# UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

# GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS ON THE DESIGN OF THE ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL)

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Jeanine Amy Edgar, student number 201102678, hereby declare that the minor dissertation entitled:

**Graduates' perceptions on the design of the online certification course for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)**

Submitted to the University of Johannesburg, apart from the assistance recognised and acknowledged, is my own work.

Furthermore, I confirm that:

- All sources have been referenced in accordance with the APA style,

- Data and findings have been collected and documented ethically,

- This document has not been presented previously or concurrently, for examination.

Signature: - -----------------------------------

Date: ------15 August 2020------------------------------------

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, my life with him is filled with laughter and adventure. To my parents that have always told me that anything is possible and their endless support to prove this notion. And lastly, to my late grandmother that is dearly missed by all those that had the privilege of knowing her.

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"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others" - Cicero, 54 B.C.

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# ABSTRACT

**Graduates' perceptions on the design of the online certification course for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)**

Very little research has been conducted on the design of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification courses. Student feedback is one procedure that can be used to identify and address any shortcomings of a course (Harvey, 2011). This study focuses on how graduates of online TEFL courses perceive the design of the course and whether they felt prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad. The study aims at highlighting the TEFL graduates' perceptions of the overall design of the online TEFL course while describing their perceived confidence to teach abroad upon completion of the online TEFL course. This study presents findings based on a qualitative inquiry that facilitated the study of the participants lived experience and allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their opinions and perspectives (Austin & Sutton, 2015). The results of this study propose that the participant's held both negative and positive perspectives. The content of the TEFL courses was perceived as being simple to access, well-sequenced, and with a good pace. Communication during the course was also shown in a very positive light. Participants felt that online TEFL staff replied quickly and course deadlines were flexible and accommodating. The participants also appreciated the support that the received from their peers. They did, however, feel that the feedback could have been more tailored to their specific needs and that more support should be available after the completion of their course. It was found that overall the participants did not feel prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad. Their suggestions include improvement in the following areas; classroom management, specific content according to the age, curriculum and culture they were to teach. In-class training was also shown to be suggested by every participant.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | |
|---|---|
| TEFL | Teaching English as a Foreign Language |
| Foreign Language | A Foreign language is a language that is not commonly found in the area in which it is being taught and learnt. The student usually only meets this language in a formal classroom setting (Moeller & Catalano; 2015). |
| Abroad | "Beyond the boundaries of one's country: in or to a foreign country" (Merriam-Wlebster online dictionary, 2019) in this study it is used to refer to a country that the participant was not born in and is typically very different from one's native country in a variety of ways: such as language, cuisine and customs. |
| Prepared | According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2019), the word prepared means "ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity" and to be "put in a proper state of mind". |
| Design | Design of the online course is the well thought out and deliberate process of structuring content, activities and information to fully achieve the course's objectives and facilitate higher-order thinking (Fink, 2003). |
| Instructional Design | A process followed by the designer to create an effective course (Piskurich, 2015) |
| E-learning | "Is a relatively new phenomenon and related to the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to-face meetings by online encounters" (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005, p. 469) |
| Course | A coherent academic engagement with a defined set of learning outcomes" (HESA, 2011, p.4). |
| Certificate | A document attesting to the fact that a person has completed an educational course" (Dictionary.com, 2020). |

| Learner Experience Design LXD | The process of creating learning experiences that enable the learner to achieve the desired learning outcome in a human centered and goal-oriented way. (Floor, 2018) |
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 1.    GENERAL ORIENTATION

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 "Collecting feedback from students about their experiences in tertiary institutions has become one of the central pillars of the quality process."

**(Williams & Cappuccini – Ansfield, 2007, p.159)**

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## 1.1   INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance in education is a highly debated and contested subject. Many procedures and protocols should be established to aim toward effective quality control of educational enterprises. Many online courses, "still suffer from the stigmas of poor quality and low standards" (M'hammed, 2009, p. 281). Student feedback is one procedure to identify and address any shortcomings of a course (Harvey, 2011). Student feedback should be gathered on an array of aspects such as "teaching, learning, course organisation, assessment and the learning resources available" (Williams & Cappuccini – Ansfield, 2007, p.160).

The foundation of quality in online courses is an effective design (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2008). Many models can be used to aid the course designer whilst developing an online course. These models will be discussed in more detail in paragraph 2.3.1. Although many models exist to assist in the designing of a course, they all share similarities as they aim at producing learner-centred courses that are constantly evaluated and upgraded to best suit the needs of all stakeholders.

Thus, it is important to highlight that teaching and learning online can take many forms and fall under many categories and names. For this research, e-learning will be the preferred term throughout. E-learning, according to Guri-Rosenblit (2005, p. 469), "is a relatively new phenomenon and related to the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to-face meetings by online encounters". E-learning provides many opportunities for all types of education, and teacher education training online is no exception. Whilst trying to make teachers classroom-ready, preservice

teacher education encounters many challenges. Online training expands access to education (Bakia, Shear, Toyama & Lasseter, 2012) for future teachers - it also fosters its own set of challenges.

Self-paced e-learning provides the student with the freedom and autonomy to work through course content at their leisure and complete assessments in their own time (Ghirardini, 2011). Designing an effective self-paced online course can be challenging as the designer is required to consider many intertwined factors. Instructional Design is explained by Piskurich (2015) as the process followed by the designer to create an effective course. Rothwell, Benscoter, King and King (2015) further explain that Instructional Design involves evaluating the students' performance and experiences and using this data to continuously update one's course to not only anticipate future problems but address them before they materialize. A course's design is therefore fluid and needs to be ever-changing.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses - the focus of this minor dissertation - are teacher training courses specifically for teachers who intend to teach English to students who are not first language English speakers. To work legally as a teacher in many countries, one needs to have at least a bachelor's degree with a minimum of two years related work experience (Baldi, 2016). This bachelor's degree can be in any field, however, if it is not in the field of education the candidate must also have a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate to qualify for a work permit. According to International TEFL and TESOL Training (N.D.) a TEFL certificate is a "the globally recognized standard qualification for teaching English to non-native speakers… many of the most popular countries for teaching English abroad also now require teachers to hold a TEFL certification to qualify for a work permit or visa".

This chapter will further provide a description of the need to conduct the research. The problem statement, aims of the study, and the research design will then be clarified.

## 1.2   THE NEED TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

There is limited research available on online TEFL courses especially from the perspective of the TEFL graduate. Very little research has been conducted on TEFL

certificates, yet they are still being used as an assurance that anyone with this certification is well-prepared to teach English. Any degree and a TEFL certificate are enough to secure a job in almost any country - some countries only require a TEFL certificate as a bachelor's degree isn't a requirement. Although many countries continuously crackdown on the requirements for foreign teachers, the tremendous demand for English teachers allows some people to fall through the cracks. This research is necessary to understand how educators teaching English as a foreign language perceive the design of their online TEFL course and how effective it was at preparing them to teach abroad.

### 1.2.1 *The increasing demand for English teachers in foreign countries*

According to the International Association of Language Centers (2016, p.6), English is by far the most demanded foreign language where "87% of Asian students choose English". The demand for English teachers in China expresses this demand. Although concrete statistics are not readily available for China, Malmsten (2018) explicates that the growth in the demand was exponential from 2016 to 2017 – "there was a 298% growth from 123.6 billion RMB to 489.7 billion RMB in the English Education market in China" and it was predicted that "100,000 English teachers were needed in China" and this number was "expected to increase further over the next few years".

### 1.2.2 *Quality of training for EFL teachers*

The quality assurance for TEFL courses and certificates are cause for alarm. This will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 2, however, it is important to mention here that there is no specific accrediting company to check and control the standards of online TEFL courses. Preparing teachers for any classroom is a daunting task and even after a four-year bachelor's degree, many teachers are overwhelmed by the pressures of being a teacher and they feel ill-equipped for the realities of the classroom. Green, Eady and Andersen (2018) explain that there are gaps between tertiary education and the real world which leaves graduates feeling unprepared for the teaching profession.

Student feedback is a great way to evaluate and monitor the quality of any educational experience. Students are at the foreground of the educational experience and are often more aware of shortcomings than other internal stakeholders or external evaluators (Hill, 1995). Thus, this study aims at exploring the perceptions of the TEFL graduates to highlight their opinions related to the certificates' design and its ability to prepare graduates for teaching abroad.

## 1.3   RESEARCH PROBLEM

Due to the increase in demand for English teachers in Asia, more people will look to TEFL companies for qualifications before moving abroad and becoming teachers. These TEFL graduates do not need any prior experience or other teaching qualifications. It is therefore pertinent to research how graduates of online TEFL courses perceive the design of the course and whether they feel prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad, as the TEFL certificate is usually the only form of training standing between them and a classroom.

The research question to be answered in this study is, therefore, **how did the TEFL graduates perceive the design of their TEFL course, and did they feel prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad?**

## 1.4   AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to highlight how graduates of online TEFL courses perceive the design of the course and whether they felt prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad. This study aims at accomplishing the following objectives in order to answer this question:

➢ Accentuating the participants' perspectives on the design of the course

➢ Highlighting participants' perspectives on application of knowledge and skills that they learnt

➢ Determining whether participants felt prepared for teaching abroad.

4

## 1.5 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

McKenney and Reeves (2012, p. i) explain educational design research as blending:

> *"scientific investigation with systematic development and implementation of solutions to educational problems. Empirical investigation is conducted in real learning settings – not laboratories – to craft usable and effective solutions. At the same time, the research is carefully structured to produce theoretical understanding that can serve the work of others."*

This next section outlines the research design that is fully explained in Chapter 3.

### 1.5.1 *Participants in the study*

The participants in this study are teachers of diverse backgrounds who teach abroad and have already completed their TEFL certificates. These participants did not have any other teaching qualifications when they started teaching abroad - this will also be covered in more detail in paragraph 3.2.2.

### 1.5.2 *The research design*

The qualitative strategy aims at gathering a comprehensive account of human beliefs and opinions in the context in which they are formed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Likewise, it facilitates the study of the participants lived experience and allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their opinions and perspectives (Austin & Sutton, 2015). I, therefore, chose a qualitative approach as I am interested in encapsulating the perspectives of the TEFL graduates regarding their TEFL course and their experiences of teaching abroad.

Semi-structured interviews will be used in this research to elicit responses from participants. A semi-structured interview allows all questions to be answered whilst allowing interviewer and participants to digress from questions where necessary. The interviews will be somewhat conversational in the sense that certain topics will be

covered, and probes will be used to provide a deeper understanding if necessary (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interviews are well suited to qualitative research because they allow the interviewee the chance to entice depth from the explanations. Also, interviewees are given a platform to share their voice and given the platform to explain their thoughts and feelings (Berg, 2009). The semi-structured interview is effective for conversationally gathering data as the interviewer has the freedom to choose the order of the questions and digress from the structured questions for further probing. According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), it is best used when the interviewer wants to delve deeper into the answers provided which, in this case, is the participants' perspective on the online course and whether they felt it prepared them for teaching abroad.

An inductive approach will be adopted for this study and lived experiences of the participants will summarise their perceptions of the design of the TEFL course and whether they felt prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad.

### 1.5.3 *Data collection*

This study will comprise of a once-off semi-structured interview with nine participants that have a TEFL certificate and have taught English as a Foreign Language. Some participants will be interviewed face-to-face and others will be interviewed online using WeChat and the video will be recorded for transcription (with their signed consent). The audio and video will be made available to my supervisor in order to ensure trustworthiness in this minor dissertation.

### 1.5.4 *The research programme*

The successive chapters are:

Chapter two comprises of this studies literature review that outlines the literature available on this topic. It places this study within the broader context and confirms the research paradigm.

Chapter three encompasses the research methodology chosen for this study, firstly the context of the study will be provided followed by the research design. This study's sampling procedures and data collection methods will then be laid out in detail.

Chapter four will describe the data analysis procedures that will be used for this study.

Chapter 5 sketches the findings of the study and explores the implications of these findings. Conclusions will be drawn from these findings and advice for future studies will be established.

## 1.6   SUMMARY

This chapter's function is to provide an overarching outline of the study. Firstly, online teaching and learning and the importance of effective design models were covered. Then the TEFL certificate was explained as a preservice teacher training method and the problem with quality control was briefly highlighted. The rationale for this study was laid out as follows; there is an increase in the demand of teachers and little quality assurance of these teachers. The TEFL certificate needs to be well designed to ensure that it will be effective in preparing graduates for a foreign classroom as it is often the only training that the graduate receives before teaching. Finally, the research design and research process were specified.

# CHAPTER 2.    LITERATURE REVIEW

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**"Rethinking conventional education in light of technological developments and the need for higher-order educational outcomes is shaking the foundation of the educational enterprise. E-learning is the nexus of technological and pedagogical developments which has led to insights into deep and meaningful learning"**

**(Garrison, 2016, p.1).**

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## 2.1    INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at encapsulating current literature applicable to this study in order to provide a robust context. Firstly, online courses will be defined, and various types of online courses explored. Then TEFL courses as online preservice teacher training opportunities will be discussed, including the factors that influence the demand for TEFL courses, and the possibilities and challenges of online preservice teacher training courses. Thereafter, literature relating to online course design will be considered, paying attention to current design models, design of online TEFL courses, and challenges with online course design. Lastly, publications that explore quality assurance of online courses will be described underlining quality assurance related to TEFL companies, accrediting bodies, and using student feedback to ensure quality.

## 2.2    ONLINE COURSES

HESA (2011, p.4) defines a course as "a coherent academic engagement with a defined set of learning outcomes". Allen and Seaman (2013, p. 7) state that for a course to be considered "online, at least 80 per cent of the course content" should be via the internet. An online course requires an internet connection in order to access course materials and assessments (Wasim, Sharma, Khan & Siddiqui, 2014).

Sun and Chen (2016, p.157) explains that online teaching and learning holds the possibility to create "critical learning spaces, in which students are encouraged to increase their capacities of analysis, imagination, critical synthesis, creative expression, self-awareness, and intentionality". However, research conducted by Alexander, Truell and Zhao (2012) revealed that students found some challenges when studying online; the increased need for self-discipline from the students and problems related to not receiving help from instructors regarding assignment or technology issues.

### 2.2.1 *Types of online courses*

There are many types of online learning experiences such as self-paced or facilitated/instructor-led that can be either synchronous or asynchronous. A self-paced course allows students to work through course content at their own pace usually without being monitored, whereas a facilitated course usually has stricter schedules and involves collaboration with an instructor and potentially other students (Ghirardini, 2011). Synchronous means that the learning experience occurs in real-time through a face-to-face lecture or using technology in real-time such as video conferencing or polling apps, whereas asynchronous is not reliant on time and can occur through email, messaging, discussion forums (Ghirardini, 2011, p. 13).

Another type of learning, a form of online learning, is blended learning which according to Allan (2007, p.4) is "a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning". Lalima and Dangwal (2017, p.131) further explain blended learning as a "teaching-learning process that incorporates both face to face teaching and teaching supported by ICT (Information Communication Technologies). Blended learning incorporates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching and individualized computer-assisted learning". Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) described six explanations as to why one may elect to design or use a blended course: "(1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost-effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision". Graham, Allen and Ure (2003) found that people often chose blended learning for three reasons "(1) improved pedagogy, (2) increased access and flexibility, and (3) increased cost-effectiveness". Graham (2006, p.8) does, however, say that although Blended Learning has the possibility to "combine the best of both

worlds", if not well designed it "can also mix the least effective elements of both worlds".

### 2.2.1 *Online preservice teaching training courses*

Before further explanation, it is important to clarify that a preservice teacher is someone who has not yet entered the teaching profession. Most preservice teacher training programs include an in-service phase whereby preservice teachers are provided with the opportunity to be immersed in the teaching environment through observation and participation, allowing for supervision and assessment (Nguyen, 2019). Online preservice teacher training courses, for instance, the bachelor's degree offered through the University of South Africa (UNISA), also has a compulsory practical phase for five weeks each year over a four-year period (UNISA, n.d). UNISA therefore trains preservice teachers through a blended learning approach. The theory is provided online, and teachers are also required to attend practical sessions in schools in order to obtain their certification. However, most online TEFL courses do not offer any practical exposure to their participants and TEFL students can graduate without this exposure to the classroom.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all formula to design an effective preservice teacher course, a few authors have recommendations compiled through research in this area. Research on graduate teachers seems to unanimously agree that in-service practicals are the most beneficial phase of their training (Haigh & Ward 2004; Graham 2006; Allen & Wright 2014; White & Forgasz 2016). There also seems to be a call to reduce the amounts of theory given in favour of practical teaching strategies (Mayer, et al., 2017). Graduates also felt better prepared if their practical was completed in the same or similar school as they hired. Shulman (1992) discussed the use of case-studies as a device to prepare future teachers as teachers were required to apply theories learnt to real-world problems with the guidance of others, Darling-Hammond (2013) seconds this notion of applying taught knowledge in one's career through "apprenticeship learning". Perhaps what many online TEFL courses are lacking is a practical arena in which students can apply the theories that they have learnt from the course.

### 2.2.1.1  TEFL courses as preservice teacher training and certification

TEFL courses aim at providing knowledge and skills for teaching English as a foreign language. It is important to note that if the student graduates from any 120-hour TEFL course they will be considered a certified teacher in many countries. A simple internet search will reveal that there are vast amounts of companies and universities that offer TEFL courses. Some of these companies include: Vantage, TEFLPros, myTEFL, ITT International TEFL & TESOL, Teaching Nomad, International TEFL Academy, i-to-I, LoveTEFL, Let's TEFL and Global English TESOL (McCollum-Martinez, 2019).

A TEFL course can be completed using diverse means.  Go Abroad (2018) published an article listing and explaining the different options available for a TEFL course as; online, in-person abroad, in-person in the country that the student intends on working, in-person in the students' home country, blended courses that have both online and in-person components and in-person through a university.

The admission requirements for many TEFL courses are not very strict. In an i-to-i (2019, p. 2) brochure it states that it isn't necessary for the student to have "prior teaching experience, degree, practical training or the ability to be able to speak a foreign language" in order to qualify for the course although most courses prefer students over eighteen (Deady, 2018). Although the requirements for English teachers are always changing, Premier TEFL (2019) summaries EFL jobs by country and provides job requirements amongst other information. This document is separated by country and provides information on requirements for English teachers.

### 2.2.2  Factors influencing the demand for TEFL courses

The demand for TEFL courses can be linked to the spread of English around the world. Determining the current global prevalence of English is not an easy task, however, McCarthy (2018) rates the percentage of native English speakers as the third-largest at 379 million, behind Mandarin (1311 million) and Spanish (460 million). Although English does not have the most native speakers it is vastly spread around the world. According to Eberhard, Simons and Fennig (2017), English is established in 106

countries, compared to 37 for Chinese and 31 for Spanish. English is also said to be the most commonly learnt second or foreign language (Mosalingua, 2018).

