们这些学校，他们的基础特别差，然后单纯的词汇都是很大的问题，那这种情况下把如果把课堂全部教给他们，或者是大部分的时间交给他们的话。对一个课堂来说，这节课其实对他来说就是废的，我觉得。Because I think if the students are good, for example, if you conduct a class, you can give them a lot of time and let them get done on their own but if the students have too weak a foundation, if you give them the time they simply can't do it. This is a very contradictory point. In the process of teaching, you are thinking that you are going to teach this class to students. However, because they have so poor a base, if you simply give it to them, they simply don't do it according to your own idea of letting them complete this task. The simplest example is that when they're reading a paragraph you actually get them have a grasp of the whole first, it is necessary to look at it first, but many students in our schools, because their foundation is particularly poor, then simply the vocabulary is a big problem, then in this case, you teach it in class, or most of the time is given to it. For the class, this lesson is actually a waste for him, I think.

For this teacher, responding to the students' needs means that the teacher cannot allow students to work autonomously because they do not have the ability to do learn independently. As a result, instead of doing tasks as she would wish, she spends her time giving basic support, with the result that she feels the lesson time is wasted.

Extract 7: FG3 T2

我这边的话，如果要实施这种新方法，如果是在我的学校，那我的这些，老教师倒是也还是有的，有两个三有三个吧，我们组，我们组有三个老教室，有十几个人，有三个老教师，他们还是挺支持这种。就你进行一个变革，你提出新方法，他们是非常支持的，但是呢，问题就在于，我觉得我们的学生基础太差了，根本实施不了什么新方法，完全就只能按照老一套的那种去教他们拿分，教他们做题。只能这样子，搞什么新方法，新方法这种不适合我的学生，太差了，真的基础太差了。From my point of view, if I want to implement a new method, if it's in my school then my old teachers are still there, there are two, three, three, right, there are a dozen people, and we have three old classrooms and there are three older teachers. I f you want to make a change, if you propose a new method, they are very supportive, but the problem is that I think our student base is too poor, you can't implement new methods an only teach them the same old way to get marks and to do problems. It can only be like this, what new methods, new methods are not suitable for my students, they are too poor, they have a really poor foundation. (FG3T2)

This teacher appears to believe that newer methods of teaching can only be applied with capable students and that the only way to teach her students is to persist with older methods that will help them get marks on exams.

Overall, the teachers in the focus group felt little able to support students where their existing level of language ability and the curriculum they were required to teach did not match and believes that they did not have the knowledge or experience to be able to teach students in an effective way. The ways that the comments are framed suggest that the problem lies in reconciling the students' level with the

needs of the curriculum for their stage in education (junior high school or high school) and this suggest that the dominating consideration here is teaching the curriculum and perhaps the assigned textbooks rather than building on students' existing levels. These difficulties may reflect issues from the questionnaire such as problems in designing one's own materials and a general heavy reliance on pre-existing resources.

Developing students' motivation

The teachers in the focus groups raised students' motivation and how to motivate students as a frequent topic. There was a perception that students in rural and remote areas did not see a central rationale for studying English as there seems to be no connection to their students' realities and futures.

Extract 8: FG1 T1

> 我会想研究首先第一个如何提高学生的英语兴趣，就像刚刚老师说的，很多学生其实现在因为她们总觉得，特别是这些山区孩子们，他们就觉得学了英语对他们来说没有作用，他们以后也不用讲英语，你学过数学，至少还可以，可能你买东西的时候可以计算一下怎么样的，但是他们觉得学英语对他们来说毫无作用。I would like to study first how to improve students' interest in English, as the teacher just said, many students actually now always think, especially these mountain children, they think that learning English is useless for them, they don't need to speak English in the future. If you have learned mathematics, at least it's okay, maybe you can calculate when you buy something, but they feel that learning English is useless for them.

Moreover, teachers feel that students are demotivated because of their low levels of English and would prefer to study something where they are more likely to succeed. One teacher compared studying English with studying Japanese, and feels that students are more motivated to learn Japanese

Extract 9: FG6 T1

> 对，确实。他们高考现在就是可以选择学学日语了嘛，就好多同学都已经去学日语去了，大部分他觉得英他觉得英语就是学学的学不走的，然后实在是不感兴趣的，他就会去选择日语去了。Yes, indeed. They can now choose to learn Japanese in the college entrance examination, and many students have gone to learn Japanese. Most of them think that English is something they can't learn, and then they are really not interested, and they will go to choose Japanese.

Teachers also report that students may have other priorities than English in their studies and are more likely to focus on these priorities than on English.

Extract 10: FG1T2

> 那我现在教授的班级是属于就音体美班级，特色班的学生。然后就是他们的学习情况，就是属于，不是很有上进心，因为他们基础比较差嘛，可能就是心里面特别恐惧，也讨厌这个科目，恐惧这个科目，所以我觉得我最想改变的应该是帮助这些学生，就是让他们不要再害怕英语这个科目，然后提高英语，英语这样子。然后还有之前刚才方老师说到的一点，就是她说可能三五年之后选选择考调吗？我觉得这也是我的一个一个，像应该说是人生目标吧，因为比如说考去城里，肯定各种生活方面都方方便一点，我觉得。The class I am teaching now is for students in a special class in audio, physical education, and aesthetics. Then there is their learning situation, that is, they belong- they are not very self-motivated, because their foundation is

relatively poor. It may be that they are particularly afraid in their hearts, and they hate this subject, and they are afraid of this subject. So, I think what I want to change most should be to help these students, that is, let them stop being afraid of the Subject of English, and then improve their English.

According to this teacher, students' lack of motivation also interacts with their low level of prior achievement making English an especially problematic subject. She expresses a desire to know how to improve students' motivation and this desire was frequently articulated by the teachers.

Extract 11: FG1 T2

我每天，就是每天上他们班课之前，都特别再特别头疼，都在想我这节课该用什么方法，来吸引他们的注意，因为有些同学就是他听不懂，他听不懂他就不想上课。就是这样，那么我刚才收，我每天都在该用什么方法来提起他们的兴趣呢？我马上就要，比如说马上期末考了，那怎么办呢？他们他们的成绩怎么提高呢？就每天最头疼，最头疼的就是这个问题。Every day, before I go to class, I have a special headache, I am wondering what I should use in this lesson to attract their attention, because some students just cannot understand. They cannot understand and they do not want to go to class. That's how it is. So, what method I should use every day to raise their interest? I For example, soon it will be the final exams, then should I do? How do I improve their grades? It's the biggest headache every day. The biggest headache is this problem.

This teacher expresses the idea that motivating here students is the biggest issue she faces as a teacher of English using the metaphor of a headache, which was also used in the same context by Teacher 1 in focus group 6. Moreover, the teacher feels she needs to motivate students in order to improve their chances of getting good grades. Given that passing exams has been cited as a main goal of students of English (Chen et al., 2005; Q. Xie, 2011), the need to motivate students even to achieve this goal is significant.

It appears that teachers believe that addressing motivational issues is a part of their role, but not one that they feel they have been equipped to deal with and that they need much more support in working with demotivated students and finding ways to motivate them.

Managing students' behaviour

Managing student behavior in the classroom emerged as an issue in the questionnaires and was taken up by the teachers in the focus groups as well. These teachers raised the issue of managing students both in and out of the classroom a number of times referring to behavioral issues that were sometimes quite severe, as in Extract 12.

Extract 12: FG2 T2

我觉得问题多一点，那就这边学生素质比较低下，素质问题上课的时候的时候我遇到过两次，是在我上课的时候，课堂进行中，有学生跳起来后公然叫板。还有，就是课后学生把握不住分寸的。就是这些情况的话。就是可能也因为是新老师，年轻的老师可能说学生就会比较把不住度，然后在课堂上遇到这样子的行为，也会就是说他们对峙，然后下不来台，或者说是处理不了这些问题，都是和老老师学习，就是该用什么方法，去解决问题或者说是改变。改变不了，至少会压制一下，他们这种这种比较不尊重人的，比较冒失的举止，就是这样。I have encountered two times when I am in class, when I am in class, in the middle of the class,

some students jump up and openly challenged me. Also, after class, students can't control their sense of proportion. That's the way it is. It is also possible that because they are new teachers, young teachers may say that the students are more uncontrollable and then encounter this kind of behaviour in the classroom. It will also mean that they confront each other, and then they can't come down, or they can't deal with these problems. They are learning from the old teachers what methods should be used to solve problems or change. It can't be changed, at least they should suppress it. Their behaviour, which is relatively disrespectful and rash, is just like that.