English is seen as a commodity for international business and education. English takes on many roles. It is described as a lingua franca, which means that it is adopted as a common language when both speakers do not share a common tongue (Osman, 2017). It is also said to be a global language. Rohmah (2005) describes a global language as one that is used in most cities globally and dominant in most forms of media and entertainment. English is also referred to as the language of "science, of aviation, computers, diplomacy, and tourism" (Mahu, 2012, p.374). Kaplan (2000) explains that approximately 80% or 85% of all the scientific and technological information is written in English.

Thus, the appeal to learn English cannot be denied. English improves the chances of further education and this is an important factor because 712,157 Chinese students were studying abroad in 2016 (UNESCO, 2016). English is also seen as the gateway to the job market (Pang, Zhou & Fu, 2002) and it has even been proven that in many instances learning English can result in higher earnings (Chiswick & Miller, 2014; Johnson, 2016). It is, therefore, no surprise that China Daily (2015) estimated that, in 2015, 300 million people in China were studying English. Figures could be exceedingly higher now but very little is known about China. Nevertheless, it is known that there is a massive demand for English teachers in China. According to Cheng (2019), China's early-years English language learning market will see substantial growth, both online and offline. The market has been estimated to climb as high as tens of billions of Yuan by 2020.

### 2.2.2.1 *Possibilities and challenges with online preservice teaching training courses*

After graduating from preservice training programs, teachers are expected to be ready for the classroom however research demonstrates that they encounter difficulties such as; feeling unprepared for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Mayer, et al., 2017). There is limited literature available that specifically targets preservice teacher training online. This type of training can also be referred to as Initial Teacher

Education. Research done in Australia showed that there was a 10 per cent increase in off-campus or online enrolment for Initial Teacher Education between 2008 and 2017 and a fifteen per cent decrease in on-campus training in the same years (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2019, p.2). Online teacher training is increasing, it holds a lot of potential as it increases the accessibility for many students that previously might not have been able to attend the course due to health, distance or economic reasons. One also needs to consider the challenges these students face due to factors such as lack of support, and technological difficulties, to name a few (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018).

### 2.2.3 *Challenges with online teacher training*

Due to the limited amount of literature available on challenges for specific to online teacher training we assume that challenges that students face in traditional courses will also arise for online students. A major challenge identified through literature is classroom preparedness. Graduate teachers feel predominantly unprepared for classroom management and teaching in classrooms with diverse students. The divide between the students' education and reality is also a challenge for them. Some recommendations for these problems were then provided. Subsequently, it is then important to consider specific issues related to teaching English as a foreign language.

#### 2.2.3.1 *Classroom preparedness*

Preparing teachers for the classroom is the ultimate aim of any preservice training course. Jordan, Kurilof, Sutherland, Ponnock and Hoffman (2018, p.4) explains that the "majority of new teachers graduate from schools of education feeling underprepared to meet the challenge of motivating and engaging students." Preparedness is a complex and multifaceted concept and is dependent on many factors and ranges of perspectives. Students may feel prepared and other stakeholders may disagree or vice-versa. Teachers that enter the profession are held to certain levels of expectations and standards.

The aim of a TEFL certificate should, therefore, be to provide preservice teachers with "discipline-specific knowledge, pedagogy and assessment methods" (Setty, Iyengar, Witenstein, Byker & Kidwai, 2019, p.37). Providing TEFL graduates with these skills is not enough, as Bahr & Mellor (2016) explain that preservice teachers will have to have congregated this knowledge and skills needed for the classroom and show positive attributes associated with an effective teacher such as compassion, humour, open-mindedness, to name but a few. Preservice teachers need to also be able to apply this knowledge and skills to a variety of schools and students (Rowan, Mayer, Kline, Kostogriz, & Walker-Gibbs, 2015) which comes with guidance and experience.

Effectively preparing teachers is a massive task especially considering the complex nature of teaching and learning. Therefore, Mayer, et al., (2017) explicates that it is more beneficial to consider both the role of the preservice teachers' education and their employment as contributors in the effective readiness for the classroom. This notion is supported by further explanation that teacher preparedness may not be a static factor and may change over time, teachers may acquire skills through their preservice education which develop through hands-on experience in the classroom (Mayer, et al., 2017).

Research conducted by (Mayer, et al., 2017, p.61) suggests that teachers entering the profession feel most unprepared in the following areas:

- classroom management,
- professional engagement with parents/carers and the community
- assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning
- teaching culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse learners.


Many authors emphasized classroom management as an area that new and experienced teachers have difficulties with. Siebert (2005) feels that inadequate training regarding classroom management in preservice education results in these complications. Although teacher education may provide theories on managing a classroom applying these theories to create productive and constructive classrooms is a difficult and underdeveloped skill (Oliver & Reschly, 2007).

Another overarching problem is described as the "theory-practice divide" or "transition shock", these occur as a teacher moves from learning teaching theories to applying them in the classroom. Because the classroom is a complex environment influenced by many contextual factors it proves difficult to prepare the new teacher to effectively navigate these environments in preservice education (Monroe, Blackwell & Pepper, 2010).

Although the above-mentioned challenges apply to all new teachers irrespective of their mode of study (on-campus, online or blended instruction) some challenges are specific to online preservice teachers. Dyment and Downing (2018, p.72) have summarised some of these as:

- feelings of isolation (Murdock & Williams, 2011)
- lack of support (Heirdsfield, Davis, Lennox, Walker, & Zhang, 2007)
- lack of confidence or competence in the required technological knowledge (Rovai & Downey, 2010)
- a struggle to take on a greater level of responsibility for own learning (Broadbent & Poon, 2015)

TEFL graduates usually receive no other training before entering the classroom, therefore they need to be prepared for the classroom after the 120-hour TEFL certification. Eilisha (2007) explained that a student's culture influences their style of learning and behaviour. Therefore, preparing TEFL graduates not only to be ready for cultural differences but also other classroom realities should be the ultimate aim of the TEFL course.

### 2.2.3.2  Challenges related to teaching English as a foreign language

TEFL courses are often broad and don't specify school type of age group, this often leads to a problem with linking taught theories to the real-world. Ryan (1979) highlighted that many teachers face hurdles in their first year of teaching because they are not prepared for specific jobs in specific schools and they have no idea of the workload and job expectations.

Then there is the problem of TEFL companies promising to help find graduates suitable jobs. However, this is a very eager promise as most people that graduate has never taught before and are unclear of the differences in schools, curriculums and age groups available (Mernin, 2012). Because TEFL companies sell the dream of global travel, high salaries and exotic locations, many graduates do not anticipate any problems before moving abroad consequently holding high expectations (Wang, 2011). Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) explain that it is easy for a new teacher to underestimate the impact of the students' home and community contexts on teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the problem of the massive shortage of foreign language teachers all over the world may be temporarily lulled by hiring any foreign teacher that applies for the position, but this presents unique set of obstacles. Punthumasen (2007) explains that many foreigners are hired "out of field" meaning that they did not initially study to be a teacher or study at all. Thus, many teachers are unprepared for the classrooms and are unsure of how to speak English properly (Salahuddin, Khan & Rahman, 2013). Many foreign teachers only take a position to travel and need to continuously be replaced, which is detrimental to the cohesion of the staff (Punthumasen, 2007). Teachers are therefore left without guidance and Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007, p.118) elucidates that teachers without guidance tend to merely "cope rather than to promote learning for all their students."

Moreover, teachers are unaware of the extent of their students' English levels, especially in more rural areas. Smith (2017) explained that only about 10 million people can speak English, which is fewer than 1 in 100 people. China Highlights (2020) estimates that less than 1 per cent of China mainlanders poses conversational levels of English. Most TEFL graduates come from countries where English is more common and are left completely unprepared for these low proficiency levels. Also, English is a foreign language in China, therefore, the TEFL graduates' students do not encounter the vocabulary in their daily lives. Students must be self-motivated to acquire and retain vocabulary as it is not readily available Hasan (2016). Likewise learning English is much more than simply learning new vocabulary and sentence structure one needs to learn the culture of the language. English is also full of slang and colloquialisms that are often not taught in a formal setting, leaving a gap between real life and the classroom (Hayat Al-Khatib, 2009).

Another consideration of foreigners that move abroad to teach English as a foreign language is that they are required to leave the safety and normality of their home country to travel to another country that is often very different from their own. Therefore, teachers experience culture shock. Culture shock as explained by Oberg (1954, p.177) as an "occupational disease suffered by people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad" and it is caused by "losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse". Brining (2015) explains that this culture shock may have a major impact on the teacher's motivation and assimilation within the new school and environment.

## 2.3 DESIGNING AN ONLINE COURSE

The design or Instructional Design of any learning experience is a complex and multifaceted endeavour and includes the careful planning of all aspects that influence learning, such as student prior knowledge, student needs, student expectations, course goals, course content, course pacing, course timeframe, assessment, support, feedback, collaboration to mention a few (Ghirardini, 2011). Rothwell, Benscoter, King and King (2015, p.3) explain that the instructional design is for the development and improvement of "performance, efficiency and effectiveness".

Hence the design of an online course is vital for its success. According to Chen (2016) if an online course is not properly designed students usually become overwhelmed and lost. These feelings are exacerbated if the student isn't accustomed to using technology and the internet. A well-designed course stimulates and cultivates active and engaged learning (Chen, 2016). Brown (2010, p.1) articulates that detailed and careful planning that "occurs before, during, and after instruction is a foundation of effective teaching". Brown (2010, p.1) goes on to express that course content should be planned around "central concepts" in order to determine the sequencing and pacing in order to ensure content and assignments occur within a feasible timeframe.

### 2.3.1 *Models used to design online courses*

Although there are many theories and guides to facilitate the effective design of an online course a well-known design model is the ADDIE model. ADDIE is an acronym that stands for: "Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate" (Branch, 2009, p.1). Branch (2009) explains that the ADDIE model is used to guide the designer through the process of designing a course for varying contexts and aims at providing the student with an authentic and effective learning experience. Another relevant model for course design is The Dick-Carey model which guides the designer through nine steps that also include the evaluation of the course (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2009).

While the ADDIE and The Dick-Carey model could be used to design any type of course, it is important that the designer attempts to be an agent of transformation by not perpetuating outdated pedagogies and calling them modern because they utilise technology (Conole, Dyke, Oliver & Seale, 2004). Moallem (2003) emphasizes that the social aspect of online learning is often left underdeveloped and attempts to formulate a model that targets collaboration through four types of support namely; community, peer, cognitive and emotional.

According to Murray's and Christison's (2017) research courses that were designed to facilitate group and interaction amongst students were found to be most favoured amongst students and online courses with no synchronous aspect favoured the least. Whichever model or combination of models the designer chooses for their online course it is important that they are reflective and constantly adapt and change the course to ensure that it is effective (Rothwell, et al., 2015).

### 2.3.2 *Learning Experience Design and online preservice teacher training*

The term "Learning Experience Design" (LXD) was coined by Niels Floor in 2007. Floor (2018) describes LXD as "the process of creating learning experiences that enable the learner to achieve the desired learning outcome in a human-centred and goal-oriented way". LXD highlights how students learn rather than how they are taught, primarily

focusing on the way knowledge and skills are assimilated and applied (Malamed, 2015).

The learners are therefore at the centre of the experience, in a process called human-centred design. Thus, LXD revolves heavily around the goals of the learners (Floor, 2016). Floor (2019) explains that the designer must get to know and understand the people that they are designing the course for by "getting in touch with your target audience through interviews, observations".

Floor (2019) explains that an experience takes time and leaves an impression, a learning experience is any experience that we learn something from and stays with us. LXD aims at designing courses that creates a platform for these learning experiences to occur. The learning journey is therefore meant to be "enjoyable, engaging, relevant and informative." (Sohal, 2019) explains that putting learning into practice is important for LXD. Taking learners down a learning path toward proficiency. The learning path is paved with content, feedback, support and reflection (Rosenheck, 2015). Johnson (2016) explains that the course designer must ensure that the progress of each student is effectively communicated to them in a constructive and actionable way.

Rosenheck (2015, p.26) explains that LXD is a great match for teacher training as teachers are currently "unprepared for classroom realities, student teaching is haphazard, uncoordinated [and it is necessary to] focus on competence". TEFL courses aim at providing future teachers with "English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies and techniques in order for you to enter the classroom with confidence and begin teaching… you owe it to your students to be prepared and know what you are doing" (International TEFL Institute, 2020, p.4). Therefore, the goal of the TEFL course is to ensure that the TEFL graduate is prepared to teach English abroad.

### 2.3.3 *TEFL course design*

The design of the TEFL courses depends on numerous factors such as its mode of completion, duration, available modules, and provider, to name but a few. TEFL courses are predominantly comprised of the following modules: Pronunciation,

Grammar, Vocabulary, Lesson Planning, Classroom Management, English Language Teaching Methodology, The Four Key Skills: Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking and Error Correction. Some TEFL courses offer more modules whilst others only offer a few. Some TEFL courses also include modules on Teaching Young Learners, Teaching Adults, and/or Teaching Business English.

TEFL course assessment also varies depending on many factors; however, many courses followed an analogous assessment protocol of multiple-choice style tests especially after each module, a section on lesson planning where students were required to submit their lesson plans and finally an essay style written assessment.

### 2.3.4 *Challenges with online course design*

Course designers face many challenges when designing an online course. Many interconnected factors provide hurdles for both the instructor and the student. Some of these obstacles pertain to; interaction, real-world contexts, students' technical skills, student feeling isolated and student expectations.

Brunet (2011) explains that students feel that one main disadvantage of learning online is the lack of interaction between instructor and student. The course designer must ensure that students are provided opportunities to have discussions with their peers whilst receiving feedback from their instructors. The feedback from the instructor is said to reinforce course material and motivate student engagement (Jacobs, 2013).

Practical application of learnt theory is very important for student satisfaction, Braxton (2003) explains that a student may not complete a course if they felt that the course was of little practical use especially if the course was expensive. Although there are other driving forces for persistence in a course, this research shows the importance of bridging the theory-practice divide. Students feel that developing practical skills is underrepresented in their online courses unless practical work experience is a part of their course (Cavanagh, Burston, Southcombe, & Bartram, 2015). Although some courses offer better links to the real-world contexts, student feedback often suggests that students feel a divide between theory and practice (Gillett-Swan, 2017).

Although students are perceived as being tech-savvy, Hoffman (2010) explains that students are often unfamiliar with the usual desktop programs as these often remain untaught to them. Though students use technology to communicate they often battle to use other programs intended for educational purposes (Jacobs, 2013). The designer of online courses needs to ensure that these possible technical difficulties need to be identified early and provisions need to be made to address this problem as it is also one of the leading causes to the student feeling isolated.

Most research pertaining to problems with online learning mention student feelings of isolation. Lim and Vighnarajah (2018) highlight three types of isolation that students may feel: academic, social and physiological. Although the cause of this issue may vary and materialise despite the best intentions of the course designer it is important to implement monitoring protocols to identify students at risk. Incorporating platforms that facilitate communication amongst peers and instructors help to curb this problem (Liu, 2008). Tutors have also been shown to provide advice, support and guidance to online students (Lynch, 2004).

Lastly, the expectations of the learners can also pose a challenge to online courses. Students may have expectations regarding feedback, assessments, content or other aspects of the course. If their expectations are not met, they will not be satisfied in the course which may negatively impact their success in the course. The course designer, therefore, needs to ensure that these expectations are considered, and course rules and procedures need to be clearly outlined before the start of the course (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz & Santiague, 2017).

## 2.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ONLINE COURSES

The design of any course needs to consider quality assurance which is a multifaceted phenomenon. Butcher and Wilson-Strydom (n.d) explain quality assurance as having two functions namely, a way to ensure accountability and pathway to improvement. Assuring quality in private online courses proves to be a difficult task. Lastly, the role of the students' perspective in quality assurance protocols is a highly debated topic and will be discussed.

### 2.4.1 *TEFL company's quality assurance*

There are many considerations when attempting to assure the quality of online courses provided by private companies. Murray (2013) explained that different providers of online courses provided different means of quality assurance for their course, some declared quality of their instructors without providing the names of these instructors, others expressed their accreditation through various private accrediting agencies.

#### 2.4.1.1 *Accrediting bodies*

Companies have developed a set of criteria by which TEFL companies are assessed in order to aim at providing a quality course, this creates its own set of problems. A blog on ESL Base (2019) explains that "Just as anyone can create a TEFL course, so too can anyone create a TEFL accrediting body". A blog written by Deady (2018) takes it a step further by explaining that "courses will go as far as creating a fraudulent accrediting company to give their course a false veneer of legitimacy".

There are however a few recognised accrediting bodies for TEFL courses. Stimac (2018) lists recognised accrediting bodies for TEFL courses as:

- ACCET- Association of Language Testers in Europe
- ACTDEC- Accreditation Council for TESOL Distance Education Courses
- IATEFL- International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language,
- ODLQC- The Open & Distance Learning Quality Council
- TQUK- Training Qualifications UK
- WTEFLAC- World TEFL Accrediting Commission

TEFL courses can apply for accreditation from these bodies. ODLQC (2012) for instance explains on their website that they aim to "identify and enhance quality in education and training". "The Standards set out the Council's definition of quality.

Open and distance learning providers who meet those standards are eligible to apply for accreditation by the Council" (ODLQC, 2012). Thus, there are accrediting bodies that oversee online TEFL courses.

However, most schools and training centres are not concerned about the quality of a teacher's TEFL certification. Having a TEFL certification is on the list of requirements for the VISA application and no inquiries are made into what the course covered (or didn't cover) and whether the TEFL certificate provider was accredited or not (Deady, 2018). Murray's and Christison's (2017) research showed that 60 per cent of participants did not indicate accreditation as a factor for choosing their TEFL courses.

### 2.4.2 *Using student feedback to ensure quality*

Student feedback has been used for many years to evaluate education. Wilcox (2013) explains that there is an irrefutable link between student success and student satisfaction, if the student does not perceive the benefit of the course, they are less likely to assert themselves. Kress (2006) further explains that student satisfaction is in the best interest of the livelihood of the program or institution. Porfilio and Yu (2006) explores the notion of the student as the consumer, "economic ideology is being normalized within educational arenas as market principles and commercial criteria are invading [education]" (Porfilio & Yu, 2006, p.226). Edstrom (2008) however explains that student evaluation can be shallow and subjective. Educational programs are therefore facing large amounts of pressure to produce positive feedback from the students whilst ensuring educational goals are also met (Walker 2001).

Miwa and Miyahara (2015, p.20) asks "whether the inherently reductive nature of student ratings—regardless of their demonstrable validity and reliability—can provide the critical insights necessary to drive improved teaching and student learning in the increasingly complex and multi-layered learning environments." These authors also express the need to better research the nature of student responses and its role in pedagogical decisions. Evidence from their research indicated that using these responses to improve teaching "actually worked to undermine academic judgment, teaching autonomy and, most seriously, teaching quality and educational standards" (Miwa & Miyahara, 2015, p.161). Whilst studying responses made from students the

potential and subjectivity needs to be kept in mind. Floors (2019) explains that the design must be constantly evaluated to ensure that learning experiences were created, and the goals of the course were met. Student feedback is vital as they are the centre of the learning experience.

## 2.5   SUMMARY

In this chapter literature related to online TEFL courses were described in detail. This literature provides a context of online courses, TEFL courses, course design and quality assurance.

The different types of online courses were explored which are dependent on the purpose and the needs of the stakeholders. Online TEFL course was then described as a preservice teacher training course and the types of TEFL courses were discussed. Literature that explains the demand for online TEFL courses related to the need for foreign language teachers due to the nature of the English language as a lingua franca and a global language used for commerce. The possibilities and challenges of online preservice teacher training courses such as TEFL courses were explored. Classroom preparedness and classroom management were highlighted as challenges. Literature that highlighted specific challenges faced by foreign language teachers was then explored.

Then literature that deliberated course design was presented. Current models used for designing courses such as the ADDIE model, The Dick-Carey model were defined. Learner Experience Design was highlighted as an important design to be used for preservice training such as TEFL courses because it accentuates applying skills and knowledge learnt in the course. The design of TEFL courses was then underlined then literature pertaining to challenges of designing online courses was described.

Lastly, the notion of quality assurance of online courses was explored. TEFL course's accrediting bodies were described and finally literature that demarcated the possibilities and challenges of using student feedback as a form of quality assurance were discussed.

In the next chapter, the research design will be explored in detail in order to explain how the problem was investigated and provide justification for the methods and techniques employed.

# CHAPTER 3.    THE RESEARCH DESIGN- GRADUATE'S PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE TEFL COURSES

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*"Qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant… interviews are used to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective"*

**(Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016, p.499)**

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## 3.1    INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes how the data was collected, recorded and analysed in this study. This study aims at exploring the perceptions of TEFL online course graduates regarding the design of their online course. This study is therefore qualitative as it attempts to describe human experiences embedded in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Data will be collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. These interviews will then be transcribed, and the data will then be analysed using the procedures and techniques described below.

The data will be analysed using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis can be described as a "data reduction and analysis strategy, by which qualitative data are segmented, categorised, summarised, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.867). Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that this method is valuable when striving to compare the perspectives of different participants to examine the similarities and variances and to uncover unexpected ideas.

## 3.2    THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this section, TEFL courses, the participants, and foreign English teaching will be introduced.

### 3.2.1  *TEFL courses*

The details of TEFL courses were covered in section 2.2.2.2.

Although there are a lot of TEFL courses, all participants in this study have completed courses that were at least 120 hours in length. A TEFL course of 120 hours is the minimum requirement for many countries to legally obtain a working VISA. For ethical reasons, participants were not expected to expose the provider of their TEFL course.

The mode in which the participants completed the course varied. Two participants completed the course 100 per cent online. Four completed blended courses with 100 hours online and 20 hours in person. Another participant's TEFL course was also blended but with a 60-hour online component and a 60 in-person constituent. Lastly, two were completed 100 per cent in person, one of those participants attended the course in China where they taught after graduating the course. As mentioned in paragraph 2.2 Allen and Seaman (2013, p.7) explain that a course is required to be at least 80 per cent online to be constituted as an online course, therefore six of the nine participants completed their TEFL course online. Although the focus of this study is the design of online courses the data collected from the three participants that were not online allowed for comparisons to be made between the perceived experiences of the participants completing their TEFL through the different modes.

### 3.2.2  *The participants in this study*

The participants of this study were sampled by using a purposeful sampling method. The participants required for this study had to have a TEFL certificate and to have taught in a country abroad. Participants were from different countries and none of them were teachers in their home countries. Additionally, none of the participants had other teaching qualifications other than the TEFL certificate before entering the classrooms. They, therefore, relied solely on their TEFL credentials to prepare them for the teaching profession.

## 3.3   THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan that the researcher follows to convert their research idea into a research project (Cheek, 2008). The approach used for this study can be described as *qualitative, exploratory* and *evaluative.*

Exploratory research aims at discovering new insight into a topic that has not been extensively researched (Akhtar, 2016).  While online courses have been researched from many angles, an online course aimed specifically at English teacher preparation has not been well researched. Evaluative research is useful to determine merits and areas in need of improvement in policy, organisation or in this case a course (Saville, 2017). Students' perceptions and evaluations of courses have been widely used to collect valuable data on learning programmes (Capa-Aydin, Cobanoglu & Gülmez, 2017).

## 3.4   RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology used for this study is a generic qualitative approach. This approach can also be called a basic qualitative or interpretive approach (Merriam, 2009). A generic qualitative approach according to Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003, p.4) "is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the more recognised qualitative methodologies" such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. Generic qualitative studies, therefore, avoid conforming exclusively to these more recognised methodologies and can adapt the methodologies to the benefit of their study (Lim, 2011).

Merriam (2009, p.23) explains that interpretive studies revolve around understanding "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences." This study is interpretive as it aims to highlight the perceptions of teachers that have obtained TEFL certificates with a focus on the design of the online course.

This study also uses some principles of a grounded theory approach, as it does not have predetermined theories to prove, it simply aims at using the data to explore the perceptions of the participants and generate new ideas. According to Strauss and

Corbin (1990) categories are formed by a deliberate coding process that requires the researcher to find similarities and differences in gathered data. The coding process will be explained later in this chapter. Because very little research has been conducted on TEFL courses this study aims at producing theories rather than testing them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## 3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data collection is the "collection of information in a targeted fashion, which is further analysed thoroughly to lead to answers to research questions" (Parveen & Showkat, 2017, p3). In this study, primary data will be collected first-hand by the researcher through semi-structured individual interviews.

An interview is useful when delving into the opinions and experiences of participants. A deeper insight is provided into the phenomena (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). Semi-structured interviews as explained by Harrell and Bradley (2009) are interviews that have a set of standard questions to be covered by the interviewer however a conversational style is adopted as the interviewer can deviate from the questions to delve deeper into the phenomena as necessary and allow for a comprehensive understanding of the participant's response. This method of data collection is therefore suitable for this study as it aims at exploring the opinions of the participants in-depth regarding the design of their TEFL courses and their perceived effectiveness of the course's design on preparing them for teaching abroad.

## 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

A brief introduction to qualitative data analysis methods used in this study to derive the categories presented in chapter four will now be discussed.

### 3.6.1 *Introduction*

Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews explained in paragraph 3.5.1. Once the data has been collected it will be analysed. Qualitative data analysis is a complex process. Suter (2012, p.344) explains that in order "to understand a complex phenomenon, you must consider the multiple "realities" experienced by the participants themselves—the "insider" perspectives". Data produced by interviews is explained by Denzin (1989) as "thick" because it is rich with the participants' realities. Hence, Patton (2002) describes the aim of qualitative data analysis as discovering patterns, insights and themes from these complex and multidimensional data sets.

Data analysis in this study aims to categorise and compare the perceptions of participants that have obtained TEFL certificates with a focus on the design of their TEFL course.  This study will also consider the participants' perceptions on the TEFL course's designs effectiveness at preparing them for teaching abroad and any areas of the TEFL online course's design that participants perceived could be improved.

### 3.6.2 *Qualitative data analysis procedures*

Qualitative research depends heavily on the insight and perspectives of the researcher; it is therefore interpreted by the researcher and subjective (Pope & Mays, 2006). Thematic analysis is one way of analysing qualitative data (Lacey & Luff, 2009). Qualitative data, usually consisting of verbal accounts, can be condensed by organising the data into codes or categories (Saldana, 2009). Chenail (2008) describes this categorisation as the researcher's method of bundling the data into meaningful entities. These bundles then can be used to make inferences regarding the research aim (Thomas, 2006).

In this study, a grounded theory approach will be used. The data analysis will be open to gain new insights and understandings. The coding process will reveal this approach as all perspectives related to the TEFL course's design will be considered.

Several steps can be followed when analysing qualitative data. After data is collected and recorded the following process of analysis occurred: transcription, familiarisation, coding, the emergence of themes, and then sorting of themes into categories. During

coding, categorisation and generation of themes, and a constant check for saturation occurred.

### 3.6.2.1 Transcription

Halcomb and Davidson (2006, p.38), explain transcription as the practice of "reproducing spoken words, such as those from an audiotaped interview, into written text". Often the transcription should be verbatim, word-for-word, and include non-verbal cues to ensure rigour and reduce interpretative bias (Loubere, 2017). Lacey & Luff (2009, p.20) explain that non-verbal cues can also communicate the participant's feelings such as "silence may communicate embarrassment or emotional distress, or simply a pause for thought."

I chose to leave out participants' self-corrections from the transcripts as I felt they did not take away from the intended meaning of the participants. An example of such self-correction was when a participant said, "There is teachers… I mean there are teachers." The transcribing process allowed multiple opportunities to listen to the recordings and I was able to better understand the participants' perspectives regarding their TEFL courses.

### 3.6.2.2 Familiarisation

After transcribing the interviews, which is the first step in the process of familiarisation, I printed the interviews and reread them repeatedly. I also listened to the recordings again to double-check for anything I might have missed. Parkinson et al. (2016) explains that this step allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and attempt to develop a holistic idea of all the data.

### 3.6.2.3 Coding

Many coding methods were used in this research and had to be constantly refined to ensure that I was portraying the participants' voices most efficiently. Analysing

31

qualitative data requires that the researcher allocates labels or codes to the data to facilitate the organisation of the data into "meaningful categories to be analysed and interpreted" (Blair, 2015, p.16). Flick (2013, p.11) further explains that coding essentially means to "find a label that allows the grouping of several elements (statements or observation) under one concept, so that we have a more or less limited number of codes (or categories)." Saldana (2009, p.3) explains that codes can "range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images".

Saldana (2009) divides the coding process into two cycles; first and second cycle. He explains the "nature of coding: comparing data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to data… suggests that the qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather than linear" (Saldana, 2009, p.45). I have also separated the path of analysis into the first and second cycle, however, there was a lot of backward and forward between the two cycles.

### 3.6.2.3.1  First cycle

A few different coding methods were used. Since this research was exploratory the emergence of codes was used to lead the study and the advancement to the next coding method. Firstly, the transcripts were coded using an exploratory coding method. A holistic coding method was used first. Dey (1993) explains that a holistic approach views the data as a whole instead of line by line, in an attempt to formulate themes and issues. These broad ideas and their interconnections can then be refined later. This research's aim was not to prove a theory but rather to generate theories in an ill explored area, therefore the holistic approach helped to highlight key aspects from the data which referred to the online design of the TEFL course specifically looking for positive and negative perceptions of the online course. Recommendations stood out as well during the holistic approach. These ambiguous codes were then used as the lens for the next coding method: initial coding.

An initial coding method was then used. This coding method breaks the data into distinct sections so that they can be compared for likenesses and variances whilst staying open to various directions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The initial codes

highlighted the many positives and negative perspectives that the participants had towards the online TEFL course.

This data set included the participants' perceived preparedness thus emotion coding was used to highlight this aspect of the study. Emotion coding can be quite complex as it tries to highlight the emotion using language (Saldana, 2009). Although the perception of preparedness can be complicated and not solely linked to one cause, it is still valuable to highlight how participants recall the feeling and the links they make to the design of the online course. These perceived emotions were coded with holistically as negative or positive and the link between negative emotions and other codes were made.

Lastly, the codes were further refined with an evaluative perspective. Evaluative coding according to Rossman and Rallis (2003) is used to appraise a program's or policy's value. This standpoint transformed the participants' perspectives into insight on the design's effectiveness and merit and accentuated recommendations. An example would be, one participant said, "you can read a thousand books but it's not applied in the classroom setting it's not going to work" (line 862-863). The evaluation coding changed this code from "no application of theory" to "Recommendation: Actually teaching in order to implement theory and experience classroom realities".

Once the initial and emotion codes were formulated and then further refined via an evaluative method the second cycle of coding followed.

### 3.6.2.3.2 Second cycle and categorisation

The second cycle involves further fine-tuning of first cycle codes. Because there is always an interplay between codes, categories and themes these aspects are constantly being adjusted under the lenses of the research aims, some codes were removed other was amalgamated with similar codes, to formulate the most well-tuned responses to the research aim (Saldana, 2009).

Now focused coding was used, this coding method recognises the consistent and significant initial codes and uses these to "sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46) data further.  Focused coding is more "directed, selective, and

conceptual than word-by-word coding" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 56). Focused coding uses codes identified during initial coding to further focus and generated themes from the data. Charmaz (2006, p. 60) explains "through comparing data to data, we develop the focused code. Then we compare data to these codes, which helps to refine them". Through the focused coding method themes emerged.

### 3.6.2.4 Emergence of themes

All categories that were formed from the codes were used to answer the research aim, what were the participants' perspectives of the design of their TEFL courses Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.104) explain that a theme has the "greatest explanatory relevance" to the research. Three dominant themes emerged from the regular initial codes and are discussed in detail in chapter 4. These three themes are preparedness for teaching abroad, design of online TEFL course and application of skills and knowledge incorporated into the design of the online TEFL course.

### 3.6.2.5 Saturation

The completion of qualitative data analysis is usually indicated by a stage called data saturation. Saturation is reached when "no new themes are emerging, and theoretical ideas have been tested satisfactorily" (Lacey & Luff, 2009, p.25). New data and sorting only further confirms the ideas and categories already discovered (Suter, 2012). In this study, data saturation was reached after the nine participants were interviewed and nine rounds of data analysis had been done. The analysis reached saturation after the three themes emerged and prominent and most relevant codes were shown to resemble these themes effectively to answer the research aim.

## 3.7  THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH

Since qualitative research involves interpretation of data that is based in context and relies upon the interpretation of the researcher it has been seen by some researchers

as "lacking in rigour, transparency, justification of data collection and analysis methods being used" (Hadi & Closs, 2016, p.1). To ensure quality in research one needs to adhere to certain criteria.

To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, the research needs to fulfil the criteria for all four of the principles; namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). These criteria will now be discussed individually below.

### 3.7.1  *Credibility*

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research demonstrates the genuine perspective of the research participants, or the "truth value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Credibility can be ensured through the practice of procedures such as; peer debriefing and member checking (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016) these two steps will now be explained in detail.

Firstly, this study utilised peer debriefing which involved sharing the research process with my peers to provide different insights on the analysis and interpretation (Moon et al., 2016). My supervisor also followed the study and provided insight and a more experienced perspective on this study. My supervisor helped to refine my thoughts and provide guidance to ensure its credibility.

Secondly, once the ideas and themes were established member checking was performed. Member checking involved communicating the study's findings to the participants to ensure that it truthfully reflected their experiences (Padgett, 2008). Once I analysed and coded the interviews, I contacted each participant again to ensure that I had completely understood and accurately presented their perspectives.

### 3.7.2  *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree the conclusions defined in one study are relatable or suitable to theory, practice, and future research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), hence whether the findings could be transferred to other contexts. Since research is used to

modify further policy and practices researchers must state whether their findings are relevant to other contexts (Moon et al., 2016). Because of the nature of qualitative research, often it is not possible, or appropriate, to ascertain if the findings or conclusions from one study apply to other situations (Shenton, 2004).

Jensen (2008) suggests that two considerations could increase transferability in qualitative research. These two aspects include; "purposeful sampling" and a detailed description of all aspects of the research design (Jensen, 2008, p.886). Purposeful sampling, with a detailed description of the criteria, used to sample the participants will provide the reader with a better idea of the transferability of this study to their context or other studies. Also, a thorough research design will provide the same context for the reader that they can make an informed decision regarding aspects of transferability. This chapter clearly describes the sampled participants and the research design which serves to improve its transferability.

### 3.7.3 *Dependability*

Dependability relates to determining if the study were to be replicated if the results would be the same (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). However, in the context of a qualitative study, this could pose a challenge because the "research context is evolving and that it cannot be completely understood a priori as a singular moment in time" (Jensen, 2008, p.208).

Since qualitative research is based on an ever-changing context the study must be "open to change and variation" (Jensen, 2008, p.209). These changes need to be made to the research design as the context shifts. Changes to the research design include "increasing the number of interviews required, tracking nonverbal cues as well as spoken text, including document analysis" (Jensen, 2008, p.209) and so on. I did not stop interviewing participants until saturation occurred after nine participants. Whilst transcribing the interviews nonverbal cues and can be seen in the interview transcript (appendix C).

### 3.7.4 *Confirmability*

Confirmability is objectivity in the research, yet Patton (1990) explains that it is difficult to ensure rigorous objectivity in qualitative research since interview questions and other data collection methods are designed by humans and therefore their bias is unavoidable. Nevertheless, some measures can be taken to reduce the amount of researcher bias on the study such as; providing extensive documentation and relevant materials, including reflective notes and performing member checking.

Firstly, Lincoln and Guba (1986) provide a list of documents that should accompany the study to improve its degree of confirmability. These include:

- raw data- field notes, video and audio recordings (which have been made available to supervisors however to ensure participant confidentiality they cannot be included with the official dissertation)
- instrument development information- interview schedule (Appendix A)

Also, Jensen (2008) illustrates that confirmability requires that the researcher provides evidence that the findings of the study represent the participant's opinions and ideals correctly and are not altered by the researcher's bias. Member checking done for credibility is also useful in this regard.

## 3.8  ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Preissle (2008, p.273) explains ethics as "part of human philosophy concerned with appropriate conduct and virtuous living". Research is ethical if it strives to protect its human participants by adhering to ethical principles (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). The University of Johannesburg requires that all studies are approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee before fieldwork such as interviews is conducted. This step is to ensure that the study has been reviewed by an ethic's board and received ethical clearance.

This study received ethical clearance and its approval number is: Sem 2-2019-033. A copy of the certificate has also been included as Appendix B.

Although this research isn't seen as high risk it still needs to abide by ethical procedures. These procedures included:

- ✓ Informed consent of participants (Provided to the supervisor but not included in this research paper as it contains the particulars of the participants)
- ✓ Confidentiality and anonymity
- ✓ Providing the participants with feedback on the findings

## 3.9    SUMMARY

This chapter firstly described the setting of the study. Then an explanation of the research design was provided. The strategy of research was explained as a generic qualitative study thereafter the collection method, a semi-structured interview, was described. Thereafter each step involved in qualitative data analysis was defined in detail. The trustworthiness of the research was also disassembled into the four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, in which each was explained in the context of this study. Lastly, the ethical aspect of this study was explained, and ethical clearance number was provided.

# CHAPTER 4.    RESEARCH FINDINGS

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*"Qualitative research involves asking participants about their experiences of things that happen in their lives. It enables researchers to obtain insights into what it feels like to be another person and to understand the world as another experiences it."*

**(Austin & Sutton, 2014, p.436)**

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## 4.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 present the findings resulting from the data collected for this research study: **Graduates' perceptions on the design of the online certification course for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).** This study aims to highlight opinions relating to the design of online TEFL courses and to explore the participants' perceived preparedness for teaching abroad. Some suggestions for improvement provided by the participants of the TEFL online course are also highlighted in the findings.

The data was collected through face-to-face interviews, either in person or online. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed text was analysed using qualitative methods described in chapter three. Firstly, perceptions related to feelings of preparedness for teaching abroad were also derived and will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Secondly, the categories related to the participants' perceptions of the design of the online TEFL course were derived from the data. Thirdly, data related to the application of knowledge and skills were considered.