This teacher relates problems of direct confrontation between teachers and students and also alludes to problems outside the classroom. She describes a situation in which new teachers are ill equipped to deal with such behaviours and must learn to do so from more experienced teachers. Some teachers also referred to the need to manage students' behaviour throughout the whole day as they were responsible for managing students' dormitories for those who lived in boarding accommodation. Another teacher took up this issue of being ill prepared to deal with classroom behaviour issues. One teacher spoke about experiencing a lack of knowledge in dealing with classroom management as an early career teacher, and how there seemed to be little support for this in teacher preparation courses.

Extract 13: FG1 T1

> 其实两年下来会发现自己或多或少会有一点点欠缺，当时可能我在学这门课的时候没有意识到它很重要，然后可能也就。没有，很认真。但是现在想想会觉得有点后悔，就觉得在班级管理方面应该也可以多设这样的课程，当时应该觉得这个课程如果我当时好好上，说不定现在在管理班级事务的时候，可能就没有那么头疼。But now that I think about it, I feel a little regretful, and I think that there should be more such courses in class management, and I should have felt that if I had taken this course well at that time, maybe now when I manage class affairs, I may not have such a headache.

Teachers often felt that solving these behavioural problems required them to develop positive relationships with students.

Extract 14: FG1 T1

> 就有时候想要去做的一个事情，就是想要和有时候想和学生拉近距离，然后让他们也对自己的课程提起兴趣，然后，做到一个平易近人这样的一个一个程度，然后平时的话就是其实我觉得做教育，其实你就是把学生当作朋友，学会去去和他，和他交流，然后唤起你们之间的一个共同的认知，然后这样的话，其实对于学生的一个发展，以及你和他的相处因为我自己所处的学校属于乡镇学校，然后这边的好多孩子，他们都是一些留守儿童，就是父母离异，然后或者是父母去外省打工，只有爷爷奶奶在身边。One of the things that I sometimes want to do is to get closer to my students and sometimes I want them to be interested in their own courses. Then, to be achieve a degree of approachability like this, then I usually say that in fact I think that in education, you treat students as friends, and learn to communicate with them and communicate with them. And then develop a common understanding between you, Then, in this case, it is actually a development of the students, as well as your relationship with them because my own school belongs to a township school, and many of the children here are left-behind children, their parents divorced, or their parents went to work in other provinces, with only their grandparents around.

This teacher sees developing positive relationships with students as a key part of working to resolve difficulties, including problems of motivation and engagement. However, for some teachers, it seemed that they had limited strategies available to help them with this and when their strategies did not work well they had few alternatives to all back on:

Extract 15: FG3 T2

> 然后第二点的话就是处理和学生的这个。这些问题有些时候你上课学生，有些学生他是会很抵触的就会和你产生冲突。我觉得这种事情 也挺难处理的。后边慢慢的学会了，课后找学生谈一下话，但是好像效果有一些特别难搞的学生。找他谈话没什么效果，也不知道怎么办。And then the second point is to deal with the students. These issues are sometimes when you are teaching your students, some students he will be very resistant. They will conflict with you. I think this sort of thing. is quite difficult to deal with. I slowly learned later to talk to students after class, but it seems that some students are particularly hard to deal with. Talking to them has little effect, and I don't know what to do.

In discussing classroom management issues, the teachers often raised the impact of students' living arrangements on their psychological well-being. The teachers noted, as did teacher 1 in focus group 1 in Extract 14, that many students had disrupted family lives as their parents were often absent from home and working in other parts of China. Some of these children lived with grandparents, but many were also living in boarding accommodation. These 'left-behind children' (留守儿童) have been acknowledged to suffer from psychological and academic problems (Bai et al., 2018; Ding et al., 2019) and it is these problems that teachers are having difficulties addressing in their school contexts. This indicates that many teachers of English in rural and remote areas of Yunnan may be dealing with much more complex issues of behavior management and students' well-being than other teachers and are not well-equipped to dela with these complex situations. As one teacher argued, what is needed is not just learning about classroom management but also a better understanding of psychology:

Extract 16: FG3 T1

> 其实教学都是比较轻松的，最麻烦最难的就是这些班级管理的问题。我觉得有一个教我们如何进行班级管理的，还有对学生进行心理指导的心理课吧。In fact, teaching is relatively easy, and the most troublesome and difficult problem is the management of classes. I think we have to have someone to teach us how to manage classes, as well as psychological lessons to guide students psychologically.

Findings: Student survey

Qualities of a good teacher

The students' ideas about what knowledge is required to be a good teacher are shown in Table 11.

Professional knowledge	101
Personal characteristics	93
Good English knowledge	24
General knowledge	19
Ability to develop professional capability	14
Professional ethics	6

Communication skills	2
Experience	2
Other	5

Table 11: The three most important things students need to know to be able teach English well

The students were asked to identify three things they thought were important. The responses were relatively brief, and there is little detail for may on the answers. The most common knowledge identified was professional knowledge and skills for teaching, which was usually expressed generally and did not identify specific components of this knowledge base, for example: S2 'English teaching skills training' (英语教学技能训练), S9 'solid professional knowledge' (专业知识扎实). An exception was S30 who identified several components of professional knowledge: 'professional knowledge (including subject knowledge, psychology, pedagogical knowledge) (专业知识（包括学科知识，心理学，教育学知）), and some participants identified classroom management. The next most widely stated feature was not a knowledge base but rather personal characteristics of teachers. Most of these responses were related to enthusiasm: S80 热情 enthusiasm, S10 活力与热情 (energetic and enthusiastic), S15 passion (热爱); love S30 (having a love for students and teaching (有热爱学生，热爱教学的情怀), S71 'loving to see students feel happy and have a sense of accomplishment (喜欢看到学生高兴时的成就感); patience, S15 'patient. (耐心); and confidence: S89 'confident' (有自信), S10 'self-confidence'(自信). The third most common identification was English language knowledge. This was often expressed generally as in: S29 'English proficiency' (英语水平), S4 'good English' (英语好). However, spoken English knowledge was also commonly identified as a requirement: S2 'fluent in spoken English' (英语口语流利). Some students identified an ability to be able to develop their own professional capability as a key need for teachers: S74 'having the goal of improving teaching skills' (有提升教学技能的目标), S86 'lifelong learning' (终身学习), S36 'research ability' (研究能力).

Students were also asked to indicate why that believed that the features they identified were important for teachers, see Table 12. Across all of the features given, similar arguments were presented for their importance, although not all rationales applied to all dimensions of knowledge.

	Part of being professional	Relating to students	Required for perseverance/ motivation	Important (unspecified)	Other
Professional knowledge	34	3	-	51	-
Personal characteristics	30	16	18	17	6
Good English knowledge	10		-	13	1
General knowledge	-	1	-	17	2
Ability to develop professional capability	13	-	-	1	-

Professional ethics	4	-	-		1
Communication skills	1	1	-		-
Experience	-	-	-		2

Table 12: Students reasons for thinking the selected elements are important

The most common stated reason was that the knowledge identified was important without specify further why it was important. S2 said that English teaching skills training (英语教学技能训练) was the foundation (基础). S13 justified professionalism (专业度) by stating that 'strong teaching ability is necessary (强教学能力很必要). S31 argued for language knowledge (语言知识) by saying 'Knowledge of language is the basis for teaching English' (语言知识是开展英语教学的基础).

In more elaborated reasons, students unsurprisingly linked professional knowledge directly with professional conduct as a teacher: S5 explained the importance of organization and management skills (组织管理能力) as 'The ability to properly organize and manage students in the classroom and after class affects teaching effectiveness and student development' (课堂上和课后是否能正确组织和管理学生影响教学效果和学生发展); S20 justified teaching skills (教学技能) by saying 'Good teacher expertise is the bridge to transfer English knowledge and skills to students' (良好的教师专业技能是将英语知识与技能传给学生的桥梁). A small number of students also saw professional knowledge and skills as important for developing relationships with students: S13 said professionalism (专业度) was important because 'The relationship with students must also be handled well' (与学生的关系也必须处理好).

In explaining the significance of personal characteristics, many students associated dispositions with being professional: S57 explained the importance of being motivated (上进心) as 'Teaching is a career of continuous improvement, and you need to improve yourself while teaching well' (老师是一个不断进修的职业，教好书的同时需要一直提升自己); S64 explained 'love for teaching' by saying (Love for teaching means you are willing to make efforts in teaching, and more importantly, you're happy while you are doing them). Students also justified selecting personal characteristics by stating they were important for having positive relationships with students: S79 explained the significance of personal character (个人性格) by saying 'handling teacher-student relationships' (处理师生关系), and S81 justified rapport (亲和力) with 'Can get along well with students' (和学生可以融洽相处). One interesting justification was that some personal dispositions were required to persevere in teaching. These reasons constructed teaching as a difficult or tedious occupation and teachers needed certain personal characteristics to persevere in the career: S26 explaining the importance of patience (耐心) said 'Teaching is tedious and requires patience' (教学工作繁琐需要耐心), and S30 explained the importance of having a love for students and teaching (有热爱学生，热爱教学的情怀) by saying 'Love can withstand long, boring years (热爱可抵枯燥的漫长岁月).