Appendix A illustrates the participants' transcripts with line numbers, the line numbers will be referred to throughout this chapter.

## 4.2 PREPARED FOR TEACHING ABROAD

From the data, it was revealed that the participants did not feel prepared for teaching abroad. Some participants explained that they felt completely unprepared after graduating from the TEFL whilst other data revealed that some felt theoretically prepared but felt there was a lack of application of this theory. Most of the data highlighted that the participants felt unprepared to manage their classrooms and for classroom realities.

### 4.2.1 *Feeling completely unprepared*

The data showed that most participants felt completely unprepared for the complexities of teaching abroad. "**I got thrown in the deep end on day one… I wasn't really prepared for anything on day one**" (193-195). "**I was fresh and new and really had no clue what I was doing**" (234-235). "**TEFL doesn't really prepare you for the class experience. I would say that the 100 per cent online TEFL is quite different to what you would actually experience in a class**" (340-342). "**I wasn't really prepared after doing a hundred and twenty hours of theoretical teaching for a foreign classroom environment**" (1112-1113). "**I have pretty much not used a single thing from my TEFL**" (246-248). "**The 120 hours course doesn't really work. It's a fast track to saying that people are qualified and prepared. And really, they won't be. So, it's probably, like, the hundred and twenty hours is almost pointless**" (1147-1150) "**because they didn't prepare me enough for what was actually needed for the class**" (25-26).

### 4.2.2 *Feeling theoretically prepared*

Some participants explained that they felt theoretically prepared for teaching abroad after the TEFL but as explained in paragraph 4.4 it lacked practical application, "**[I was prepared] in theory… but it's difficult to apply stuff you've written into a computer to a real-life environment**" (line 1057-1058). Another said that "**you can't really imagine it to you're actually there and it's happening, but [their TEFL course] definitely gave an idea of what to be prepared for**". (line 1207-1208). Another explained that they were prepared "**more academically than anything**" (line

1224). One participant explained that the "**grammar, and phonics, the basis of what to teach is there. This is definitely well done**" (line 351-352). Another explained that "**the TEFL [course] is adequate in terms of describing what you could expect**" (line 368-369).

### 4.2.3 *Feeling unprepared for classroom realities and classroom management*

The data displayed that even after completing the online TEFL course participants felt unprepared to manage their classrooms. A participant explains that they "**did have ideas of how to manage a classroom … you don't really learn your own style until you get into the classroom and do it yourself. The kids ran all over me for a number of months before I figured it out**" (line 972-974) this reinforces another participant's idea that "**there were some pointers but without the real classroom setting there's no way to apply it**" (line 837-838) because "**I've never been a teacher. Done nothing like it. It was impossible to visualize [how the classroom] could be, how you could fix [the discipline problems]**" (line 552-553). Furthermore, another participant exclaimed that they thought it would have been "**important to deal with classroom management a bit more in [online TEFL courses] and how to deal was some actual nitty-gritty**" (line 314-315).

Additionally, the data revealed that participants thought that the online TEFL did not prepare them for classroom realities. One participant explained that the content was "**written from the ideal perspective of a classroom of sixteen students or twelve students who really really want to be there and are motivated to learn. And I think that's not [the] reality for 90 per cent of people teaching**" (line 308-310). One participant painted a picture of their classroom reality as; "**some of [their students] are running about, some of them are not listening. Some of them are yelling and they are so excited about this lesson. To bring all of that together is much more challenging**" (line 361-363). One participant explained that the TEFL course was "**totally irrelevant to teaching [students] in reality**" (line 246-247).

## 4.3 DESIGN OF THE ONLINE TEFL COURSE

Although the design of any course is made up of many aspects, the content and layout of the content TEFL course were accentuated by the participants during the interviews. Then aspects of feedback and support were also emphasized in the data.

### 4.3.1 *Content of the TEFL course*

As mentioned in paragraph 4.2.2 some participants explained that they did feel theoretically prepared after graduating from their TEFL course. The theoretical knowledge delivered by their TEFL course was mostly perceived as "**pretty thorough. All of the modules were really well explained**" (line 1120-1121). One participant explained that the online TEFL course provided "**good theoretical knowledge**" (line 449), while others simply acknowledged the amount of theory with comments such as; there "**was a lot of theory**" (line 87), and that the online TEFL course "**gave you a lot of theories**" (line 1073). Another stated that the theories were "**put in sort of like a simple way… for you to understand and for the students to understand without going too deep into it**" (line 726-727).

Regarding gaps in participants' content knowledge, the data highlighted that grammar rules were seen to be accentuated in the content of the online TEFL course. Participants explained that "**there was a lot of grammar**" (line 33-34). These sections on grammatical theories seemed to resonate with two participants as they explained that being the taught grammar rules of their native language caused them to confront gaps in their knowledge that they were previously unaware of. They said that the TEFL course "**made me a bit more nervous to realize how little I know about my own language that I speak… when I'm speaking, I just know from experience that word goes in that order in that sentence. So, as a native English speaker we don't actually think a lot about structure of sentences and structure of words**" (line 256-261). Another participant supported this notion by saying that "**it taught me a lot about my own language that I didn't realise**" (line 1197-1198). It can therefore be seen that the content pertaining to English grammar rules deepened the participant's understanding of the language by revealing gaps in their own knowledge.

Subsequently, it emerged from the analysis that the content of the course was found to be well-sequenced and laid out in a user-friendly manner (refer to paragraph 2.2.2). One participant stated that the layout of the course "**was simple and easy to use**" (line 307), another explained that it was "**very well thought through… concise… well laid-out**" (line 475-476). In addition to these sentiments, another participant illuminated that they thought that "**the actual modules were useful and well set out**" (line 1126-1127). One participant explained that the course "**starts slowly and it's easy to get into**" (line 127). Thus, it was revealed that the participants felt that the design of the online TEFL course's content was laid out in a user-friendly manner and effectively sequenced.

### 4.3.2  *Lack of specified content*

The participants described the TEFL course as a "**very basic course… they don't really go too in-depth**" (line 1064). It was suggested that it "**could be more detailed**" (line 89) and "**needs to be more thorough**" (line 1153-1154). Three main aspects related to content were perceived as lacking in the online TEFL course. These include: curriculum specific content, culture specific content and content appropriate for the age of the participants' future students.

#### 4.3.2.1  *Content regarding curriculum*

 It was also found that the participants felt that they were not provided with any content on the type of curriculum that they would be expected to teach once moving abroad. One participant explained that "**from day one it's a bit nerve-wracking because you didn't really know what to expect. And every school is different**" (line 197-199). Another participant was explaining that grammar learnt in the TEFL "**was wasted**" (line 545) "**because in Korea where [they] went first, foreigners were forbidden from teaching [grammar]. They were like… you cannot teach this**" (line 543-545). Another participant explained that there was "**no formal training given to the teachers. Instead one had to learn on the go and got criticized for not knowing a school procedure when it wasn't explained before-hand**" (line 807-809). The

participants' sentiments therefore show that they regarded the online TEFL course's content as lacking in specific curriculum knowledge.

### *4.3.2.2 Content regarding culture*

The data similarly revealed that the most pertinent issue with the content available in the online TEFL course was the lack of cultural-specific content and as Paragraph 2.3.2.2 explains, this issue is a major contributor to culture shock. One participant explained that they "**couldn't even figure out where Korea was on the map when we got the job**" (line 253-256). Another explained that the online TEFL should make graduates "**aware of cultural sensitivities but it didn't really delve into what they are, how to approach them and how-to kind of deflect questioning about it**" (line 1087-1089). This participant went on to explain that "**anything that we did get taught had to be adapted to teaching in China where there are slightly different expectations on how classes should be run, and how teachers should behave, and how students should behave**" (line 1077-1080). Also, some of the resources provided were useless because "**being in China ... some resources like YouTube and this are blocked**" (line 100-101). This participant therefore had trouble accessing the resources provided to them as they were not accessible in China thus reinforcing the idea that it is vital that content and resources are tailored to specific cultures and countries.

Another participant completed an in-class TEFL in China and the data revealed that the culturally specific content and advice was perceived by the participant as being a better preparation for the classroom. The participant explained that, "**my TEFL course was done in China. So, I was interacting with Chinese kids. I was getting the cultural background from the course instructor**" (line 741-743) "**when I was in the classroom for the first time I wasn't as nervous**" (line 704-705) because they had "**interaction with kids that don't speak English as a first language**" (line 704).

### 4.3.2.3 Content categorized according to age

The data highlighted that the predominant perception of the content provided in the online TEFL course was largely irrelevant to the participants because they weren't specified for teaching certain age groups. One participant explained that their first few months of teaching in China had been "**very different and difficult**" (line 1181) because their classroom experience was "**very different to what I'd experienced in TEFL because the kids are a lot younger**" (line 1176-1177). Another participant suggested that the online TEFL would have been more beneficial if there were "**age-specific courses so if I am going to teach kindergarten maybe something in terms of kindergarten**" (line 80-82) and another participant's opinion agreed to this idea with the proposal that TEFL could provide an idea of "**what [teaching abroad] will probably be like. This is what the students will be like. Here's some pictures, here's some videos, of what you can actually expect**" (line 659-661). The analysis, therefore, revealed that participants required that the TEFL was tailored for the age group in which they were looking at teaching. The age of the students is an important factor in determining the type of teaching styles and content knowledge future teachers would need.

### 4.3.3 *Feedback and support*

There were both negative and positive findings related to feedback and support. Peer support was stressed in several interviews as important factors of success during the TEFL course and once the participant entered the classroom.

### 4.3.3.1 Positive aspects related to feedback and support

The data indicated that the participants felt that the communication between the online TEFL staff and the participants was positive. One participant explained that "**they replied quickly and it was very straight to the point**" (line 113-114) and another participant supported that notion: "**the response that I received when I submitted my final essay and my final lesson plan was quite quick and the response was**

**quite concise and nicely laid out**" (line 488-490). The participants, therefore, viewed the communication during the online TEFL course in a positive light.

The data emphasized that the participants regarded the online TEFL course to be flexible. The course was said to be "**set up for people who were working they might have a little time or a lot of time**" (line 638-639). Over and above this the staff were also described as flexible and accommodating. One participant explained that their "**adjudicators were really useful because we were on a really tight timeframe to complete the course. So, they allowed us fast track [their course] and do the two assessments at the same time rather than one after the other. They were helpful**" (line 1138-1140).

It was also apparent from the analysis that the participants felt that peer collaboration was an important part of the support provided by the TEFL course. The participants that completed the TEFL course with an online constituent or fully in class expressed the importance of the collaboration with their peers. "**[W]e did a lot of teaching in groups and got a lot of ideas from each other and a lot of support… some of the people we're still in contact with**" (line 301-302).

Another participant that completed their TEFL course completely online was in contact with friends already teaching overseas and they explained that "**your friends that can help you. People that have actually taught, people who are actually teachers, who know this stuff. Working through the actual issues in a classroom. If that in any way can be incorporated within a TEFL, then it'll be the best qualification**" (line 462-466) also they said, "**[their friend's] help is almost as valuable as a TEFL**" (line 412). This data shows the participants' perceived their peer collaboration as an important support mechanism for learning to teach abroad.

### 4.3.3.2 Negative aspects related to feedback and support

The data highlighted that a participant who completed their TEFL course entirely online felt that the course did not provide sufficient support. They explained that "**there is no help, there's no support system after your TEFL**" (line 155). They also recognized that job-related assistance was lacking, they explained that the TEFL courses "**don't**

tell you how to get better, how to improve… when you are a TEFL teacher in China, there is always that limit, it doesn't matter where you are it's all around the same pay" (line 131-133) and they discussed an issue regarding the perceived lack of administration support when they recommended that the TEFL course make; "notarisation and legalisation areas very clear on [the TEFL course's] website. Or make it so that it can be notarised anywhere or in China or in the country they're in" (line 121-123)

Data analysis revealed that participants recommended that support and feedback available through the online TEFL course could be more efficiently tailored to specific countries and teaching English as a foreign language. One participant explained that they thought "an instructor who has taught ESL in the past" (line 652-653) would be beneficial. Another proposed that "people coming back from various countries. People who might give you real insights into what countries... will offer different experiences. Someone in Asia or someone in the Middle East, someone in Europe. You know, these kids will be different, they'll treat you differently, they'll have different expectations of you as a teacher" (line 948-952) would help to increase the quality of support an online TEFL student could receive.


## 4.4   PERSPECTIVES ON APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The data revealed that the participants felt that there was no application of the theory and skills taught in the online TEFL course.

One participant explained that it was "semi-useful to have a little bit of knowledge there wasn't really any practical application" (line 1080-1081). One participant explained that preservice EFL teachers "need exposure to a classroom whether it's kids or adults. And that that classroom also needs to be Non-English speaking, so that you can understand firstly what you're getting yourself into that it's not just fun and games" (line 771-774). "It's all well and good reading a book but if you have to get up in front of someone and try and sort of implement what you've learned. I think that's the hardest thing, actually being confident enough to do that" (line 294-297). In order to be better prepared to implement theories and skills learnt in their online TEFL course participants recommended practical classes.

### 4.4.1 *Recommendation of practical classes*

It emerged from the analysis that most participants felt that the course needed to provide opportunities to deal with classroom realities and implement theories taught. A participant said "**if you are going to say that TEFL [certificate] is the only thing that you need to teach. I think there's a lot of room for improvement… a practical class has to be mandatory for you to get your TEFL [certificate]… the preparation that you need to do in terms of for a real class is much different that you do for a scenario that you would be given in your TEFL exam**" (line 406-411). Another participant's idea seconded this: "**you can read a thousand books but it it's not applied in the classroom setting it's not going to work**" (line 862-863). Learning "**how to teach… comes with experience**" (line 352-353).

One participant suggested that the TEFL courses should "**condense the theoretical portion down only to the vital and relevant information and rather demonstrate how this information is needed, through a practical way. [Provide] a practical means on how to implement this information. And allow participants the opportunity to teach in a real class. Have them have mock lessons and provide critical feedback on that, rather than have them read a passage and answer questions. So, apply the knowledge**" (line 884-890) because "**you don't really learn your own style until you get into the classroom and do it yourself**" (972-973).

Participants provided ideas on how to implement a practical class within the online course. One participant suggested, "**running the courses over summer so that you can use English summer schools as a practice ground for teaching or you have them do a placement in summer school so that they can watch how teachers do it**" (line 1150-1153). Another participant proposed "**a virtual classroom… where all of these issues are simultaneously running where you would have to like scramble and deal with them**" (line 476-478) or "**online jobs if there is some kind of partnership**" (line 946).

## 4.5 SUMMARY

The data was categorised into three central themes: firstly, whether participants felt prepared for teaching abroad, secondly participants' perceptions related to design of the online TEFL course, then participants' perspectives on application of knowledge and skills

The data showed that the participants did not feel prepared to teach abroad after they graduated from their online TEFL courses. Some felt completely unprepared whilst others explained that they felt theoretically prepared but there was a lack of practical application to taught theories. Classroom realities and classroom management were perceived as the main aspects that the participants weren't prepared for.

Thereafter the design of the online TEFL course revolved around content and feedback and support. There were positive findings related to the content as it was found to be perceived as providing an abundance of theories that were thought to be well laid out and easy to navigate. It was expressed that there was a focus on grammar rules that revealed gaps in the participant's content knowledge. Yet, the data also revealed that the participants identified that the content was lacking in three major areas: curriculum and culture or country and theories related to their future student's age.

Feedback and support were also a theme that emerged from the data. Positive findings related to the flexible nature of the course's staff and the speed in which they would reply to participants. Peer collaboration was viewed as an imperative feature of success for the participants. On the other hand, the data also stressed that the fully online students felt that the course did not offer them a satisfactory level of support especially after the course and with administration difficulties. Moreover, it was established that participants felt that the support and feedback could be improved by personalising it to specific countries and teaching English explicitly as a foreign language.

Lastly, perspectives related to application of skills and knowledge during the online TEFL course were described. The data revealed that participants felt that there was a lack of application in the online TEFL course and this left them feeling unprepared for the complexities of teaching abroad, the participants, therefore, advocated for

classroom exposure to be made a feature all TEFL courses in order to amend perceived classroom management inadequacies amongst other difficulties.

Chapter five will be used for the overview of this study. Conclusions will be drawn, and deficiencies in the research and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

# CHAPTER 5.    CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS IN THE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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*"You have to get to know and understand the people you design for. You want to figure out what drives them and how you can ignite their intrinsic motivation. That's why getting in touch with your target audience through interviews, observations and co-creation is indispensable."*

**(Floors, 2016, paragraph 9)**

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## 5.1  OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study highlights how graduates of online TEFL courses perceive the design of the courses and whether they felt prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad.

Many models exist to assist in the design of any course as shown in paragraph 2.3.1. These models all aimed at assisting the designer to produce learner-centred courses that are constantly evaluated and upgraded to best suit the needs of all its stakeholders. Learning Experience Design outlined in paragraph 2.3.2 is a useful model to design online preservice teacher training courses as it aims at creating online experiences that focus on applying knowledge and skills, thus putting learning into practice. LXD also accentuates the importance of students evaluating courses in order for the course to be relevant. In paragraph 2.4.2 using student feedback in order to ensure quality was discussed and the considerations and benefits were outlined.

The need for this research was established in paragraph 1.3 due to the limited research available on online TEFL courses especially from the perspective of the TEFL graduate. TEFL certificates are used to certify graduates are prepared to teach English as a Foreign language. In almost any country a TEFL certificate and any degree are enough to secure a teaching job. Some countries only require a TEFL certificate and the bachelor's degree isn't required. This research is necessary to

understand how educators teaching English as a foreign language perceive the design of their online TEFL course and how they feel it prepared them for teaching abroad.

Within this context, the research question was formulated as: "How do TEFL graduates perceive the design of their TEFL course and did it prepare them for the complexities of teaching abroad?" In order to answer the main question, the following objectives were formulated:

➢ Determining whether participants felt prepared for teaching abroad.

➢ Accentuating the participants' perspectives on the design of the TEFL course

➢ Highlighting participants' perspectives on application of knowledge and skills that they learnt incorporated in the design of the TEFL course

In chapter 2 a literature review was conducted. Firstly, literature pertaining to online courses was highlighted. The characteristics of different types of online courses were described in paragraph 2.2.1. Online preservice teacher training courses were then highlighted in paragraph 2.2.2 explaining what these courses are and TEFL certification courses as a preservice teacher training course. The demand for TEFL courses was then highlighted in 2.2.3. Literature relating to possibilities and challenges that occur with online preservice teaching training courses was then portrayed in paragraph 2.2.3.1. In paragraph 2.3.4 literature related to challenges with online teacher training were laid out as: classroom preparedness and challenges arising from teaching English as a foreign language.

Paragraph 2.3 summarised literature relating to designing an online course: models used to design online courses, Learner Experience Design and online preservice teacher training, challenges with designing an online course and TEFL course design. Finally, paragraph 2.4 revolved around the quality assurance of online courses; TEFL companies quality assurance, accrediting bodies and using student feedback to ensure quality were discussed.

Chapter 3 was used to explain the research design and methodology used in this study. Firstly, the setting for this minor dissertation was explained in paragraph 3.2. A brief overview of TEFL courses was provided, such as the type of TEFL courses taken

by the participants and their different modes of completion. Followed by details pertaining to the participants that were relevant to this study.

Chapter three described the research design used to collect, record and analyse the data. This study was delineated as qualitative, exploratory and evaluative. Exploratory was explained as aiming at discovering new insights into a topic that has not been extensively researched. Evaluative research is useful to determine the worth and shortcomings of a course, in this case.

The research method was described as a generic qualitative approach which is explained by Lim (2011) as an approach that avoids conforming exclusively to more recognised methodologies and can adapt the methodologies to the benefit of their study. This method was chosen as it showcases how people perceive their lived experiences. The study also used principles of a grounded theory approach as it had no predetermined theories to prove but rather aimed at producing a new understanding of TEFL courses. The data collection method of this study was one-on-one interviews.

Chapter three also included the steps used in this study to analyse the data. The stages are explained in detail in paragraph 3.6 but can be summarised as; familiarisation, coding, the emergence of themes, saturation.

Approaches used to ensure trustworthiness in this study were explored under the following headings; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. A brief description of the ethical aspects of this study was then provided.

Chapter four was used for data analysis. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews. The categories summarised the perceptions of the participants relating to the design of their TEFL course and their feelings of preparedness for the complexities of teaching abroad.

- **Perceptions related to feelings of preparedness for teaching abroad**.

From the data, it was revealed that the participants did not feel prepared for teaching abroad. Some participants explained that they felt completely unprepared after graduating from the TEFL whilst other data revealed that some felt theoretically prepared but felt there was a lack of application of this theory. Most of the data

highlighted that the participants felt unprepared to manage their classrooms and for classroom realities.

- **Participants' perceptions of the design of the online TEFL course.**

Perceptions related to the content and the layout of the content were positive as the participants did feel theoretically prepared after the TEFL and the content was well laid out and simple to use. However, the participants felt that the content of the TEFL course lacked in three main areas: curriculum, the culture of future students and age of future students. Feedback and support also emerged from the data. Positive aspects of the feedback and support during the TEFL courses revolved around the flexibility and speed of responses from the TEFL staff, and the importance of peer collaboration to their success as teachers. Negative aspects included lack of support from TEFL staff after the course and lack of tailored support that was specific to the country that they were hired in after graduating the TEFL course.

- **Perceptions related to the application of knowledge and skills.**

The data revealed that the participants felt that there was no application of the theory and skills taught in the online TEFL course. The participants recommended practical classes be added to their online TEFL courses in order to better prepare graduates for teaching abroad.

## 5.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FINDINGS

The research question was laid out in chapter one as: how did the TEFL graduates perceive the design of their TEFL course and did they feel prepared for the complexities of teaching abroad? The conclusion was determined by the evidence in this study as discussed in chapter four.

### 5.2.1 *Perceptions related to feelings of preparedness for teaching abroad.*

The participants explained that they didn't feel prepared for teaching abroad after they completed their online TEFL courses. Some participants explained that they felt completely unprepared for teaching abroad whilst others explained that they felt

theoretically prepared, but they struggled to apply what they had learnt in the classroom. This will be discussed further in paragraph 5.2.3

Classroom management was also perceived as a stumbling block for the participants as they felt unprepared to manage their classrooms because they weren't prepared for the realities of a classroom. This reinforces the argument presented in paragraph 2.2.3.1 that although preservice training programmes provide theory on classroom management without practical application this remains an underdeveloped skill for many novice teachers. As the participants explained that without practical experience, they had no way to visualise discipline problems and manage them accordingly. Classroom realities were also emphasized as an area in which the participants felt unprepared for when entering the classroom for the first time. Mayer, et al., (2017) highlighted that many novice teachers reported feeling unprepared for culturally and linguistically diverse students, which reinforces the findings of this study. Darling-Hammond, et al., (2007) also explains that novice teachers have been known to be unaware of the impact a student's context has on the teaching and learning environment especially if they are not prepared for this in their preservice teacher training.

### 5.2.2 *Participants' perceptions of the design of the online TEFL course*

The participants had positive comments about their TEFL's course content. They felt that the course provided a lot of theory that was well explained. The course content revealed gaps in the participants content knowledge on topics such as grammar and phonics. The participants, therefore, felt that English content knowledge was sufficiently covered in their TEFL courses. The TEFL course seemed to be successful in providing the participants with English content knowledge needed to teach abroad.

Participants also found the content to be user- friendly and well sequenced. The course was said to start easily and get progressively more difficult, the layout of the content was also simple and easy to use. These are commendable as a well-designed course ensures that the student doesn't feel overwhelmed and can be completed in the allocated timeframe, as explained in paragraph 2.3.

However, the participants felt that the content was very shallow and needed to be better tailored to their needs, paragraph 2.3.2, LXD lays out the importance of interviewing the learners of the courses to determine their needs before the course to ensure the course is relevant to them. They felt that the course could have provided more specific knowledge especially when it came to age, curriculum and culture they were to teach abroad. In paragraph 2.2.4.2 it was shown that non-specific training caused novice teachers to enter the classroom without an accurate job expectation leaving them feeling unprepared. Also, in that paragraph, non-specific of preservice teachers training led new teachers to miscalculate the influence of their students' culture on teaching and learning.

Then opinions related to feedback and support also emerged. Positive opinions related to feedback and support of the online TEFL course related to communication, flexibility and peer collaboration for support. Communication channels available during the participants' online TEFL course were positively regarded as the staff replied quickly and the responses were straight to the point. The online TEFL course was said to be very supportive in their flexibility of deadlines and course work. This openness and flexibility were shown as a challenge for course designers, in paragraph 2.3.2, therefore it is very commendable that participants didn't seem to struggle with communication during their online TEFL course. Peer collaboration was also said to provide support in those participants that had the 20-hour constituent, this is great because feelings of isolation pose a challenge to most students of online courses as seen in paragraph 2.3.2.

The negative comments related to the participant's feeling that the TEFL course lacked support after the course was completed. Also, the support that was provided was very generic and wasn't tailored to the participants' specific needs. This can be linked to understanding expectations of students, paragraph 2.3.2, to ensure they understand what the course entails and to check their levels of satisfaction after the completion of the course.

### 5.2.3 *Perceptions related to the application of knowledge and skills.*

The data revealed that no practical application of knowledge and skills occurred during the participants' online TEFL. Participants suggested that their online TEFL course should have an in-class training aspect to help better prepare graduates for the realities of teaching abroad. This in-class training aligns with the apprenticeship learning highlighted in paragraph 2.2.4.3 where novice teachers are provided with a practical means to apply taught theories and skills and to learn from experienced teachers.

The findings showed that the participants felt theoretically prepared and whilst content knowledge (paragraph 5.2.2) is important for a teacher, pedagogical content knowledge should be the aim of any teacher. Shulman (1987) explains pedagogical content knowledge as a bridge between knowledge and practice. "It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organised, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction". Thus, TEFL graduates may have been presented with theories of English but without the bridge to apply these theories practically into a specific classroom, they are as one participant put it "almost pointless".

Also, LXD, paragraph 2.4.2, highlights the importance of applying knowledge and skills taught in an online course. As shown in paragraph 2.2.1 preservice teachers feel that their phase of practical training was the most beneficial to them. Oliver and Reschly (2007) explain that teachers acquire skills through their preservice education however these skills are only truly developed through hands-on experience in the classroom.

**In terms of the participants' perceptions related to feelings of preparedness for teaching abroad after graduating from their online TEFL courses, some felt theoretically prepared whilst most felt completely unprepared, and classroom management and classroom realities were highlighted as the main stumbling blocks. Then the participants' perceptions of the design of their online TEFL courses were perceived both negatively and positively. The content and feedback and support were highlighted as major findings in the perceptions of the design. The content was perceived as being simple to access and well-sequenced with a good pace. Communication during the course was also shown**

**in a very positive light. The participants also appreciated the support that the received from their peers. They did, however, feel that the feedback could have been more tailored to their specific needs and that more support should be available after they complete the course. They felt that the content lacked in the following areas: specific content according to the age, curriculum and culture they were to teach. Finally, the participants felt that they needed a platform to practice the taught skills and knowledge as this wasn't perceived to be incorporated in the design of their online TEFL course. Practical classes were also shown to be suggested the majority of the participants.**

## 5.3   LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study only focused on online TEFL courses. Although one participant did provide some insight into TEFL courses that were done in person much more needs to be done in this area.

All participants were native English speakers therefore second language English speakers could have had a different view on the TEFL course's design and the degree to which they felt prepared for the classroom could have been different.

TEFL graduates can teach anywhere in the world however the participants of this study only taught in China and Korea after graduating. Teaching in other countries may have yielded different opinions from the participants.

Some of the participants had completed the TEFL many years before and have been teaching in China for at least six months at the time of the interviews. Some of their opinions have likely changed over the years, through the interviews some participants state that they cannot clearly remember some of their ideas regarding their TEFL courses. Therefore, participants that have just started teaching after they graduate might provide different perspectives.

Another possible limitation is that accrediting bodies of the participants' TEFL courses were not considered and no link or connections could be drawn from courses that are accredited by internationally recognised accrediting bodies or not. I have added this to the recommendations for future research.

It is important to note that I know each participant on a personal level and although I was careful not to discuss my own opinions regarding the TEFL courses before the interview, it is always possible that word choice or other subconscious triggers led them to believe I sought a certain result from the interview and this study, therefore, influencing their opinions on the TEFL course. Gathering data anonymously using different questions may also reveal different perspectives.

## 5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was exploratory in nature as very little information and research has been done on any aspects of TEFL courses. Therefore, future research is needed in all aspects of TEFL courses.

- Characteristics of people that choose to move abroad and become TEFL teachers and the effect this has on the students, schools and education.

- The extent to which third-party assistance allows new teachers to adapt faster to novel situations.

- Quality assurance of TEFL teachers and TEFL courses/certificates

- Connections between perceived quality of TEFL courses and approval by accrediting bodies

- Differences between online and in-person TEFL courses.

- Professional development of TEFL teachers.

- Creating a country and an age specific TEFL course.

- The benefits and disadvantages of native speakers becoming teachers.

- The effect of cultural differences in the classroom and language acquisition.

## 5.5    FINAL COMMENT

Online TEFL courses are used by many countries to certify that teachers are ready to teach abroad. The perspectives and opinions gathered from the graduates of theses TEFL courses and other educational stakeholders are vital to ensure quality in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers need to graduate this online course feeling prepared to enter a foreign language classroom and teach students English efficiently. At the moment the TEFL courses needs to provide more tailored content and feedback, as well as providing a practical arena for TEFL students to apply the taught theories and skills.

If online TEFL courses were to incorporate design features of a Learner Experience Design in which the needs of the participants were considered at every stage of development the TEFL graduates might be better prepared to enter a foreign classroom. The participant that did their TEFL course in China, where they went on to teach, expressed that they were better prepared for their foreign language classroom.

There is a great demand for TEFL teachers all over the world. Teachers are often hired out of field and with little or no prior experience. Often the only things schools and teachers are relying on to prepare these novice teachers is a 120-hour TEFL course. This course needs to provide not only content knowledge to novice teachers but also provide them with the pedagogical tools needed to teach their foreign language students. Without the practical application of the taught theories, they will still be walking into their classrooms unprepared for the complexities for teaching abroad. The perceptions of the TEFL graduates are vital to understanding the shortcomings of the TEFL courses and provide a more wholesome preparation of foreign teachers.

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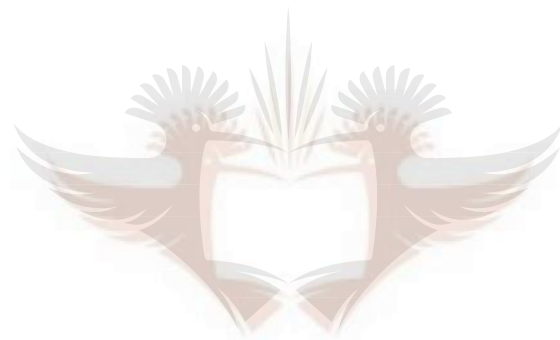
## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Roughly in what year did you complete your TEFL?

How many hours was it for?

What really stuck with you after your TEFL course?

Please describe your first few months of teaching abroad.

Did you feel prepared for the classroom?

What challenges did you face?

What do you think the main objectives of the TEFL course were?

Do you think they were achieved?

What advice would you offer the TEFL course designers?

# APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

**ETHICS CLEARANCE**

Dear Jeanine Amy Edgar,

**Ethical Clearance Number: Sem 1-2020-018**

**Topic: Perceptions on the design and effectiveness of the online certification for teaching English as a foreign language.**

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student/researcher to submit a new application.
- It remains the student's/researcher's responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

**The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to**

☒ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

Prof Mdu Ndlovu
**Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**
4 February 2020

| 1 | **Participant 1- transcript** |
|---|---|
| 2 | |
| 3 | Interviewer: Okay, please tell me roughly what year did you complete your TEFL? |
| 4 | |
| 5 | Participant 1: I did two TEFLs, I completed the first in 2006 and the second |
| 6 | about 2012. |
| 7 | |
| 8 | Interviewer: Roughly how many hours were the TEFLs for? |
| 9 | |
| 10 | Participant 1: The first one was only 60... because that was the requirement |
| 11 | back then for 60 hours and the second one was for 120 hours. |
| 12 | |
| 13 | Interviewer: Okay... perfect... and we're they both online? |
| 14 | |
| 15 | Participant 1: Yes, both were online. |
| 16 | |
| 17 | Interviewer: Okay and please describe your first few months of teaching, after |
| 18 | the TEFL. |
| 19 | |
| 20 | Participant 1: In China? |
| 21 | |
| 22 | Interviewer: Yes |
| 23 | |
| 24 | Participant 1: okay... uh... first few months of teaching in China was... very... |
| 25 | hectic because I had to change a lot of my plans. Because they didn't prepare |
| 26 | me enough for what was actually needed for the class. |
| 27 | |
| 28 | Interviewer: Okay and um can you comment on how they prepared you for |
| 29 | actually teaching English like the grammar and the phonics and the actual |
| 30 | English side of it. |
| 31 | |
| 32 | Participant 1: I did my TEFL after I got to China... so I was already in China |
| 33 | teaching and then I decided to do a TEFL and the first TEFL there was a lot of |
| 34 | grammar to do. **A lot** of grammar tests where you would sit down and you would |

35 have like an hour or something and you would have so many questions to
36 answer um and they give you some reading to do and you'd do some
37 assignments on it. Some topics on classroom management. Quite a lot of
38 grammar. That was the main thing.
39
40 Interviewer: okay so they taught you the grammar um did they teach you how to
41 use it in the classroom, how to teach it actually.
42
43 Participant 1: Uh, not really, no. And it wasn't especially that the grammar was
44 taught. They told you... they gave you the information... basically... you taught
45 yourself so that's the thing with the online thing, cause it's not especially... you
46 didn't get a lot of tutoring that's the one thing I noticed, for TEFL you don't get a
47 lot of tutoring, What you do is... they give you the information to pass. They give
48 you all the information, you read it through, you digest it, take it in and then you
49 use it. And in that way you will pass the... certificate.
50
51 Interviewer: Okay and how did they prepare you for the culture, like the culture
52 of the students, the culture of the teachers, the culture of China itself, like how
53 did you feel prepared for that?
54
55 Participant 1: Um, it didn't prepare me at all. It's completely lacking the cultural
56 aspect. I guess because the tutor is in another country teaching many different
57 students in different countries so they don't really specify about culture. They
58 take culture completely out of the context. It's not even in there. You just have to
59 experience and adjust yourself.
60
61 Interviewer: Okay, what would you say the objective of a TEFL would be? Why,
62 are they there, what are they done for?
63
64 Participant 1: Personally speaking I think TEFL is just to show you have a
65 certain level of competency to think on your feet and adjust. That's the main
66 thing, I mean when teaching you have to think on your feet be able to take in
67 information and adjust it. I mean it doesn't really matter if you are teaching
68 history,  English literature, English language or English kindergarten. I mean the

| 69 | idea is that, the TEFL is just there to show a person's competency in life |
| 70 | whether they can take in information or not and use it. |
| 71 | |
| 72 | Interviewer: And do you think they achieved this objective? |
| 73 | |
| 74 | Participant 1: Um, for that purpose yes. For other purposes as in actually |
| 75 | teaching... um... no. To be honest, there is a lot more, there is a lot more things I |
| 76 | would like to see in a TEFL online course. |
| 77 | |
| 78 | Interviewer: such as... |
| 79 | |
| 80 | Participant 1: such as age-specific courses so if I am going to teach |
| 81 | kindergarten maybe something in terms of kindergarten, if I am teaching |
| 82 | university. So that's one thing, so in terms of the age range. The second would |
| 83 | be whether the subject I am teaching cause maybe I come and I want to teach |
| 84 | literature or I want to teach um PE or something like this they could be more |
| 85 | divided in that way. Um... The other things would be ... uh .... again culture like |
| 86 | you suggested, um just... management, classroom management could be |
| 87 | improved on, it was a lot of theory, there wasn't enough teaching involved in |
| 88 | how to actually deal with different students. It just tells you, there is a passage |
| 89 | on classroom management but it's very... broad. So it could be more detailed |
| 90 | maybe more one-to-one teaching, like a video course on that. |
| 91 | |
| 92 | Interviewer: okay great and then um... the online part of it, um you said you did it |
| 93 | online, would you say that you found it user-friendly? Let's talk about the newer |
| 94 | one, the 2012 one. |
| 95 | |
| 96 | Participant 1: Uh yes... The newer one was a lot more user-friendly because of |
| 97 | course the internet is a lot faster um had a lot more resources which is better |
| 98 | obviously back in 2005 when I first started learning it was slow, and they didn't |
| 99 | have as many resources. So the good thing is they had a lot of resources in that |
| 100 | way, of course, the bad thing is being in China ... some resources like YouTube |
| 101 | and this are blocked. So you know you can't exactly watch videos that they are |
| 102 | recommending because ... you know obviously they are blocked so you have to |

103      try think of a way around it so you can't do everything, so when you tell them oh

104      I can't do this they will say find a VPN uh I don't have a VPN so... anyway

105      resources was good um and still not enough tutoring I would say you really need

106      to know how to be a teacher that's a totally different thing. And I know

107      everybody has there own style but.. as a general thing they should walk into the

108      classroom, there are things you need to know.

109

110      Interviewer: And did you feel supported during your um during your TEFL? Do

111      you feel like you got enough support?

112

113      Participant 1: Um I got a lot of support, enough support... umm... they replied

114      quickly and it was very... very straight to the point which was good. Um...

115      sometimes things were unclear but in general... yes I would say... mmmm yes

116      and no [laugh].

117

118      Interviewer: okay great and any like final suggestions that you would give to like

119      a TEFL company on how to improve these courses.