Students' comments on the importance of developing their own professional capability, showed a strong sense of teaching as a dynamic profession that required teachers to update their capability continually. S21 said that teaching and research skills (教学研究能力) were important because 'Teaching and learning research skills contribute primarily to teacher development, student development and curriculum development' (教学研究能力主要有助于教师的发展，学生发展，课程发展) demonstrating an orientation to research as important for professional development and

teaching quality. S74 argued that having the goal of improving teaching skills (有提升教学技能的目标) was important because of the dynamism of teaching: Times are changing and the demands on educators are higher, and teachers can easily become obsolete if they do not maintain a sense of self-improvement (时代在变，对教育者的要求更高，如果教师不保持提升自我的意识，很容易被淘汰).

Confidence in carrying out teaching

Students generally reported feeling confident in most aspects of English language teaching, with students reporting they felt confident or very confident with most aspects of teaching in the survey (see Table 13 and **Error! Reference source not found.**). More than 75% of students expressed confidence with six areas of teaching: teaching reading, organising small group work, using technology in teaching, teaching English in schools, teaching vocabulary and teaching listening. The lowest rated areas of teaching were teaching ethnic minority students, teaching grammar, teaching writing, teaching speaking, developing your own materials. Of these, developing your own materials was the only areas in which less than half of the students expressing confidence.

	Very confident	Confident	Not very confident	Not confident at all
Teaching reading	17	62	9	1
Organising small group work	12	67	10	0
Using technology in teaching	18	61	10	0
Teaching English in schools	11	64	14	0
Teaching vocabulary	14	55	18	2
Teaching listening	10	57	20	2
Teaching large classes	9	55	25	0
Assessing students' learning	6	58	25	0
Using games	14	46	25	4
Using the national curriculum for English	6	54	28	1
Teaching English to young learners	19	40	23	7
Using viewing as a learning activity	10	49	29	1
Teaching pronunciation	15	43	27	4
Developing learners' authentic communication skills	7	51	29	2
Teaching English to ethnic minority students	9	48	26	6
Teaching grammar	10	46	27	6
Teaching writing	11	43	32	3
Teaching speaking	8	41	36	4
Developing your own materials	4	28	47	10

Table 13: Students' confidence in teaching activities

Coverage of topics in the postgraduate curriculum

Students' perceptions of the coverage of topics showed that they believed that many topics had not been covered adequately in their course. Over half of the students did not believe that their studies had had adequate coverage seven topics: using viewing as a learning activity, teaching pronunciation, using

games, teaching speaking, developing your own materials, teaching English to ethnic minority students, and teaching English to young learners. Only four topics were rated as being well covered by more than 70% of learners: teaching reading, teaching English in schools, organising small group work, and using the national curriculum for English. One interesting observation from the data is the small minority of students who felt that none of the topics had been covered at all.

	Very well covered	Well covered	Limited coverage	Not covered at all
Teaching reading	11	57	14	7
Teaching English in schools	11	55	20	3
Organising small group work	13	53	19	4
Using the national curriculum for English	11	54	20	4
Using technology in teaching	13	45	27	4
Teaching writing	11	45	25	8
Assessing students' learning	8	47	28	6
Teaching large classes	11	44	27	7
Teaching vocabulary	8	44	31	6
Developing learners' authentic communication skills	6	45	34	4
Teaching grammar	10	38	34	7
Teaching listening	8	39	32	10
Using viewing as a learning activity	7	35	38	9
Teaching pronunciation	5	37	38	9
Using games	6	36	39	8
Teaching speaking	6	31	39	13
Developing your own materials	5	29	42	13
Teaching English to ethnic minority students	2	20	40	27
Teaching English to young learners	2	17	45	25

One student provided and unelicited comment that suggested the postgraduate course may not be significantly different from what is covered in undergraduate courses, saying

> 学科英语的初心就是培养中小学应用型英语教师，但是在 XX 大学两年里，很多人方向不明确，教师基本功不扎实。就本人而言，全都靠自己摸索和吃本科的老本进行。在就业过程中发现两年的课程没有多少帮助。The purpose of English major should be to train practice-oriented English teachers for primary and secondary schools, but in the two years at XX University, many people's direction was not clear, and the basic skills of teachers were not solid. As to me, it all relies on their own exploring and what I learnt in undergraduate study. I found that the two-year course did not help much in the employment process.

Thus, this student expresses a sense that the program was not developing a solid skill base for new teachers and contributed little to their career trajectory. However, as only a minority of students in the program had previously studied English language teaching at undergraduate level, this student's experience may not be representative of the cohort.

Comparing experienced and inexperienced students

Many of the students had had experiences as English language teachers prior to beginning their postgraduate study and so it is important to compare the responses of students with and without prior experience, especially in terms of their confidence in teaching.

Overall students without prior teaching experience were less confident than teachers with experience across most activities, and in some cases the differences were quite large (Figure 1), especially for areas in which in experienced students felt less confident, suggesting that more experienced students may have developed confidence through their previous practice rather than through their studies.
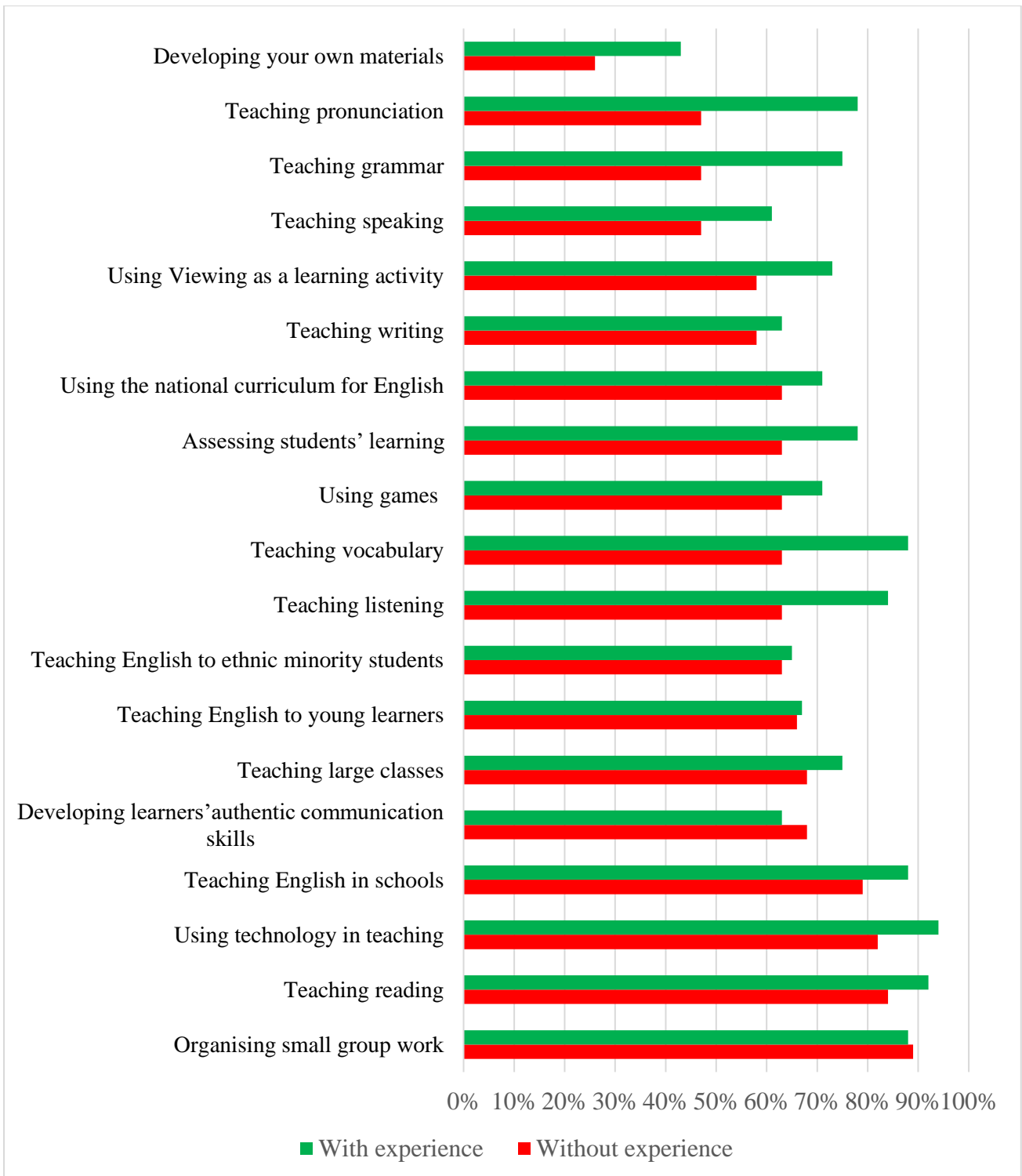
Figure 1: Percentage of students expressing confidence in teaching activities (inexperienced vs experienced teachers)