120

121      Participant 1: TEFL company, uh yes. One thing I'd say is make your

122      notarisation and legalisation areas very clear on your website. Or make it so that

123      they can be notarised anywhere or in China or in the country they're in, that's

124      the first thing. Second thing, teachers who are in the specific country you are in,

125      if you are in China have a TEFL teacher who is in China, who knows China. um,

126      what else, um TEFL course needs to be... more motivational, I think it's just, it's

127      very just, very simply laid out, do this and it starts slowly and it's easy to get into

128      that's good, but it's not especially.. it doesn't really motivate you to be a teacher,

129      and it doesn't tell you the positives and negatives of being a teacher. Also, like I

130      find a lot of TEFL websites have jobs but honestly speaking they don't have the

131      better jobs. And also they don't tell you how to get better, how to improve. So if

132      you want to be a, obviously when you are a TEFL teacher in China, there is

133      always that limit, it doesn't matter where you are it's all around the same pay,

134      where as you want to know where ther ones you can move up, wheter you

135      worked there five years or whatever. They don't have any suggestion like that,

136      so there's no growth. You're just set, TEFL teacher you get paid this much this

| | |
|---|---|
| 137 | much this much [moves a flat hand, palm down, horizontally from left to right] |
| 138 | done. So, pay and job titles you know, obviously you want to move up, you don't, |
| 139 | maybe you don't just want to be a teacher, you want to be a headteacher or... |
| 140 | one day principal I don't know... There needs to be room for movement, we don't |
| 141 | just want to do... I know TEFL has a **masters** but what's after the **masters**? And |
| 142 | how's it going to be helpful? So... my friend, obviously [friend's name] has, has a |
| 143 | master in TEFL right so he gets paid higher, slightly, but he's still in the same |
| 144 | range [hand gesture again]. He is not really moving up, um. What else with |
| 145 | TEFL? There is a lot of grammar, but it's not **focused**... it's not **class** focused. |
| 146 | Like, there is a subject on the grammar and you do lots of grammar and there is |
| 147 | a subject on management, classroom management but there's not... um... how |
| 148 | to use this much of the grammar [index finger and thumb held parallel with a gap |
| 149 | in between] in a class and **this** much [index finger and thumb held parallel with a |
| 150 | gap in between] in **this** class. It's very... like you should know this, you should |
| 151 | know this but they don't put them together. So I think it's really missing that. So |
| 152 | for most teachers, especially when I see new teachers, I've been teaching |
| 153 | fifteen years, in China, uh and two years in England, and uh I just find that, I can |
| 154 | see the new teachers from the teacher who have been here for like three, four |
| 155 | years and you know there is no help, there's no support system after your TEFL. |
| 156 | Especially. |
| 157 | |
| 158 | Interviewer: Okay, perfect. |
| 159 | |
| 160 | Participant 1: That's quite a long part, yeah [laughs] |
| 161 | |
| 162 | Interviewer: No, it's perfect I think I have everything, thanks so much. |
| 163 | |
| 164 | **Participant 3- transcript** |
| 165 | |
| 166 | Interviewer: Okay, so. Roughly what year did you complete your TEFL? |
| 167 | |
| 168 | Participant 3: Um by complete you mean finished completely? Or... Ok... So I |
| 169 | started in 2010 and I did probably 80 hours and a weekend course and then I |
| 170 | just gave up... because I already had a job I didn't need to finish it and then two |

171 or three years later my boss said you have to do 120 hours. So I paid a little bit
172 more to finish the 120 hours.

173

174 Interviewer: Okay so what year did you, would you say you finished it?

175

176 Participant 3: 2012, 2013 somewhere around there. I can't remember the year.

177

178 Interviewer: That's roughly that's okay. And you said that you finished it for a
179 hundred and twenty hours.

180

181 Participant 3: Yeah.

182

183 Interviewer:  And was it all online.

184

185 Participant 3: Ah... No there was a weekend like 20-hour training thingy. Yeah...
186 like classroom setting... Not online.

187

188 Interviewer: Okay. And... How would you describe your first months of teaching
189 abroad?

190

191 Participant 3: Completely not... Anything like what... it'd readied me for, um I
192 was teaching in this school um in South Korea, teaching middle school and
193 elementary school um it was all new and exciting but... I got thrown in the deep
194 end on day one. You will teach in an hour. What will you teach? And... Um I
195 wasn't really prepared for anything on day one. So that was sort of the... Oh
196 crap. Invent a lesson within an hour which happens to be an amazing lesson
197 that I've used again and again. But... it sort of. Yeah. From day one it's sort of a
198 bit nerve-wracking because you didn't really know what to expect. And every
199 school is different. And the previous teachers, previous two teachers, had been
200 fired from my public school. So that was a bit nerve-wracking. So yeah.

201

202 Interviewer: Okay and so my next question was were you prepared? And said
203 that you felt like you weren't. Um the TEFL with the Grammar and phonics and
204 like English particulars. Do you think you were prepared to teach that?

205

206      Participant 3: Um.., I, to be honest, I haven't taught any grammar. I don't think I...

207      I pick up on the words and vocabulary and like expand what they already have

208      but I don't feel it is my role as a native English speaker to teach grammar. So I

209      haven't... only through the books that the school particularly wants you to teach,

210      have I taught grammar. It's normally actually up to the local teacher, the normal

211      English teacher.

212

213      Interviewer: OK, and like classroom management and discipline. Did you feel

214      that the TEFL prepared you for that?

215

216      Participant 3: Uhm... [pause]... I think they **tried**. But the way they... they sort of

217      talk about the classroom is; everybody in your classroom really wants to be

218      there and they **really** ...they're **really** excited about learning English. And in all

219      honesty, um you've got about three kids in your class that actually want to be

220      there, the rest actually **have** to be there particularly in elementary, middle and

221      high school. University is a different, university and polytech

222      is **different**... **but** there is a lot of the class,  a major chunk of the class

223      that **have** to be there as opposed to **want** to be there. And that is where you find

224      the discipline problems. So yeah.

225

226      Interviewer: Okay and how do you think they prepared you for the culture, so

227      you said you were teaching in Korea first, so the culture the Korean students,

228      the Korean teachers, the Korean like Korea in general, how did you feel

229      prepared for that?

230

231      Participant 3: I don't think we were. I think, the lady, who taught us had taught in

232      Spain I think so ...um... her experience was completely different to ours. And

233      she had taught adults. So um we, I wasn't really prepared for Korean culture,

234      Korean language, Korean schools. I was **fresh** and new and **really** had no clue

235      what I was doing. [laugh] I couldn't even figure out where Korea was on the map

236      when we got the job. Sort of said, Oh it's there, okay yeah [laughs].

237

238    Interviewer: [laughs] OK. Perfect. Um... What would you say the objective of a

239    TEFL is like why does someone need to do it?

240

241    Participant 3: Um... I know that a lot of like industries and a lot of countries

242    expect some sort of basic knowledge. And [pause] I think they've just sort of

243    decided there is this sort of something physical like a piece of paper that we,

244    you know, we can put a stamp. Have they done this piece of paper? Yes, okay,

245    they've got some sort of training. Um... Whether it's relevant or not,  if you've

246    done young teaching, young children. It is totally irrelevant to teaching them in

247    reality. Um, [laughs] And yeah I pretty much not used a single thing from my

248    TEFL but the weekend stuff gave me confidence. So with the weekend not the

249    online stuff with the weekend training gave me the confidence to be the teacher

250    that I am. So that's sort of [laughs]...

251

252    Interviewer: OK. And do you think this objective was achieved? You said to give

253    some sort of basic knowledge, was it achieved through the TEFL?

254

255    Participant 3: It gave you some basic knowledge. But I think it also... for me it

256    actually made me a bit more nervous to realize how little I know about my own

257    language that I speak and I don't think about where the noun and what the hell

258    is a gerund? I don't think about these things, when I'm speaking I just know from

259    experience that word goes in that order in that sentence. So as a native English

260    speaker we don't actually think a lot about structure of sentences and structure

261    of words. So, I think that it sort of made me go; Oh my God I can't do this, you

262    know as opposed to; oh this is easy. So that was the hardest thing.

263

264    Interviewer: Okay, and now, specifically the online part of it. Would you say that

265    this course was user-friendly?

266

267    Participant 3: Yeah, I would for what I remember of it um it was sort of like

268    reading through lots of information which had been written in a way that you

269    could understand it easy. And then completing small tests and assignments at

270    the end. So as you go through you actually were checking that you understood

271    what you were doing. Um... so yes it actually it was fine. It just I feel that, I still

272          feel like I could fail those courses if I hadn't done the same day as I was doing

273          the test. If you go back to it. So, yeah.

274

275          Interviewer: Okay and do you feel like you were supported enough?

276

277          Participant 3: Um [pause] I don't really know [laugh]

278

279          Interviewer: Did you like, get feedback on your like assignments?

280

281          Participant 3: Yeah we did get a little bit of feedback I remember um [pause]

282          yeah I was doing it with my husband, you know together. So I think we talked

283          about things together a lot more than asking others for help. So it was more like,

284          oh how did you approach this? or what did you said about that? So we were

285          going through this course together. Um... so I sort of feel like that sort of

286          eliminates the need for a third party to help.

287

288          Interviewer: Okay that makes sense, um... If you had to give any suggestions to

289          the TEFL companies that do these certifications, what would, would you have

290          any for them?

291

292          Participant 3: [deep breath out] um... I don't know. I think it's essential that you

293          do um an in-class part. I think um that will actually help you understand

294          who **you** are as a teacher. It's all well and good reading a book but if you have

295          to get up in front of someone and try and sort of implement what you've learned.

296          I think that, you know, that's the hardest thing, you know, actually being

297          confident enough to do that. And if you can do that in and amongst your peers

298          who all speak the same language, then you realize; hmmm ok, you know,

299          I **can** do this. So yeah it sort of gives you the confidence and also helps you find

300          out where your strengths and your weaknesses are. And I think particularly ours

301          we did a lot of teaching in groups and got a lot of ideas from each other and a lot

302          of **support**. So like some of the people we're still in contact with and have seen

303          where they're going what they're doing. So yeah.

304

305          Interviewer: OK. And the online part, would you give any... feedback.

| 306 | |
|---|---|
| 307 | Participant 3: Ummm nah, it was simple easy to use is just I think yeah it's, |
| 308 | written from the ideal perspective of a classroom of sixteen students or twelve |
| 309 | students who really really want to be there and are motivated to learn. And I |
| 310 | think that's, that is not reality for 90 per cent of people teaching, that you know, |
| 311 | 90 per cent of your students are **not** going to want to be there and not wanting |
| 312 | to learn and you're **not** going to have a small class and you're going to have |
| 313 | discipline issues and you're going to have students sleeping. I think that may be |
| 314 | as important to deal with classroom management a bit more in these courses |
| 315 | and how to deal was some **actual** nitty-gritty. How to deal with a student who's |
| 316 | sleeping what can you do. Um and give lots of different advice and that sort of |
| 317 | sense because I think they give you how to teach but not how to teach. Yeah |
| 318 | more like what to teach. How to teach this part but not how to actually control |
| 319 | the environment within your classroom. Yeah. |
| 320 | |
| 321 | Interviewer: OK. Thank you so much. |
| 322 | |
| 323 | **Participant 4- transcript** |
| 324 | |
| 325 | Interviewer: So. Roughly what year did you complete your TEFL? |
| 326 | |
| 327 | Participant 4: I completed it in 2018. |
| 328 | |
| 329 | Interviewer: All right. And how many hours was it for was for? |
| 330 | |
| 331 | Participant 4: was for 130 hours |
| 332 | |
| 333 | Interviewer: Okay and how much of it was online? |
| 334 | |
| 335 | Participant 4: a hundred per cent of it. |
| 336 | |
| 337 | Interviewer: Ok can you please describe your first few months of teaching |
| 338 | abroad. |

339       Participant 4: Um. Very intimidating. I would say, um in terms of the TEFL

340       though because the TEFL doesn't really, um prepare you for the class

341       experience. I would say, um the 100 per cent TEFL doing it online is um quite

342       different to what you would actually experience in class. But you get used to it

343       as with all things that you do. So... first couple of months quite nerve-racking

344       then got used to it. Then you know it actually becomes quite enjoyable though.

345       So yeah that's I think that's the basic description of the first few months, yeah.

346

347       Interviewer: Okay and how do you think TEFL prepared you for like teaching

348       phonics or teaching grammar? Actually teaching English.

349

350       Participant 4: Actually teaching English. I would say, in terms of , **what** to

351       teach. Very well. Like the grammar, and the phonics, the basis of what to teach

352       is there. This is definitely it's well done. In terms of **how** to teach that is

353       something that also you know, it comes with experience, I would say that the

354       method that you need to use to teach. Um specifically I think with the school, the

355       one that I was at. The methods that they used, the methods that the kids were

356       used to. Are not necessarily taught within TEFL because there are so many

357       different methods. I think. Um, and also using a method is much different to

358       actually being taught about a method. I would say, say for instance you use a

359       game to teach something. Listening and reading about it seems quite easy and

360       straight forward. You know what you're doing, but having to actually apply it in a

361       classroom with kids. Some of them are running about, some of them are not

362       listening. Some of them are yelling and they are so excited about this lesson. To

363       bring all of that together is much more challenging than just **reading** about the

364       method. I hope that description was not too long.

365

366       Interviewer: No, it was perfect. And classroom management?

367

368       Participant 4: Hmmm [pause] I think the TEFL is adequate in terms of describing

369       what you could expect. But again. It's the hands-on experience of actually going

370       into the class and then. Being in contact with the kids and then there's many

371       different kids. I mean so the TEFL brilliantly outlines specific problems. And then

372       you would use this type of method to deal with it. But what happens in a

| 373 | classroom when all of this all of the problems are present at the same time. |
| 374 | That's where it gets difficult. That's where the TEFL, I don't think in any way will |
| 375 | be able to prepare you for. Except if you actually do a practical, do a class. If |
| 376 | technology could advance where you would do like a virtual classroom even. |
| 377 | Where all of these issues are simultaneously running where you would have to |
| 378 | like scramble and deal with them. Like an actual classroom then I think TEFL |
| 379 | would definitely be, preparing you much better. I think you, yeah. |
| 380 | |
| 381 | Interviewer: Okay and like the culture of the students, and the co-teachers and |
| 382 | the whole of China, how do you think you were prepared for that? |
| 383 | |
| 384 | Participant 4: [pause] By the TEFL... um... No I don't think the TEFL goes into |
| 385 | too much detail about a specific culture that you are going to teach within. The |
| 386 | culture, let's say specifically, the Chinese culture to teach within, is a lot different |
| 387 | than the school that I was used to, that I went to. It's a lot more different than |
| 388 | what you would expect growing from a, sort like your, mindset is already, you |
| 389 | know, made up and... it's your high school or university mindset and then all of a |
| 390 | sudden going into... the classroom of the kids. No, it's not just the Chinese |
| 391 | culture. It's also the culture of the **kids**. I would say, like you know they are still |
| 392 | behaving differently they are still growing they are still learning. And then. It's |
| 393 | based within the larger culture that is the Chinese culture and the teachers I |
| 394 | mean that the environment that they create. So a TEFL preparing you for that |
| 395 | culture. No. But not that it's a bad thing, I think. Being open-ended that question |
| 396 | that's been open-ended. That's a TEFL didn't necessarily answer. It's maybe not |
| 397 | a bad thing because you go there with an open mind, open experience and then |
| 398 | everything is new you discover. So I don't think that's something that TEFL |
| 399 | really needs to prepare you for. But it could help. I don't know. There might be |
| 400 | some things in there that they could include, yeah. |
| 401 | |
| 402 | Interviewer:  So would you say you were prepared to be a teacher after the |
| 403 | TEFL. |
| 404 | |
| 405 | Participant 4: Overall I would say, yes. But there's a lot more that needs to be |
| 406 | done if you are going to say that TEFL is the only thing that you need to teach. I |

407   think there's a lot of room for improvement. One is, I would almost go as far and

408   say; that a practical class has to be mandatory for you to get your TEFL. Almost

409   in my opinion. That needs to be done, because... the preparation that you need

410   to do in terms of for a real class is **much** different that you do for a scenario that

411   you would be given in your TEFL exam. Um, yeah. A question that you ask of

412   your friends. I mean their help is almost **as** valuable as a TEFL. In my opinion,

413   their support. So I think there are definitely [pause] spaces within the TEFL that

414   can be upgraded, can be added to, can be expanded. To make it a more robust

415   certificate, if you want, and a more robust preparation of **actually** doing, you

416   know teaching, these young kids in a specific country in a specific culture, yeah.

417   Overall I think that's how I feel about the TEFL, yeah.

418

419   Interviewer:  So you say they need to have practical classes, but you said there

420   is also other things that they need to improve on. Could you mention some of

421   those, do you have anything in mind, like other things that they need to improve

422   on?

423

424   Participant 4: Um... so yeah... um. One thing that I found a little bit difficult from

425   TEFL is, the TEFL describes teaching methods. So let's say, using flashcards,

426   and then it describes a couple of other methods of how to use it but I found that

427   actually using the stuff that the TEFL taught me, to use it a classroom is a much

428   better way of learning how to teach. Let's say the scenario is you're going to

429   teach. A couple of nouns, let's say animals and you're gonna use flashcards to

430   teach the animals. I would say that if the TEFL had a mandatory practical within

431   it and then you're going to say okay this is my scenario you wrote out your

432   essay you wrote out your lesson plan and now you have to go present that.

433   Present that specific lesson in a practical. You go and you make your flashcards

434   or you download them from wherever.. You prepare your lesson, you go through

435   your lesson, you have naughty kids in your class, you have, let's say another

436   teacher your class as well. All of these things that, are **real** in the classroom if

437   you can have that in a practical as well. That's sort of the best preparation you

438   could have before walking into the first class on the first day. I would believe, in

439   terms of real-world application of what you're going to do before you actually

440    enter the classroom. That's what I think, yeah. A little bit of a short-coming in the
441    TEFL.

442

443    Interviewer: Great, what would you say the objective of a TEFL is? What are
444    they trying to achieve?

445

446    Participant 4: What they're trying to achieve is definitely to, one lay a base of the
447    basic English that they're going to teach and then at the end trying to give you
448    as much tools and methods to be actually, to be able to, carry over that
449    knowledge in a classroom. Now, yes that's good theoretical knowledge. I think
450    that purpose is well fit for a TEFL, give you the tools and then you know how to
451    apply them. So in terms of the purpose of a TEFL I think that's fine. How far it
452    actually goes. That's another question.