The areas of least confidence showed differences across the two groups (see Table 14). Among the five lowest ranked elements for confidence (ranks 15-19), both groups listed teaching speaking, and developing your own materials. Students without prior experience added using viewing, teaching grammar and teaching pronunciation. Experienced students ranked these much higher (viewing at rank 11, teaching grammar at 10, teaching pronunciation at 8). Students with experience added teaching

ethnic minority students, teaching writing, and developing authentic communication skills. These were ranked higher by the inexperienced group, with teaching ethnic minority students ranked at 8, and developing communication students much higher ranked at 5. Teaching writing was ranked at 14 by these students and so was not something they felt much confidence about. Among the highest ranked items, both groups included teaching reading (ranked 2 for each), organising small group work (ranked at 1 and 3), using technology (ranked at 3 and 1) and teaching English in schools (ranked 4 for each.)

	Without experience	With experience
1	Organising small group work	Using technology in teaching
2	Teaching reading	Teaching reading
3	Using technology in teaching	Organising small group work
4	Teaching English in schools	Teaching English in schools
5	Developing learners' authentic communication skills	Teaching vocabulary
6	Teaching large classes	Teaching listening
7	Teaching English to young learners	Assessing students' learning
8	Teaching English to ethnic minority students	Teaching pronunciation
9	Teaching listening	Teaching large classes
10	Teaching vocabulary	Teaching grammar
11	Using games	Using Viewing as a learning activity
12	Assessing students' learning	Using games
13	Using the national curriculum for English	Using the national curriculum for English
14	Teaching writing	Teaching English to young learners
15	Using Viewing as a learning activity	Teaching English to ethnic minority students
16	Teaching speaking	Developing learners' authentic communication skills
17	Teaching grammar	Teaching writing
18	Teaching pronunciation	Teaching speaking
19	Developing your own materials	Developing your own materials

Table 14: Rank order of teaching skills most confident to least confident)

Relationship between coverage and confidence

There is a correlation between students' perceptions of coverage and their level of confidence ($r=0.628$, $p \leq 0.001$). There is a correlation between students' perception of the coverage of topics in their program and students' confidence (Figure 2). This suggests that the students' confidence in teaching comes from a sense of having been prepared to teach by their coursework. However, there are some areas in which coverage and confidence do not correlate well.
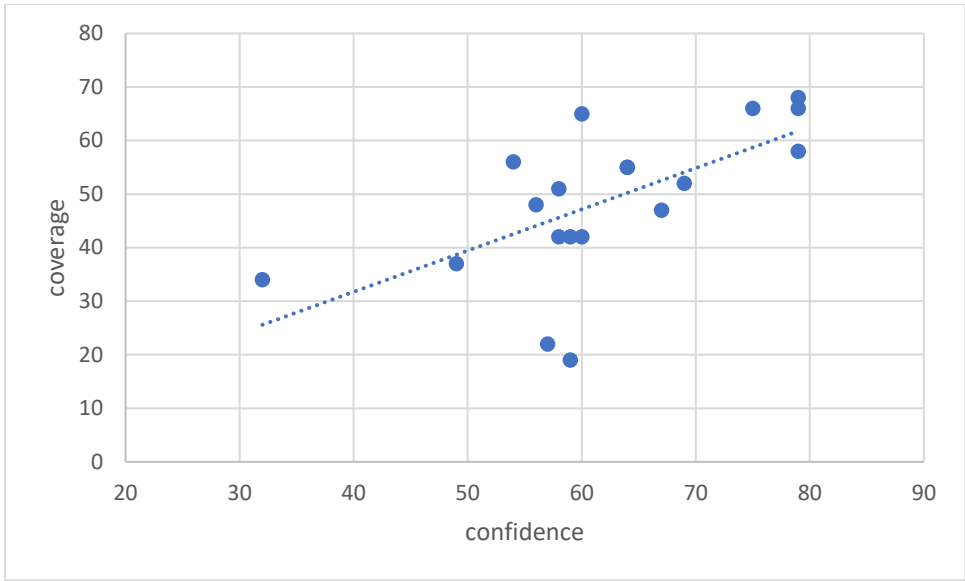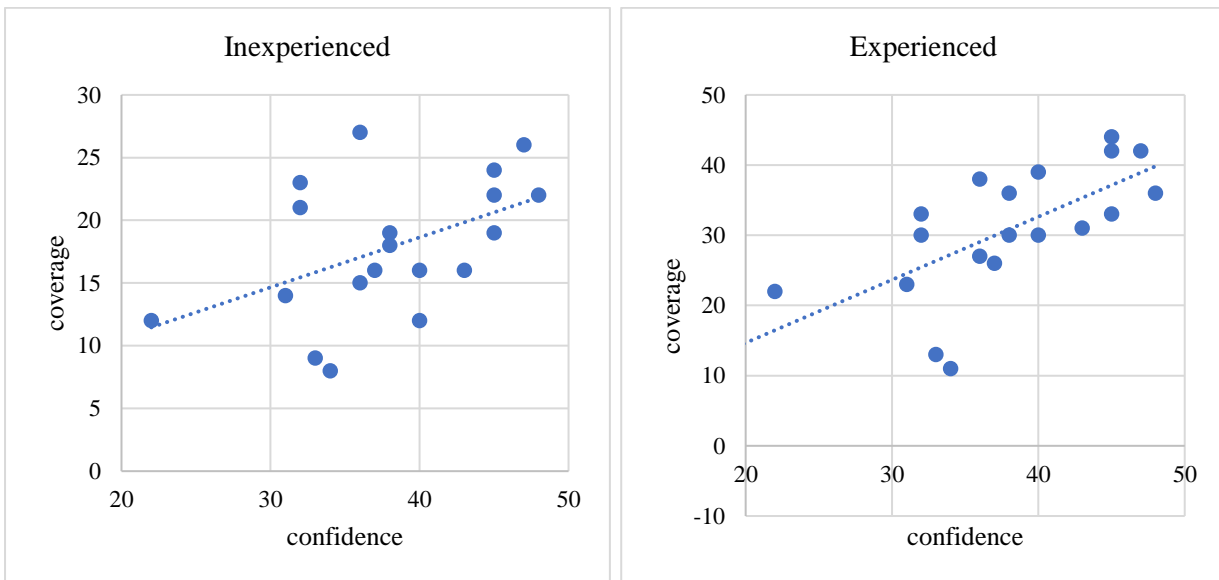
Figure 2: Correlation between confidence and confidence

There are some topics that students perceive to have been well covered, but where they do not feel as confident for their future teaching. These include using the national curriculum (ranked 4th for coverage and 10th for confidence), teaching writing (ranked 6th for coverage and 17th for confidence, and teaching grammar (ranked 11th for coverage and 16th for confidence). However, there are also areas of teaching where students perceive more limited coverage but have greater confidence. These are teaching listening (ranked 12th for coverage and 6h for confidence), using games (ranked 15th for coverage and 9th for confidence), and teaching English to young learners (ranked 19th for coverage and 11th for confidence).

The correlation between coverage and confidence is much stronger for students who have prior experience of teaching than for less experienced teachers, although both results are significant ($r=0.652$ $p \leq 0.001$, $r=0.453$ $p \leq 0.01$). This suggests that students with previous experience may be able to draw on that experience to help them map between their coursework and its practical application more than less experienced students, whose confidence may grow more from their lack of experience and the need to develop a teacher identity.

Discussion

In the questionnaires and focus groups a number of issues have emerged that identify key needs for the design of teacher education for future teachers of English in Yunnan. These issues relate to working with students with low level prior attainment, enhancing motivation and engagement, teaching language skills, linking theory and practice, and classroom management. In addition to these teaching focused activities, further development of teacher education students' English language abilities also emerged as a need.

Dealing with students whose level of language acquisition was not adequate to engage with the set curriculum emerged as a key need for teachers across the study. This issue reflected a lack of confidence in departing from the set curriculum and textbooks to meet students learning needs and problems in designing teaching to meet the needs of classes where there were diverse levels of attainment. Teachers have a need for more knowledge about how to teach differentiated classrooms. Part of this problem appears to be ascertaining students' levels and selecting relevant materials to work with them, which in turn overlaps with the problems reported by the teachers in designing their own materials. A further aspect of the problem is developing differentiated teaching in very large classrooms. Differentiation of teaching requires teachers to have a clear understanding of what it is most import for their learners to learn, and how to build on their current stage of development, and this in turn requires a wide range of teaching approaches and the ability to construct different learning activities for different learners (Eisenmann, 2019).

One feature of the responses from the teachers, especially the less experienced teachers, was a need to be able to link theory to practice. While they valued theory, there were concerns about how to put the theory into practice. This indicates a need for a practice focus in teaching approaches adopted in teacher education programs in which theory-practice links are foregrounded. This links not only to the ways that theory is taught in teacher education programs but also to how it is taught.

Enhancing students' motivation and participation was a significant issue for teachers and this indicated a key area in which they needed more support. The teachers felt they needed the ability to design more engaging teaching that would help improve motivation and participation in classroom activities and beyond the classroom. Resolving issues of motivation would appear to be linked to the ways that teachers respond to the low levels of attainment of their students. For example, if teachers believe that students with limited attainment need to be taught in a teacher-centred way to offset their limited abilities, it is less likely that they will develop engaging teaching. In particular, teachers need strategies to help students experience success in their learning (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), as the sense of lack of achievement is something teachers themselves identify as demotivating. It would also be important that teachers adopt teaching approaches that help to maintain a positive self-image for students, who may be considered by their teachers as having little possibility of success.

While teachers across the study identified the teaching of language skills such as teaching grammar, vocabulary, and speaking as issues that were difficult for them, there is also evidence that these topics had been included in the teacher education programs. The issue in the data seems to be more one of moving beyond the focus on skills in isolation and to develop the ability to communicate in real-life situations. This also appears to be linked to the difficulties expressed by teacher sin developing integrated tasks in the questionnaires, where integration scored much lower than teaching focused on specific skills. In this case, the need is not for teacher education courses to include skills-focused

content, but rather the content needs to be expanded to include ways of enhancing communication rather than just knowledge of skills.

Classroom management has emerged as a key need for the teachers, especially in dealing with disruptive students and with students who have well-being problems and related behavioural and personal problems. Issues of classroom management are likely to interact with issues of low prior attainment and motivation and enhancing teacher' abilities in these areas may have a positive impact of classrooms but, at the same time, teacher education students do also need to learn about classroom management strategies as classroom management is especially a problem for beginning teachers (Macías, 2018). However, as many of the issues identified by the teachers relate the psychological and well-being problems of students, students need to have opportunities to learn about these issues and how to respond to them more generally, for example in (educational) psychology classes.

The needs identified go beyond the possibilities for creating a single module for teacher education that could address all the issues that emerged and instead suggest that there is a need to address the overall curriculum for teacher education. There is also a need for student teachers to be introduced to ideas about self-directed teacher development, given the common experience of having to learn alone reported by many teachers in this study.

Curriculum mapping: Courses for English language teacher education

Masters-level courses

The only universities authorised by the Ministry of Education are able to offer Masters programs in teacher education and only a small number of universities in Yunnan have been authorised to offer Masters degrees in education – four programs as of 2017 (Yjbys.com, 2021). The curriculum for such programs is determined by Ministry of Education guidelines (National Steering Committee for Postgraduate Education for Professional Degrees in Education, 2017), although there is some freedom for universities in constructing discipline-specific and elective components of their offerings (see also below). The provision of Masters programs for English language teachers in Yunnan is based on national guidance for the delivery of postgraduate programs in education (National Steering Committee for Postgraduate Education for Professional Degrees in Education, 2017). The national guidance provides specific requirements for such programs involving guidance for core modules, electives, practicum, and dissertations. The basic requirements for M. Ed. programs consist of:

- A basic course structure consisting of political theory and general education modules: Principles of Education, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Educational Research Methods, Psychological Development and Education.
- Compulsory courses related the specific educational major. This component consists of two required modules – Research on Curriculum and Textbooks and Subject Instructional Design and Implementation, and further modules designed by the institution. According to the guidance document, these modules may cover a range of topics related to the discipline, including subject content modules, modules focusing on evaluating or reflecting on teaching, or modules focusing on using information technology in teaching.
- Compulsory courses related the specific educational major. These electives are described as modules focusing on professional theoretical knowledge, teaching skills, or educational management.

- Practicum, involving on campus practical activities, such as micro-teaching and lesson study, and off-campus practicum involving a teaching internship.
- A dissertation.

Core modules

The credit weighting for mandatory modules varies across the universities but there are a similar number of modules on offer at each institution.

- University 1: 22 credits = 11 modules
- University 2: 24 credits = 13 modules
- University 3: 26 credits = 12 modules

The required courses at the universities cover both education and politics topics. The mandatory modules are:

- political theory modules – U1 = 1, U2 = 2, U1 =1
- general Education modules – U1=2, U3 = 3, U3 = 3. The modules focus of general education theory, curriculum and pedagogy, and educational psychology.
- English language teaching and Applied Linguistics modules – U1= 3, U2 = 4, U3 = 4. The only module taught as a core module across all the universities is curriculum and textbook design. Two universities offer Second Language Acquisition, English language teaching pedagogy, and theory of teaching English. U3 offers modules on learning strategies, and psychology of foreign language education.
- Linguistics: U1 offers intercultural Pragmatics.
- Research methods: U1 = 1, U2 = 3, U3 = 1
- English language: U1 offers general English and U3 offers advanced spoken English
- Other modules: U1 - Chinese literature

This reveals that there is some diversity in the core of pre-service Master level courses for teachers of English and that the core focuses mainly on topic areas outside English language teaching itself. At all universities modules with a specific focus on English language teaching constitute about one third of all core modules. General education modules constitute a further quarter of the core modules.

Elective modules

The organisation of elective studies varies cross the universities, with differences in the number of electives, the credit weighting and range of electives offered.

- University 1: 7 credits = 4 modules, a total of 8 electives are offered.
- University 2: 6 credits = 3 modules, a total of 8 electives are offered
- University 3: 2 credits = 2 modules, a total of 31 electives are offered

Although U3 offer the largest range of electives in the Masters program, students take fewer electives here than at other universities.

- English language teaching and Applied Linguistics – U1 = 4, U2 =1, U3= 7.

The only elective topic available at all three universities is language testing and evaluation. Two institutions offer intercultural communication modules and two offer generic Applied Linguistics modules. There are no other electives that are taught in more than one institution. U1 offers foreign language learning theory in addition to these. U3 offers modules on learning strategies, teacher education, technology and a module on the new English curriculum.

- General education –U1 = 4, U2=3, U3 = 0.
  The two universities offer a modules in classroom management and educational policy. In addition to this U1 offers modules on school management and educational evaluation. U2 offers a module on educational technology.

- Linguistics – U1 = 0, U2 = 2, U3 = 11.
  U2 offers two modules in theoretical linguistics topics. U3 offers three modules in general and theoretical linguistics and modules in linguistics sub-topics such as syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics.

- Literature – U2 = 1, U3 = 6
  U2 offers a module on English literature for teenagers. U3 offers a range of modules in English and American literature and some modules in literary theory.

- English language – U1 = 0,U2 =1, U3 = 1
  U2 and U3 both offer modules in spoken English.

- Translation – U3 only = 4

- Research methods – U3 only = 2

- Other: U3 offers a module on the history and culture of English-speaking countries.

Practicum

All programs offer a practicum component, but the practicum is organised differently at different institutions.The basic structure of the practicum across the universities involves on-campus activities in which students learn practical aspects of teaching and off campus activities in which engaged in teaching practice.

The on-campus component typically involves the following elements:

- skills training
- micro-teaching
- education apprenticeship (教育见习) in which students observe experienced teacher's classes, and a case study.

The off-campus component has the following general structure:

- an internship (教育实习) during which work with mentor teachers, such as classroom management, designing lesson plans, and delivering a lesson

- education traineeship (教育研习), in which students teach language classes independently.

The universities organise the practicum in differing ways:

- University 1: on-campus practicum = 2 credits, off campus = 6 credits.
  The on-campus practicum consists of skills training, micro-teaching, education apprenticeship. The off campus consists of an internship of 16-20 hours, and education traineeship.
- University 2: on-campus practicum = 2 credits, off-campus practicum = 6 credits,
  The on-campus practicum consists of skills training, micro-teaching, and education apprenticeship. The off-campus practicum consists of an internship of 72 hours and educational study.
- University 3: practicum is 6 credits, but no further details are available.

Dissertation

All curricula refer to a dissertation but there is little information about the form this takes. At U1, this is a report on practice or research of 3000-4000 words. At U2 it may be a research report or a literature review, but the length is not stated. There are no details of the dissertation given by U3.