453

454    Interviewer: So that is my next question. Do you think they achieve it? [laugh]

455

456    Participant 4: [laugh] yeah... Ummm... I would say if you're looking at me
457    specifically, because that was my, you know, I took my TEFL I used my
458    knowledge and my studying that I did and to actually go and teach. The TEFL,
459    like just, just, [holding thumb and index fingers parallel with a gap between] I
460    would say, does it. It gives you just enough courage to actually go ahead and
461    move to another country and then do it, it just it gives you just enough courage
462    to walk into that first classroom. But as I said, one the practical, two your friends
463    that can help you. People that have actually taught, people who are actually
464    teachers, who know this stuff. Working through the actual issues in a classroom.
465    If that in any way can be incorporated within a TEFL, then it'll be the best
466    qualification that anyone could need before going into teaching English as a
467    foreign language. If they're not, you know, if they're not a dedicated teacher. I
468    mean like a full-time teacher for the rest of their lives. They don't have a
469    teaching degree, the next best thing would be a TEFL, if it could incorporate all
470    of those things. Yeah.

471

472    Interviewer: Ok, perfect. The online part of it would you say that it was user-
473    friendly?

474

475 Participant 4: Yes, yes, yes. The online is definitely user-friendly. It's very well

476 thought through. It's concise, well laid-out. The exams are quite clear. Yes. So

477 the online version of being taught, this TEFL certificate and being taught how to

478 teach English, is a good way to do it. I wholly agree with being taught online and

479 being left to your own devices to know how quickly you're going to do it, how in-

480 depth are going to do it. All of that is placed on you. Which is fine. And the way

481 that they've created a tool so that you can study is 100 per cent. I totally agree.

482 It's a great system. I believe.

483

484 Interviewer: And do feel that you were supported, throughout the whole TEFL?

485 By the actual TEFL people? The admin.

486

487 Participant 4: I would say, yes. If I had to... seek advice or help while doing the

488 TEFL. I believe they would be there to answer those questions because the

489 response that I received when I submitted my final essay and my final lesson

490 plan was quite quick and the response was quite concise and nicely laid out.

491 The only reason, I didn't actually ask for any help during the studying so but I do

492 believe I feel that their response, and their help, and the assistance, **is** available

493 when you would ask for it. Yep.

494

495 Interviewer: Okay, perfect. I have no more questions. Thank you so much.

496

497 **Participant 5 transcript**

498

499 Interviewer: All right, so roughly, what year did you complete your TEFL?

500

501 Participant 5: 2010 accurately. [laughs]

502

503 Interviewer: Right, [laughs]. And how many hours is it for?

504

505 Participant 5: [Pause] It was one hundred and twenty-hour certificate. Which I

506 completed 80 hours initially and took three years to complete the final 40

| 507 | hours. The reason being that it came with the quote-unquote 'guaranteed job |
| 508 | placement' and we got the job placements very, very soon after starting. And the |
| 509 | final modules were, I can't remember exactly, but one was young learners and |
| 510 | we found the job we'd got it wasn't applicable to that job. So we didn't finish it. |
| 511 | Thinking, we're not going to need it and we're only doing this for one year. And |
| 512 | we've already got the job. So eighty hours initially. Yeah and a hundred and |
| 513 | twenty hours total. So long-winded answer |
| 514 | |
| 515 | Interviewer: And uh was it all online? |
| 516 | |
| 517 | Participant 5: No. It was a hundred hours online and a 20-hour in-class |
| 518 | constituent. |
| 519 | |
| 520 | Interviewer: Perfect. And could you please describe your first few months of |
| 521 | teaching abroad. |
| 522 | |
| 523 | Participant 5: Um, a mixture between disastrous and completely overwhelmed. |
| 524 | Um, no that's about it disastrous and completely and overwhelmed or |
| 525 | overwhelming. [laugh] |
| 526 | |
| 527 | Interviewer: [laugh] All right., okay. And how do you feel the TEFL um prepared |
| 528 | you for teaching English. So the grammar for instance. |
| 529 | |
| 530 | |
| 531 | Participant 5: Um... I feel the 20 hour in class was **fantastic**. I wish it'd been one |
| 532 | hundred and twenty hours in class. That prepared me simply because it was |
| 533 | more of a real-world experience. The teacher who we had, um I remember |
| 534 | specifically she did one day where she was teaching us Spanish, I think, which |
| 535 | everyone in New Zealand or everyone in that class had no concept of. And so |
| 536 | she taught us Spanish without using a single word of English. So it was all how |
| 537 | you use props, how you can actually communicate without using spoken |
| 538 | language. And that helped immensely... because we actually saw how it could |
| 539 | be done. The rest of it not so much a lot of it was very... Technical... I found the |
| 540 | online stuff not so much. I think the only thing that I've used was like lesson |

541 planning and how to sort of structure a lesson. Um... There was a lot of very

542 detailed stuff which was good for, I guess, remembering English... like grammar

543 and so forth, but it's stuff that I've never taught. And in fact in Korea where I

544 went first, foreigners were **forbidden** from teaching they were like you cannot

545 teach this. So a lot of it was wasted but that's just on my experience. Some

546 people might have found it very useful, so.

547

548 Interviewer: Okay and things like discipline and classroom management. How

549 did the TEFL prepare you for that?

550

551 Participant 5: Zero. None... at all. I think there was a module on it but until you're

552 in a classroom setting it's impossible especially I've never been a teacher. Done

553 nothing like it. It was impossible to **visualize** what it could be how you could fix

554 it.  Um... And especially Korea you are meant to have a Korean teacher in class

555 with you at all times. It's a legal requirement. So technically speaking they do

556 the classroom management and you do the English speaking which sometimes

557 that happens sometimes it didn't but the certificate didn't **really** prepare at all for

558 that.

559

560 Interviewer: Okay and things like culture so like the culture, the culture of the

561 students, the culture of the classroom, the culture of Korea. How were you

562 prepared for that?

563

564 Participant 5: Not at all. [laughs] Um... A certificate. There's so many different

565 countries. I don't think they can possibly do every culture cause they are all so

566 different. Even Korea to China. But… maybe I remember talking about this in

567 Korea with people maybe if they had a culture... a quick 10-hour culture module

568 and then it's a different country like this is a culture model module for Korea.

569 This ones for Japan. This ones with China. This one's from Chile. Whatever it

570 might be and you choose what you want. But I think most of the culture, if there

571 was any, can't remember much, was very inadequate.

572

573 Interviewer: Alright, then what would you say the objective of a TEFL would be?

574 What are they trying to achieve?

575

576  Participant 5: I guess. They're trying to achieve, I guess in my opinion, a lot of

577  the teachers I've met they've gone overseas to teach for one **maybe** two years.

578  It's more of a gap year thing. So I guess it's saying they're not going to invest

579  lots of time and money into this career because it's just a quick sort of bit of fun.

580  So it's basically trying to achieve. We need to show them as much as we can, in

581  a time frame that they can manage and that feels doable because if it's too long

582  or too expensive they're just not going to do it. So I feel it's an entry point. It's

583  like here's something to get you through your first year and if you decide you like

584  it then you might decide to pursue CELTA or other avenues of professional

585  development. So an introduction, almost.

586

587  Interviewer: Okay. And do you think this was achieved?

588

589  Participant 5: I guess overall yeah it was. As I've said I far more out of the 20

590  hour in class than the other hundred hours combined. Um, but as very brief

591  overall introduction to teaching ESL, yea I guess it achieves this goal, roughly

592  [laughs]

593

594  Interviewer: So would you say the TEFL was able to prepare you at least

595  somewhat for the classroom?

596

597  Participant 5: Somewhat, yes. I think it was able to prepare, um lesson planning

598  and an idea of how to teach people who cannot speak English or at least who

599  cannot communicate, um outside of that... No, but, I guess, you know, you can

600  learn on the job but that's sort of the basic thing. So roughly speaking yes.

601

602  Interviewer: And I want you to focus on the actual part that was online. Would

603  you say that it was user-friendly.

604

605  Participant 5: very user-friendly, and um very... [pause] easy in the sense that,

606  the impression I got was, um it gives you all this information you have

607  assessments to do but the assessments are geared strongly towards let's make

608  sure they pass. Um... Because if we fail too many people our company is not

609  going to get referrals. We're not going to get their money. So it's more like if you

610  pay your money, you get the pass. Is my take on it, unless you

611  are **completely** useless.

612

613  Interviewer: Have you heard anyone that's failed before, heard from anyone?

614

615  Participant 5: I've heard people who have failed a module but you get... what

616  was 12... If you fail you just try again until you finally pass. So not really not with

617  the one I did anyway.

618

619  Interviewer: Okay, and did you feel supported during the online side of it?

620

621  Participant 5: Um, kind of... so the the support we got was. You did an

622  assignment to the assessment a multi-choice test and you sent it off to whoever

623  was marking and then that person sent you back; this is your score and this is

624  what I think. Um... It was fairly obviously a pick and choose commentary but with

625  so many people doing it that's completely understandable. So support,  not

626  overly but as much as I'd expect, if that makes sense, for a short, cheapish

627  certificate. [laughs]

628

629  Interviewer: [laughs] okay and uh with the like sequencing and the pacing of the

630  modules. Do you feel like that was, it was a well-paced and well-sequenced?

631

632  Participant 5: It was in the sense that we had six months to do it. So it's 120

633  hours and you do, well 100 hours and theoretically you've got six months, so

634  you can take as long or as short as you want. I remember one module was a 20-

635  hour module and I did it one afternoon. Because it was, I can't remember what it

636  was now to be honest, but it was very easy. So I was just sort of skim through

637  the material, do the test, pass, done, thank you very much. So, it was well-

638  paced in the sense that it was set up for people who were working they might

639  have a little time a lot of time. So yeah.

640

641  Interviewer: Okay, and finally if you had to give any suggestions to these TEFL

642  companies, like what suggestions would you give to them? I

643

644   Participant 5: In an ideal world, more face-to-face time, because that

645   was **fantastic**. However, of course, that's pretty unachievable and that's not a

646   good business model. So [pause] I guess [pause] that's a hard question

647   because you know what would be great to have. But as I've said that's not...

648

649   Interviewer: So what would, even if it's not necessarily completely realistic what

650   would great to have?

651

652   Participant 5: All of a face-to-face with an instructor who has taught ESL in the

653   past ... someone who can go in and they can say OK you know, you've done all

654   the of the things like grammar and all the lesson planning, that can all be online.

655   Read through it, understand it, **pass it**. Then go to a face-to-face session

656   because our face-to-face session was in the middle so you didn't **have to** have

657   completed things beforehand. And then even they go through it a little bit and do

658   more sort of; this is what a classroom will be like. Or if you going to teach

659   university in China. This is what it will probably be like. This is what the students

660   will be like. Here's some pictures, here's some videos, of what you

661   can **actually** expect. Um... and I guess more real-world... examples and more

662   real-world . Not the... uh yeah you sit in a room and everyone's there and they

663   really want to learn English. Yeah no they don't. [laugh]. And how to deal with

664   that and how to turn them around and actually still teach them whilst actually

665   providing some management and something worthwhile. Some more face-to-

666   face would be, I guess, that be my ideal and my recommendation.

667

668   Interviewer: Perfect. Thank you so much.

669

670   **Participant 6- Transcript**

671

672   Interviewer: So can you please tell me roughly what year you completed your

673   TEFL?

674

675   Participant 6: [counting] Beginning of 2016.

676

677        Interviewer: Okay. And how many hours was it for?

678

679        Participant 6: 120

680

681        Interviewer: All right. And was it online?

682

683        Participant 6: No.

684

685        Interviewer: None of it?

686

687        Participant 6: No, none of it. Fully in class.

688

689        Interviewer: Fully in class okay. And then... can you please describe your first
690        few months of teaching abroad.

691

692        Participant 6: First few months, I would say it was all about learning really and
693        just getting used to uh dealing with groups of kids and kids who don't really
694        understand what you're saying; how to simplify things for them. How to use body
695        language to get them to undersand what you are saying. And how to overcome
696        that initial like student teacher fear. You're scared of the kids, the kids are
697        scared of you. I think the first two months are just getting over that little hurdle.

698

699        Interviewer: Yeah that about right, and then... Do you think you were prepared
700        for the classroom?

701

702        Participant 6: Uh... In some ways yeah, cause of the TEFL course, but in other
703        ways no. Like the good thing that I took from the TEFL was; having that
704        interaction with kids that don't speak English as a first language. So when I was
705        in the classroom for the first time I wasn't as nervous as say; someone who
706        hadn't done the course, or had done an online course. But, what I was not
707        prepared for was; just the amount of work that goes into, teaching kids.

708

709        Interviewer: Such as?

710

711     Participant 6: Such as turning your lessons. Making sure that you know you

712     have worksheets available for them, that you might have kids who are 10 years

713     old and 5 years old into the same class because the school thinks that they are

714     on the same level when actually they're not all or having kids who have never

715     learn English before but because they're much older they can't go in to say a 5

716     year olds classroom they got to go into an older class and they don't understand

717     what is going on. So you have to, you know spend time thinking about how

718     you're going to help these kids, as well as just teach your class and general.

719

720     Interviewer: Okay, so do you think a TEFL prepared you for like teaching

721     English like the actual grammar, phonics part of it?

722

723     Participant 6: Yes. Because. That's another thing that I got from my TEFL

724     course  specifically was that there was a section on grammar, especially; tenses.

725     And I remember in high school when we studied tenses, I was like I don't

726     understand what's going on. But they put it in sort of like a simple way. For you

727     to understand and for the students to understand without going too deep into it.

728

729     Interviewer: Okay and like your classroom management?

730

731     Participant 6: Oh... I don't think the TEFL really helped with that much. There

732     were a few things that they said that; you can be strict with the kids, don't be

733     afraid to tell the kids theyr'e crossing a line or something like that. But not, I

734     would say they could have gone into that a bit more.

735

736     Interviewer: Alright and then like the culture. The culture the students, the

737     culture the teachers that you probably will be working around, and the culture of

738     like China in general. Do you think you were prepared for that?

739

740     Participant 6: More so I would say than people who have taken a TEFL back in

741     their own country or online. Cause my TEFL course was done in China. So I

742     was interacting with Chinese kids. I was getting the cultural background from the

743     course instructor. You know things like don't like don't write the kids' names in

744 pens. And you know don't let the the kids lose face in front of their peers. That

745 sort of thing was explained during **my** course which was unique because it was

746 in China.

747

748 Interviewer: Ok, nice. And then what would you say the objective or like what

749 are they trying to achieve with this TEFL course?

750

751 Participant 6: I think they are trying to make sure that we can apply what we

752 know as English speakers into a classroom. So they're sort of bridging us

753 between just being English speakers and being able to explain how our

754 language words for speakers who aren't English.

755

756 Interviewer: And do you think they achieved this?

757

758 Participant 6: [pause] Tricky one. Because I think it **can** achieve that goal but a

759 lot of the times the industry itself is taken over by people who want to travel and

760 people who want to come and have fun, go out and party. And they don't really

761 take it seriously a sort of; I'm going to do this for a couple of years to see the

762 world and they kind of forget that you're working with people and people's lives

763 especially with children and that it is something that should be taken seriously.

764

765 Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions for a TEFL company? What would

766 your suggestions for improvement be?

767

768 Participant 6: hmmm... I think, definitely the classroom part should be a must. I

769 think that if you're not a qualified teacher that you can just go online and pull out

770 a couple of reports and suddenly makes you good at teaching English. I think

771 that, you definitely need exposure to a classroom whether it's kids or adults. And

772 that that classroom also needs to be Non-English speaking, so that you can

773 understand firstly what you're getting yourself into that it's not just fun and

774 games. I go in and I say hello and you say hello and we dance and sing. That

775 there's actual work that needs to be done. There are a lot of things that are

776 going to get in your way especially because they don't understand what you are

| 777 | trying to say and that you need to be prepared for that. I think that is definitely |
| 778 | something that TEFL courses **need** to consider. |
| 779 | |
| 780 | Interviewer: Okay and if we were only going to do it online, how do you think |
| 781 | they could prepare you for this? |
| 782 | |
| 783 | Participant 6: Well, you could have online classes with one-on-one students and |
| 784 | groups of students. Or alternatively, you could work through organizations like |
| 785 | The British Council. They are represented in most countries and you could work |
| 786 | through them to maybe do; a demo class with people who are frequently visiting |
| 787 | their centres. |
| 788 | |
| 789 | Interviewer: That's great. Ok... thank you so much. |
| 790 | |
| 791 | **Participant 7 transcript** |
| 792 | |
| 793 | Interviewer: So roughly what year did you start your TEFL? |
| 794 | |
| 795 | Participant 7: In 2018, last year. |
| 796 | |
| 797 | Interviewer: Okay and how many hours was it for? |
| 798 | |
| 799 | Participant 7: It was a hundred twenty hours. Half of those 120 were online and |
| 800 | the other half was lectures and workshops. |
| 801 | |
| 802 | Interviewer: Perfect. And can you please describe your first few months of |
| 803 | teaching abroad. |
| 804 | |
| 805 | Participant 7: Ok so the first few months of teaching abroad was difficult. The |
| 806 | level at which the school was demanding the teacher perform was a bit absurd. |
| 807 | And there was no formal training given to the teachers. Instead one had to learn |
| 808 | on the go and got criticized for not knowing a school procedure when it wasn't |
| 809 | explained before-hand. Although there were many demonstration classes and |
| 810 | observations from mentors and managers the feedback was often harsh and |

| 811 | belittling. Also, the amounts of lying and deceiving that happens at schools |
| 812 | specifically in China to the parents is alarming. I soon realized that education is |
| 813 | financially driven and not necessarily student-centred. |
| 814 | |
| 815 | Interviewer: Okay perfect and did you feel that you were prepared for the |
| 816 | classroom? Do you think TEFL prepared you? |
| 817 | |
| 818 | Participant 7: So when I first started teaching, I didn't have a TEFL certificate yet. |
| 819 | So in that classroom setting, I felt prepared in my own right um and confident |
| 820 | and so luckily I knew what to expect. But, there are too many procedures and |
| 821 | rules for the teacher to follow. And that sort of hinders the learning process of |
| 822 | the students because you're always thinking about I need to do this or I need to |
| 823 | do that. But after the TEFL, I don't think it prepared me any more or any less. I |
| 824 | think it was just a prerequisite of getting the necessary documentation. |
| 825 | |
| 826 | Interviewer: OK. And so TEFL for instance, like if you had to keep grammar or |
| 827 | phonics would you say that the TEFL helped you with that? |
| 828 | |
| 829 | Participant 7: Not particularly so they explained the theory behind it, but they |
| 830 | never told you how to apply that theory. I think that's what's lacking. You sort of |
| 831 | learn on the go, [laughs] when you're teaching phonics you sound the word out |
| 832 | yourself; ok, I guess that's right, if I put this combination and that blend together |
| 833 | you get the word. |
| 834 | |
| 835 | Interviewer: and like classroom discipline and classroom management? |
| 836 | |
| 837 | Participant 7: There were some pointers but without the real classroom setting |
| 838 | there's no way to apply it when you're sitting in that lecture hall. Um and also |
| 839 | those things you sort of learn on the go. Each student is different and every |
| 840 | class is different so you sort of adapt your teaching style and your methods |
| 841 | according to the students you have. Certain triggers might work one class and |
| 842 | the triggers might not work for another class. You have to sort of always be |
| 843 | willing to adapt as a teacher. |

844   Interviewer: Great. And the culture like the culture of China. So the students, the

845   other teachers, in general just being in China. How do you think you were

846   prepared for the culture?