Undergraduate degrees

Many teachers enter into teaching with an undergraduate degree in English. These degrees often do not have a teaching component, but some degrees do offer a teaching stream. This is the case at University 2, where the undergraduate teaching program is integrated into a four-year English language degree. The teaching stream consists of three components, each of which contains a number of semester length modules:

- General education theory (3 modules):
  – Psychology
  – Pedagogy
  – Professional ethics and educational policy.

- Educational skills (7 modules, of which 3 are specifically focused on English
  – Language focused modules focused on Chinese
  – Educational technology

- English specific modules:
  – English curriculum standards and teaching materials
  – Teaching design for English
  – Training in and evaluation of teaching skills

  - Practicum, which is structured similarly to the practicum in the M. Ed. courses discussed above.
    – Educational apprenticeship (4 weeks in 2 blocks)
    – Education internship (18 weeks)
    – A case study
    – Education traineeship (10 weeks)

At University 2, the dissertation is also included as part of the practicum component of the course.

Discussion

One notable feature of the graduate courses discussed here is the lack of a common core that all students preparing to become teachers of English undertake. There are only a small number of modules that are found across all programs, with curriculum and textbook design and instructional design being taught in most programs, but this constitutes a very reduced core. Instructional design seems to be a feature of the practicum and also is present in the theoretical and professional modules of the degree programs. Instructional design seems to be an established focus for professional development of English teachers in China (e.g. Cheng, 2011). The variability between programs indicates that there is little sense of an agreed pathway for teachers and that students in different programs may enter the field with quite different knowledge and skills depending on which programs they take. When the postgraduate courses are compared with the undergraduate course, this lack of a common core also appears. Within the programs, there is limited focus on modules especially related to the teaching and learning of English, with most programs offering as many core modules from general education and disciplines outside education as modules on teaching English. While modules on general education are potentially relevant, the ideas they present may need better contextualization within language teaching for teachers to be able to operationalize the knowledge they are learning, especially given that operationalising theory in practice was commonly reported in the needs analysis component of the project. Modules on psychology, however, were reported as being especially useful by many participants in the needs analysis and appear to be an important component of the core.

The problems outlined above indicate that there may be a need to review the overall curriculum for preparing English language teachers in China. While this project aims to develop module content to address students' needs, it does not seem feasible for an adjustment of content for a single module to address some of the short comings of teacher education in Yunnan.

Module development

In developing a single module, it was not possible to address all of the needs identified in the needs analysis as the would require a more thoroughgoing curriculum revision than was envisaged for this project. A collaborative decision was therefore made to prioritise tow issues that emerged in the needs analysis that were highly significant for teachers and which could be addressed within the scope of a single module. These issues were: the expressed need for greater knowledge about pedagogy for most elements for teaching and the difficulties teachers expressed in linking theory and pedagogy.

Contextual considerations

In developing a syllabus for a module that addressed elements of the needs analysis, there were some elements of the educational context in China that needed to be addressed., most especially national level requirements for Postgraduate programs in education and the Chinese curriculum for English, which the teachers needed to be prepared to teach. In addition to these, it was also important to consider how the new modules fit together with existing offerings to ensure that the revision did not leave unintended gaps in the overall curriculum.

Program requirements

The centrally established curriculum described above (see p. 41) influences how programs need to be created and the structure is relatively tightly constructed and allows only limited possibilities for local

decision-making about the content of courses in teacher education. However, the guidance also instructs institutions to take into consideration local and disciplinary needs in developing their teacher education programs. Given that the needs analysis revealed a need to enhance the focus on pedagogy and to link theory more closely with practice, it was decided to develop a syllabus for the Subject Instructional Design and Implementation module, as this was the element of the course structure that most closely fit with the required focus.

The English curriculum

The current Chinese curriculum (PRC Ministry of Education, 2022) for teaching English is the latest in a series of curriculum developments in China that have endeavoured to move curricula from an instrumentalist focus on English as a communication tool towards a more humanistic framing. The curriculum is designed to cover the compulsory teaching of English from Year 3 to Year 9, and so is not directly linked to the final stages of schooling and in particular to preparation for the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), commonly known as the *gaokao* (高考).

The curriculum is thematically organised around three main themes: human beings and self, human beings and society and human beings and nature. The themes are divided into units that draw on different text types intended to integrate language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies. The curriculum is further organised around experiential and practical forms of learning that focus on developing understanding of, and applying curriculum content, and using their knowledge to respond to real-world problems. It also seeks to emphasise a strong link between teaching, learning and assessment through developing teachers' assessment literacy and reflection on practice. The curriculum also emphasises the need to better integrate technology into language learning.

The curriculum identifies four core competencies for the English subject: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability. The focus is therefore moved beyond the acquisition of language as a structural system to include interculturally focused learning, critical thinking and the development general learning capacity. Although the curriculum indicates that language ability is the foundation of the English subject, it does not subordinate other core competencies of language conceived as structure but argues instead for an integration of the competencies throughout language learning.

The language focus of the curriculum adds viewing to the four macro-skills model of reading, writing, listening and speaking and this adopts a multimodal understanding of language use, which has been largely absent from earlier curricula, and from current practice in language teaching. The current curriculum therefore requires teachers to move from approaches to teaching that focus on language structures to a more elaborated understanding of the nature of language learning, while at the same time, preserving elements of teaching language structure, such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. This means that teacher education courses need to prepare student teachers for engaging with a multimodal framing of language learning and use that may not have featured strongly in their own language learning experiences.

Teacher education programs need to engage student teachers with the current framing of English language teaching and learning represented in the new curriculum. In developing a pedagogy focused module, therefore, it is important to engage with this construction of teaching and learning, although

a single module cannot engage with all aspects of this given the limitations of time within a single module.

The local teacher education curriculum

The new module is intended to form part of the core curriculum for students undertaking the post-graduate program and so needs to fit with the existing curriculum. This means that the new module should not overlap with the content of current modules nor should it remove essential material that is already covered in the curriculum. After examining the current curriculum, it was decided that the new module would replace the existing Design and Implementation of English Language Teaching and Learning (英语教学设计与实施). This module was selected because it was the closest module in terms of the overall curriculum focus and as a module where the proposed revisions would be least disruptive to the overall scope and sequence of the existing curriculum. Moreover, this module is scheduled for the beginning of the two-year Masters program offered at the university and so could form a basis for later work, including articulation with the on-campus practicum component.

Proposed module

Module outline

This module introduces students to the theory and practice of pedagogy for teaching English. It covers the teaching and learning of the main areas of language ability specified in the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education in China. It also includes a focus on some of the key problems that teachers may encounter in teaching English as a foreign language in the Chinese context.

The design of the module is based on a combination of lecture style input and mores student centred activities that allow opportunities for students to explore the course content and develop their own understanding of teaching theories and practices, with a particular emphasis on linking theory and practice.

Curriculum education objectives

1. Strengthen students' understanding and knowledge of pedagogy for teaching English;
2. Develop students' ability to link theory and practice in language pedagogy;
3. Prepare teachers to teach across the full range of language abilities in the contemporary curriculum.

Content and organisation

Session	Content	Teaching arrangements
Topic 1	Overview of the Curriculum for English	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 2	Principles for teaching English for communication	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 3	Student-centred teaching and integrated language skills	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 4	Teaching grammar and vocabulary	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 5	Teaching speaking	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 6	Teaching listening	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 7	Teaching reading	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 8	Teaching writing	3 classes of 45 minutes

Topic 9	Teaching viewing	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 10	Motivation for language learning	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 11	Teaching multilevel classes	3 classes of 45 minutes
Topic 12	Review and assessment	3 classes of 45 minutes

Assessment

It is important that assessment link the ideas in the module to practice rather than just focusing on recall of ideas. For example, students can be asked to write a lesson plan and provide a rationale for the lesson which explains their teaching decisions with reference to relevant course material.

Ideally, assessment could be linked to the on-campus practicum, especially to micro teaching, so that students have an opportunity to experiment with ideas and theories form the module in their own practice.

Teachers' Guide

To support this module, a teachers' guide has been prepared to outline the basic focus of the curriculum and provide support for teaching and learning in the module. This guide has been prepared as a separate volume. For each topic the guide provides:

- An overview of the teaching content for each topic. Bullet points for main content areas and explanations of key concepts.
- Suggested student activities for group work with a focus on converting theory into practice
- Suggested readings

Recommendations for developing M.Ed. in English Language Teaching programs

The literature focusing on current M.Ed. ELT programs has not only identified problems in existing programs but has also made recommendations for improving practice in each of the areas identified.

Course design

- Developing a stronger English teaching core: The core component of the programs focused on English language teaching is a relatively minor part of the overall core in the M. Ed. ELT programs. This would seem to be at least in part a source of the limited confidence students have in using course content in their future teaching work. It may also link to problems in applying theory in practice. There is a need for a more coherent set of core modules that address English language teaching and the way the teaching of English is understood in the Chinese curriculum.
- Developing a suite of varied option modules: Option modules need to address a range of different teaching contexts and teachers' needs. The lack of diversity n options has also been noted by Wang and Wang (2014) and Yang (2013). As mentioned above, students enrolled in M.Ed. programs come from varied backgrounds and have different expectations of and needs in their programs. Accordingly, it is important that programs allow for flexibility in students' pathways.
- Integrating theory and practice in learning: There is a strong need across programs to better integrate theory and practice both in terms of program design and pedagogy. Yang (2013) has suggested that the integration of theory and practice learning could be achieved during the

program by promoting a dynamic thinking mode among students and enable them to benefit more from the timely integration of theory and practice.

- Introducing modules on teacher's professional development and research: There is a need for teachers to develop greater autonomy in their professional development and Xie (2011) has argued that teacher education programs need to include modules specifically focused on how teachers can develop professionally. In addition, as Chen and Shi (2011) point out, modules focusing on research need to be integrated into M.Ed. ELT programs, not only to meet the requirements for programs to include research but also to support students in using research capabilities for their professional development. What is required in such program is not so much academic research but rather developmentally focused practitioner research that enables teachers to explore and develop their own practice through a process of investigation (Van Katwijk et al., 2021).

- Developing students' autonomous learning: Teacher education students need to develop agency in their own learning, both to enhance their development as practitioners and also to be able to support their learners in developing their own autonomy (Manzano Vázquez, 2018). The current teacher-centred approaches found in many M.Ed. ELT programs in China do not support the development of autonomy well and leave learners effectively dependent on their teachers for their learning. Given the limitations of current programs and the difficulties of developing more comprehensive approaches to teaching given the bureaucratically driven curriculum development processes in Chinese universities, increasing learner autonomy is seen as particularly important in this context (He, 2007). Zhang and Wu (2019) argue that developing students' awareness of autonomous learning, and especially developing the habit of autonomous reading, is central to compensating for the weakness of current course designs.

- Develop models of cross-university collaboration in curriculum development: By 2022, over 100 Chinese universities and colleges had established M.Ed. ELT programs and there has been considerable research looking at current programs, including research analysing an individual program (Chen, 2021; Han & Chen, 2016; Liu & Qin, 2017) Zheng, 2019); comparing programs in different universities in China (Lei & Chen, 2020; Zhang & Wu, 2019; Zhang & Liao, 2020; Zhang, 2016) or comparing Chinese programs with programs in other countries (Gao & Liu, 2015; Meng & Wu, 2018; Tian & Liu, 2018; Yin et al., 2019; Zeng, 2012). This research has been useful in identifying instances of good practice as well as instances of weakness. It would therefore be beneficial for greater collaboration between institutions in program design and to learn from the experiences of other institutions rather than keeping design processes entirely internal to institutions. Furthermore, Wu (2019) argues that higher educational institutions running M.Ed. ELT programs could also seek to cooperate actively with other universities, especially those which possess the advantage of better resources and conditions, to enhance their offerings for students.

Pedagogy

There is a need to modify the existing pedagogy in teacher education programs to move away from teacher-centred to more student-centred ways of learning. This would help address the gap between theory and practice as it would open more space for students to experiment with or discuss ideas in the classroom. The linking of theory and practice needs to be more central to the overall design of learning experiences. Tang (2016) has similarly argued that approaches to teaching students in M.Ed. ELT programs needs to be varied to facilitate students' acquisition of teaching related knowledge and skills. Xun (2012) suggests that new teaching methods and modes should be explored by lecturers in their

regular teaching practice for students of this program to accommodate their needs for professional abilities by avoiding the teacher-dominated teaching modes and modelling teaching approaches that students themselves will need to implement. Similarly, Zheng (2019) emphasises the use of hands- on learning experiences during theory learning and highlighting the importance of reflection and student's autonomy. Zheng also argues for the blending of online and offline learning.

Practicum

The practicum component of teacher education needs substantial development to ensure that all students have similar opportunities to develop their teaching practice during their M. Ed. Studies. The practicum also needs careful linking to the rest of the course content to help address the theory-practice gap identified above. The most frequently suggested solution for the problem of inadequate practicum is to establish greater cooperation between higher education institutions which run the M.Ed. ELT programs and primary and secondary schools in which students will do their practicum internships (Lei & Chen, 2020; Tang, 2016; Xun, 2012; Zhang & Liao, 2020). Such relationships are central to the organisation and management of practicum programs and is recommended by the state (Ministry of Education, 2011). Such relationships would better enable higher education to 'tap the professional wisdom of frontline teachers for teacher preparation' (Ye et al., 2019, p. 766) if a collaboration between universities, government and schools is established and comes to gain acceptance locally.

Assessment and resources

The models of assessment used in M. Ed. ELT courses needs to be diversified away from the current focus on examinations to more varied, practice-focused assessment models. Various researchers have argued for the diversification of assessment of M.Ed. ELT programs (Lei & Chen, 2020; Wu, 2019; Yang, 2013). As Fan (1999) points out, the purpose of assessment is to improve learning rather than simply evaluating it and the assessment system of M.Ed. ELT programs should support students in understanding their acquisition of knowledge and how they can put their learning into practice. Based on this, Lei and Chen (2020) suggest multiple ways for assessment, including dissertation on the course, designing teaching materials and presentations. Wu (2019) argues that students' daily performance in learning should also be considered during assessment as part of a diversified and dynamic assessment system that would facilitate the overall development of core competencies and practical abilities of the students. Regarding the problem of limited resources, Yin et al (2019) call for complete databases on education and teaching to be created and attention be paid to the availability of materials, the practicality of accessing resources, and their usage as such databases would serve both students' learning and research needs.

Concluding comments

The module developed for this project cannot completely address the needs of pre-service English language teachers in Yunnan and is intended as a starting point to address the needs of teachers for greater pedagogical knowledge. Moreover, within the scope of a single module it is not possible to address all of the elements of the current Chinese curriculum for English. The module aims to develop a foundation in English language pedagogy that can support pre-service teachers in developing their professional practice. However, this module needs to be integrated into a wider program for English language teachers that connects closely to teachers' needs and operationalises the theory-practice relationship strongly throughout the modules students take.

Appendices

Appendix 1: General questions about methodology

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Language				
I feel able to give sufficient attention to fluency in class, compared to accuracy	25%	22%	75%	78%
I know how to develop language fluency as well as accuracy in the classroom	28%	20%	72%	80%
I am familiar with techniques that encourage authentic student interactions	12%	17%	88%	83%
I feel I have the knowledge and skills to develop students' real-life communication skills even if this is not included in my textbook	33%	27%	67%	73%
I am able to integrate different language skills (Listening/ Speaking/ Reading/Writing/Viewing) in my teaching	13%	15%	87%	85%
I am able to teach grammar communicatively	8%	15%	92%	85%
Culture				
I am able to integrate cultural content into my language teaching	12%	12%	88%	88%
I understand how to develop intercultural skills as part of language learning	27%	21%	73%	79%
Learners				
I feel able to engage my students in independent learning	22%	22%	78%	78%
I know how to create opportunities for my students to learn independently	19%	16%	81%	84%
I am able to identify the learning styles of all of my students	32%	30%	68%	70%
I am able to adapt my teaching according to students' different learning styles	28%	17%	72%	83%
Classroom organisation				
I have the opportunity to engage students in free practice rather than controlled practice	8%	15%	92%	85%
I am familiar with techniques for moving from controlled student practice to free practice in lessons	9%	18%	91%	82%
I feel able to incorporate small group work into classroom activities	0%	8%	100%	92%
I have the skills needed to set up and facilitate effective small group work	12%	17%	88%	83%
I have the opportunity to use role play and drama in the classroom	30%	28%	70%	72%
I feel confident using role play and drama to promote my students' learning	39%	24%	61%	76%
I have the opportunity to use games as a learning tool	0%	14%	100%	86%
I know how to use games effectively as a learning tool	13%	16%	87%	84%
I feel confident enough in my teaching to depart from textbook teacher manuals	66%	48%	34%	52%

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Context				
I am able to cover the curriculum in the time available	12%	14%	88%	86%
The way in which students are assessed limits what I feel able to do in my teaching	32%	29%	68%	71%
I am able to be creative in my teaching while at the same time meeting the traditions and expectations of my school/peers	36%	19%	64%	81%

Appendix 2: Writing

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Textbook exercises	13%	6%	29%	13%	58%	81%
Workbook/worksheet exercises	6%	6%	23%	11%	71%	83%
Short-text activities: messages, emails, etc.	29%	19%	26%	32%	44%	49%
Grammar and structure-based exercises	6%	4%	23%	18%	71%	77%
Essay writing	35%	44%	29%	26%	35%	30%
Letter writing	16%	29%	32%	19%	52%	51%
Stories or poems	58%	67%	28%	14%	14%	19%
Writing games	48%	59%	33%	18%	18%	23%
Exam paper questions	6%	7%	19%	7%	74%	86%
Integrated writing activities	35%	26%	39%	28%	26%	46%

Appendix 3: Reading

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Pre-reading activities	3%	8%	23%	16%	73%	75%
Graded reading	16%	20%	32%	19%	52%	61%
Reading aloud	6%	11%	39%	11%	55%	81%
Reading games	29%	48%	29%	22%	42%	42%
Group reading	10%	25%	47%	26%	43%	57%
Reading comprehension	0%	3%	28%	9%	72%	86%
Integrated reading activities	13%	26%	40%	22%	47%	59%
Reading authentic materials	38%	39%	41%	25%	21%	42%

Appendix 4: Speaking

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Whole-class drilling and repetition	6%	7%	34%	10%	59%	83%
Individual practice	7%	12%	43%	21%	50%	67%
Pronunciation practice	0%	17%	50%	23%	50%	59%
Stress and intonation practice	13%	32%	43%	18%	43%	50%
Controlled speaking activities	30%	17%	27%	31%	43%	53%
Free discussion, seminars discussion and debates	40%	32%	33%	32%	27%	36%
Speaking games	40%	38%	40%	30%	20%	33%
Presentations	56%	42%	31%	24%	13%	34%
Homework/self-study tasks	13%	4%	23%	13%	63%	83%
Group assignments	20%	17%	47%	28%	33%	55%
Online assignments	41%	33%	34%	25%	25%	42%
Individual target setting	48%	50%	39%	19%	13%	31%
Self-evaluation	30%	27%	40%	21%	30%	52%

Appendix 5: Listening

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very Often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Pre-listening activities	3%	15%	13%	19%	84%	66%
Listening and note-taking	6%	16%	29%	16%	65%	68%
Listening games	29%	35%	29%	21%	42%	44%
Dictation	17%	9%	13%	10%	70%	81%
Integrated listening activities	21%	25%	45%	26%	34%	49%

Appendix 6: Viewing

	Never/rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Tables	38%	32%	31%	22%	31%	46%
Charts	42%	43%	32%	30%	26%	27%
Diagrams/figures	42%	51%	39%	26%	19%	23%
Video	3%	16%	32%	26%	65%	58%
Animations	6%	22%	42%	35%	52%	43%

Appendix 7: Language Knowledge

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Grammar	3%	4%	30%	12%	67%	84%
Vocabulary	3%	3%	17%	9%	80%	88%
Pronunciation	3%	10%	27%	14%	70%	75%

Appendix 8: Resources (use)

	Never/Rarely		Sometimes		Often/Very often	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
Video	0%	20%	23%	20%	77%	60%
Audio	0%	16%	36%	32%	64%	51%
Self-made audio recordings	47%	55%	31%	23%	22%	22%
Self-made video recordings	45%	60%	27%	15%	27%	25%
Overhead projector	9%	22%	15%	12%	76%	67%
White/blackboard	6%	12%	9%	5%	84%	82%
Interactive whiteboard/smartboard	9%	12%	12%	12%	79%	76%
Laptops	42%	29%	18%	27%	39%	44%
Mobile phones	33%	16%	18%	31%	48%	53%
Other mobile devices	50%	47%	13%	27%	38%	26%
Internet resources	6%	16%	13%	22%	81%	62%
Social media	0%	21%	25%	23%	75%	56%
Textbooks	0%	11%	6%	8%	94%	81%
Teacher guides (for the textbooks)	9%	12%	25%	14%	66%	74%
Workbooks	9%	10%	15%	16%	76%	74%
Self-produced handouts	24%	14%	30%	20%	45%	65%
Reference books (dictionaries etc)	6%	13%	28%	20%	66%	67%
Language games	16%	38%	31%	22%	53%	40%
Flashcards	38%	43%	25%	16%	38%	41%

Appendix 9: Classroom management

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
I have the skills needed to promote authentic communication in the classroom	23%	22%	77%	78%
The assigned textbook limits my ability to promote authentic classroom communication	45%	32%	55%	68%
I feel able to use Chinese in the classroom in order to promote learning	6%	8%	94%	92%
I feel confident knowing when to use Chinese and when not to	6%	11%	94%	89%
I know how to control the pace and timing of classroom activities	6%	6%	94%	94%
I understand how to signal transitions between the stages of a lesson	6%	10%	94%	90%
I am able to make effective use of available resources and equipment	0%	8%	100%	92%
I know how to give effective instructions to students	12%	9%	88%	91%
I am able to adjust my language to the language level of my students	6%	9%	94%	91%
I am able to monitor learner engagement in order to maintain learner motivation，	6%	8%	94%	92%
I am able to identify learning opportunities and adjust my learning plan accordingly	6%	10%	94%	90%
I know how to explain learning objectives in a way that promotes student motivation and engagement	6%	10%	94%	90%
I am able to plan lessons in collaboration with other teachers	0%	11%	100%	89%
I believe that planning lessons in collaboration with my colleagues is important	0%	11%	100%	89%

Appendix 10: Assessment

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
I understand how to use formative assessment	13%	20%	88%	80%
I am able to identify students learning needs at the beginning of a course	23%	26%	77%	74%
I am able to design end-of-course assessments that enable me to monitor my students' learning	16%	17%	84%	83%
I know how to employ work portfolios in order to measure students' learning	34%	23%	66%	77%
I know how to use peer assessment	19%	23%	81%	77%
I know how to use formative and summative assessment effectively	19%	27%	81%	73%
I am familiar with different modes of assessment	23%	27%	77%	73%
I feel able to assess students' real-life communicative ability	16%	33%	84%	67%
I am able to design my own assessment tasks	16%	20%	84%	80%
I know how to use assessment as a way of improving my course planning and teaching	19%	24%	81%	76%
I know how to direct learners to assess their own work and progress	16%	18%	84%	82%
I am able to use assessment as a way of motivating my students	9%	16%	91%	84%
I know how to design assessment tasks that measure the achievement of course objectives	17%	21%	83%	79%

Appendix 11: Technology

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
I am aware of technological resources that can support my teaching of English.	10%	10%	90%	90%
I have suitable access to technology for teaching English in my school.	10%	16%	90%	84%
I am able to choose technologies that enhance my teaching approaches.	17%	13%	83%	88%
I am able to choose technologies that enhance my students' learning.	7%	15%	93%	85%
My teacher education program helped me to think more deeply about how technology could influence the teaching approaches I use in my classroom.	3%	15%	97%	85%
I am able to think critically about how to use technology in my classroom.	3%	9%	97%	91%
I can adapt the use of the technologies to different teaching activities.	10%	14%	90%	86%
I feel confident using technology to support my teaching	13%	17%	87%	83%

Appendix 12: Resources (knowledge/ability)

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
I am able to make time to create my own materials	22%	38%	78%	62%
I have the understanding and skills needed to develop my own materials	19%	18%	81%	82%
I am able to create materials that promote opportunities for student interaction	16%	17%	84%	83%
I am able to adapt textbook materials in a way that maximises authentic communication	34%	37%	66%	63%
I am able to create materials that emphasise fluency as well as accuracy	23%	38%	77%	62%

Appendix 13: Reflexive practice and professional development

	Disagree		Agree	
	Less-experienced	*Experienced*	*Less-experienced*	*Experienced*
I have opportunities to observe and be observed by colleagues	0%	9%	100%	91%
I know how to reflect on my own and others' teaching practice	0%	7%	100%	93%
I am able to analyse my own teaching objectively	3%	7%	97%	93%
I know which journals can best facilitate the development of my theoretical and practical knowledge of English language teaching	26%	21%	74%	79%
I know how to work with colleagues in ways that develop me professionally	3%	9%	97%	91%
I know what opportunities exist for professional development outside of my institution and how take advantage of them	23%	21%	77%	79%
I am able and willing to incorporate colleagues' feedback on my teaching	0%	9%	100%	91%
I am able to engage in research, reading and other forms of classroom inquiry	23%	23%	77%	77%
I am able to present at professional conferences	34%	42%	66%	58%
My school supports me to attend professional conferences	19%	23%	81%	77%
Participation in teaching competitions is helpful for my professional development	0%	10%	100%	90%

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