847

848   Participant 7: I wasn't prepared at all. What do you think of China before you

849   come to China. It was **not real** China. Um but it's best to just come into China

850   with an open mind and take everything with a pinch of salt because it can be

851   very different and very upside down and to the world that you know. Yeah you

852   just sort of embrace it I guess. [laughs]

853

854   Interviewer: [laughs] okay. And what do you think the objective of a TEFL would

855   be? Why does this course exist?

856

857   Participant 7: So the main object, or what they **claim** the main objective is, is to

858   prepare you to teach to the students who don't understand what you're saying.

859   When you're coming from an English background they're Chinese and is to

860   provide you with the necessary tools needed to facilitate learning in the

861   classroom. However, I don't think they achieve that objective very well because

862   it's not applied practically. You can read a thousand books but it it's not applied

863   in the classroom setting it's not going to work in my opinion. Of course.

864

865   Interviewer: So the online part of it specifically, do you think it was very user-

866   friendly?

867

868   Participant 7: I think it was user-friendly. Yes. Although there were certain steps

869   you can complete the first parts you couldn't go to the next part. But understand

870   why. User-friendly? Yes. it was.

871

872   Interviewer: OK. And do you feel like you have enough support. We're you

873   supported during the whole online part of it.

874

875   Participant 7: Well my online part I had to complete really quickly because my

876   school signed up for it so I didn't have much time to actually complete the

877   assignments so just like go do do do [shooing gesture]. But I think they were

878    support channels in place. I'm not quite sure, I can't remember, because I didn't

879    use them I just set out to get it done.

880

881    Interviewer: Well that's fine, okay and if you had to like give any suggestions to

882    these TEFL companies. What suggestions would you give them?

883

884    Participant 7: I guess I would suggest that you condense the theoretical

885    portion **down** only to the vital and relevant information and rather

886    demonstrate **how** this information is needed, through a practical way. So

887    through a practical means on how to implement this information. And allow

888    participants the opportunity to teach in a real class. Have them have mock

889    lessons and provide critical feedback on that, rather than have them read a

890    passage and answer questions. So apply the knowledge. They do say; practice

891    makes perfect to practice what's there. And if you're teaching how to teach; one

892    way to teach is to explain, demonstrate and then practice and they're missing

893    that practice portion of what they're teaching which is really strange.

894

895    Interviewer: Perfect OK. Thank you so much.

896

897    Participant 7: You're welcome.

898

899    **Participant 8- Transcript**

900

901    Interviewer: Roughly what year did you complete your TEFL?

902

903    Participant 8: about 2007.

904

905    Interviewer: And how many hours was it for?

906

907    Participant 8: I think it was 60 hours back then which was all you needed. Now I

908    believe you need about 120, depends on where you're applying.

909

910    Interviewer: Okay and how much of it was online?

911

912        Participant 8: None of it. It was all in class. Did it on weekends.

913

914        Interviewer: Okay. All right. And could you please describe your first few months

915        of using a TEFL to teach abroad. So after you got your TEFL you went abroad

916        and how was the teaching?

917

918        Participant 8: Well, I mean it depends. I am going to give a long answer. That

919        particular TEFL didn't really prepare me for what I was teaching. It gave me a

920        broad stroke but didn't give me any concrete examples which are things that you

921        will find on the job. So I went into a Korean [inaudiable] or private school. And

922        the system there, you know, it's particular work that they want you to do.

923        Particular system that, some of the techniques in the TEFL won't prepare you

924        for. But I have taken an online course or I've studied other courses

925        which **do** teach things like TPR and various techniques and all of these kinds of

926        educational theory. So it really depends on what kind of programme you are in.

927

928        Interviewer: Okay focusing specifically on the TEFL though. Do you think it

929        prepared you for the classroom?

930

931        Participant 8: [pause] No [laugh] I'd say, I mean to a degree, obviously you have

932        an idea of what to expect but like most job training, I wouldn't isolate it to just

933        TEFL. A lot of job training is a lot of theory. [pause] It doesn't prepare you for

934        what you're **actually** going to do. You learn that as you go, and then later you

935        might reflect upon your training and go; oh yeah I know that applies here and

936        that applies here. But going in from one to the other immediately I'd say not

937        really.

938

939        Interviewer: So you say most like vocational training doesn't prepare you. What

940        do you think they could do better then, to prepare you?

941

942        Participant 8: Teachers programs will give you practicums right? Send you to

943        schools to do a lesson. If they had something like that incorporated into a TEFL

944        training versus just you know, write a lesson plan, for example. But if they send

945    you into a classroom. Or even an online component, there's a lot of teaching

946    online jobs if there is some kind of partnership or. I don't know, I'm not sure what

947    kind of system. But either way, some kind of practical classroom would be

948    optimal. More anecdotes from people coming back from various countries.

949    People who might give you real insights into what countries... will offer different

950    experiences. Someone in Asia or someone in the Middle East, someone

951    in Europe. You know, these kids will be different, they'll treat you differently,

952    they'll have different expectations of you as a teacher etc..

953

954    Interviewer: Ok. How do you think you were prepared for like grammar or

955    phonics or the actual English language, like how prepared were you for that, for

956    teaching that?

957

958    Participant 8: Not particularly, because... they might do some basics but you

959    know the art of teaching and learning grammar in the modern age is... pretty

960    bad. Again this is all dependent. My experience was that grammar wasn't a

961    focus. Maybe some phonics games it was more like here some ways to play

962    games and here's some education theory and here's... you know, how you might

963    approach a classroom. But nothing, like here's how to teach split infinitives. You

964    know, how basic, rudimentary grammar might look in the classroom. Not that I

965    can remember, was a long time ago.

966

967

968    Interviewer: [laugh] And classroom management, how were you prepared for

969    that?

970

971    Participant 8: Same thing, I'd say there were some tips, you know. You did have

972    ideas of how to manage a classroom. But again you don't really learn your own

973    style until you get into the classroom and do it yourself. The kids ran all over me

974    for a number of months before I figured it out.

975

976    Interviewer: And the culture, you said the first place you taught was Korea. So

977    how did they prepare you for like Korean culture, Korean students, just Korea in

978    general?

979

Participant 8: Oh not at all... because again, Korea was where I went but they placed everybody anywhere right everywhere. They offered me a job in China, they offered me a job in Korea. They offered me a job can't remember, I think I was aiming for Japan. So it was primarily Asian but they didn't give you a cultural run-down. Because you could go anywhere.

Interviewer: Yeah. okay. And what would you say the objective of the TEFL is? What are they trying to achieve?

Participant 8: Well they want you to... Be certified and have a general foundation of educational knowledge and well they can send you out. I mean I guess that is the objective of any educational program is to give you the tools that they think you need. And like I said it's program-specific I've gotten more out of an online course that I did with my in-person course in a lot of ways. So it depends on what TEFL programme that you're in. I think. Same as any degree.

Interviewer: How did that online course prepare you better? What did they do differently?

Participant 8: Well again they just sort of went a little more in-depth and they had more videos and things that you could review. I'm not saying online courses are better or worse but some of the materials were good because you can review them and they have those tests and quizzes. Not things like group work or let's just chat about what we wanted. Those things are great, in person. But they're not like OK now you're going to study some real theory, you know, how to approach students how to get them engaged, things like that. I don't know. I know I am being general but... [laughs]

Interviewer: No, that's fine. So you said you think the objective of a TEFL would be to give you foundation and tools. Do you think they achieved this?

Participant 8: [pause] Again to a degree, half and half, it's not like they've failed. It's not like they did nothing for me, but I didn't feel, you know. After I got the job,

| 1013 | I didn't feel oh boy I'm sure glad I took that TEFL, I took it to get a certificate, so I |
| 1014 | could get the job, right... But if I didn't need the TEFL and I could just get the job |
| 1015 | I probably would have figured it out regardless. |
| 1016 | |
| 1017 | Interviewer: Okay, and if you had to give any suggestions to these TEFL |
| 1018 | companies, what would you suggest to them, to improve? |
| 1019 | |
| 1020 | Participant 8: Again, same thing I'd say add more practicum style training. If you |
| 1021 | are an in-person program add some online component, if you are an online |
| 1022 | component... add some maybe interview... components or something where it |
| 1023 | has some kind of real-life interaction with either teachers or administrators or get |
| 1024 | in touch with an actual school. And say ok; how does it work? What's your day- |
| 1025 | to-day? Maybe two or three, so you can see the difference between say; |
| 1026 | teaching in a private school or teaching in a public school, teaching university |
| 1027 | and teaching kindergarten. It's what you're interested in. Focus a little bit on stuff |
| 1028 | like that. |
| 1029 | |
| 1030 | Interviewer: That's great. Thank you so much. |
| 1031 | |
| 1032 | |
| 1033 | **Participant 9- transcript** |
| 1034 | |
| 1035 | Interviewer: So roughly what year did you complete your TEFL? |
| 1036 | |
| 1037 | Participant 9: 2017. |
| 1038 | |
| 1039 | Interviewer: And how many hours was it for? |
| 1040 | |
| 1041 | Participant 9: 120 |
| 1042 | |
| 1043 | Interviewer: And how much of it was online? |
| 1044 | |
| 1045 | Participant 9: a hundred hours. |
| 1046 | |
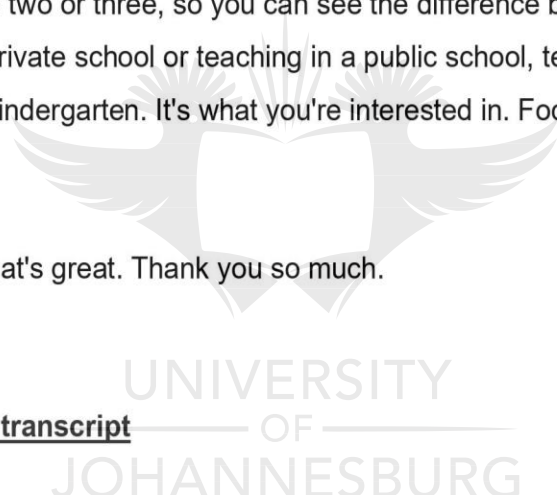
1047    Interviewer: Ok.. and... please describe your first few months of teaching abroad.

1048

1049    Participant 9: Had to learn quickly. It was difficult. I had to rely a lot on

1050    colleagues to kind of explain what I had to do... Yeah... Had to learn and get

1051    good at it really quickly. The online TEFL didn't **really** set you up particularly

1052    well for a classroom environment.

1053

1054    Interviewer: Okay. That's my next question. Do think the TEFL prepared you for

1055    these challenges that you faced?

1056

1057    Participant 9: In theory, yes. But it's difficult to apply stuff you've written into a

1058    computer to a real-life environment.

1059

1060    Interviewer: Can you comment on things like teaching phonics. Because I know

1061    you taught in kindergarten, so teaching phonics, how did TEFL prepare you for

1062    that?

1063

1064    Participant 9: [pause] uh.. Not very thoroughly. It's a very basic course, the 120

1065    hours is a very basic course. So they don't really go too in-depth into **what** you

1066    teach more how you teach it. So. That's again. Ask questions on how best to do

1067    it and watch videos kind of make up my own sort of method for it. And kind of

1068    learn off other people's experiences. But the actual TEFL course didn't really do

1069    a lot of **what** you're teaching.

1070

1071    Interviewer: That makes sense and like classroom management?

1072

1073    Participant 9: Again, it gave you a lot of theories in what to do but with no

1074    practice on how to actually apply them you kind of have to try a lot of them out

1075    really quickly and see what works. And then you've got to apply that to what's

1076    socially expected and what the learning environment is in the country you're

1077    working in and then mold it around that. So anything that we did get taught had

1078    to be adapted to teaching in China where there are slightly different

1079    expectations on how classes should be run, and how teachers should behave,

| | |
|---|---|
| 1080 | and how students should behave. So it's again semi-useful to have a little bit of |
| 1081 | knowledge there wasn't really any practical application. |
| 1082 | |
| 1083 | Interviewer: That was actually my next question about culture. How do you think |
| 1084 | the TEFL prepared you for the culture of the students, the culture of the co- |
| 1085 | teachers, and the culture of China in general? |
| 1086 | |
| 1087 | Participant 9: It didn't at all. Like it said to be aware of cultural sensitivities but it |
| 1088 | didn't really delve into what they are, how to approach them and how to kind of |
| 1089 | deflect questioning about it. Also the TEFL qualification, when you do your 20 |
| 1090 | hours worth of practical tests you are working with other adults who are planning |
| 1091 | on being teachers so they're **the best** possible students. Yeah, so they already |
| 1092 | know the answer. They already know what you are trying to say, they really |
| 1093 | have to pretend, to find a different way of getting kids to understand it. It |
| 1094 | doesn't **really** translate very well. |
| 1095 | |
| 1096 | Interviewer: OK. What would you say the objective of a TEFL would be? |
| 1097 | |
| 1098 | Participant 9: As in? What do you mean like as in why you do it? Or why it |
| 1099 | exists? |
| 1100 | |
| 1101 | Interviewer: Why it exists and why you do it? Ok, I know **why** you do it. But why |
| 1102 | does it exist? Why do you think it's necessary? |
| 1103 | |
| 1104 | Participant 9: It's necessary as like a barrier to having just anybody rock up and |
| 1105 | start teaching. It's literally so that they can say that you put some effort into |
| 1106 | learning how to teach... Yeah... It's just a little check so that people can say |
| 1107 | you're qualified. |
| 1108 | |
| 1109 | Interviewer: And do you feel that you were? |
| 1110 | |
| 1111 | Participant 9: [laughs] After a year of practical application, I think I do now, yes. |
| 1112 | But I wasn't really prepared after doing a hundred and twenty hours of |
| 1113 | theoretical teaching for a foreign classroom environment. It really depends on |

| 1114 | how... quickly you can adapt to the surroundings and how quickly you can pick it |
| 1115 | up. |
| 1116 | |
| 1117 | Interviewer: I want you to focus now on the actual online part of it. Did you find |
| 1118 | the online part to be user-friendly? |
| 1119 | |
| 1120 | Participant 9: [pause] Yeah, it was **pretty** good. It was pretty thorough, all of the |
| 1121 | modules were really well explained and really well-paced. And the online |
| 1122 | assessment style was good. It kind of told you what you got wrong so you go |
| 1123 | away and re-learn it or re-revise it. I guess the downside is that you could take |
| 1124 | the test as many times as you wanted until you got the right answer. So... it |
| 1125 | probably negates the fact that it's a qualification. It's just an online test that you |
| 1126 | can take until you pass... But yeah. The actual modules were useful and well set |
| 1127 | out. But it was all theory, you didn't really have any kind of practical application |
| 1128 | towards it. So it just depends on how you apply your knowledge once you're |
| 1129 | qualified. |
| 1130 | |
| 1131 | Interviewer: Do you feel you were supported by the people that you did your |
| 1132 | TEFL through? |
| 1133 | |
| 1134 | Participant 9: [pause] We didn't really have any interaction with them. We had |
| 1135 | 20 hours like lecture periods and the lady that ran that was fantastic.... She'd |
| 1136 | been teaching English teaching TEFL for a long time and had helped design the |
| 1137 | course. So, yeah, like she was really good... and when it came to doing the |
| 1138 | assessments, our adjudicators were really useful because we were on a really |
| 1139 | tight timeframe to complete the course. So, they allowed us to kind of fast track |
| 1140 | it and do the two assessments at the same time rather than one after the other. |
| 1141 | Like yeah. They were helpful. It was good. But actually doing the modules we |
| 1142 | didn't **really** have a lot of interaction. |
| 1143 | |
| 1144 | Interviewer:  Okay, if you had to give any suggestions to the TEFL company you |
| 1145 | did your TEFL through. What would you suggest to make it better? |
| 1146 | |

| 1147 | Participant 9: It doesn't really work. The 120 hours course doesn't really work. |
| 1148 | It's a fast track to saying that people are qualified and prepared. And really they |
| 1149 | won't be. So it's probably, like, the hundred and twenty hours is almost pointless. |
| 1150 | So you **need** practical application. Whether that comes down to only running the |
| 1151 | courses over summer so that you can use like English summer schools as a |
| 1152 | practice ground for teaching or you have them do a placement in summer |
| 1153 | school so that they can watch how teachers do it.... Yeah, it needs to be more |
| 1154 | thorough, and you can't be that through in a course that is meant to take 120 |
| 1155 | hours. |
| 1156 | |
| 1157 | Interviewer:  Okay, that's perfect. Thank you so much... |
| 1158 | |
| 1159 | **Participant 10 transcript** |
| 1160 | |
| 1161 | Interviewer: Roughly what year did you complete your TEFL? |
| 1162 | |
| 1163 | Participant 10: In August 2017. |
| 1164 | |
| 1165 | Interviewer: And how many hours was it for? |
| 1166 | |
| 1167 | Participant 10: 120 hours. |
| 1168 | |
| 1169 | Interviewer: And how much of that time was online? |
| 1170 | |
| 1171 | Participant 10: a hundred. |
| 1172 | |
| 1173 | Interviewer: Perfect. Um Please can you describe your first few months of |
| 1174 | teaching abroad. |
| 1175 | |
| 1176 | Participant 10: Teaching... goodness um it was very different to what I'd |
| 1177 | experienced in TEFL because the kids are a lot younger. Um obviously TEFL |
| 1178 | prepares you for a number of ages. But in terms of actually, standing up in front |
| 1179 | of the classroom was very different. Um, the 20 hours that we did in class was |
| 1180 | probably a bit more beneficial in terms of getting up and doing something in front |

1181 of the class but I would say, uh it was very different and difficult but um you can't

1182 really learn that you have to adapt yourself when you start.

1183

1184 Interviewer: OK. You said it was difficult. Why? What made it difficult?

1185

1186 Participant 10: Well I guess it was my first time teaching ever and so it was just

1187 remembering everything you learnt in TEFL and trying to apply that to the

1188 classes. Um, the lesson plan were obviously different. As each school is to what

1189 we've learned in the degree. So it's just learning to adapt. And also, you don't

1190 know these kids. And so. It becomes a lot easier once you know your kids and

1191 what their level is and how you can apply what you know to them. If that makes

1192 sense.

1193

1194 Interviewer: And things like teaching English so the phonics and things like that

1195 how did TEFL prepare you for that?

1196

1197 Participant 10: for phonics, um it actually, well it taught me a lot about my own

1198 language that I didn't realize. I didn't know beforehand uhm so phonics I was a

1199 bit, um of a stranger to, so that helped me at least prepare in terms of the

1200 appropriate sounds and how that can be applied in teaching.

1201

1202 Interviewer: Okay and classroom management?

1203

1204 Participant 10: Classroom management. Yeah. It gave a lot of variety in terms of

1205 how to deal with difficult kids and how to sort of what you can and what you

1206 can't say which is good, cause going in I had no idea about that. Um, it's

1207 obviously you can't really imagine it to you're actually there and it's happening,

1208 but it definitely gave an idea of what to be prepared for.

1209

1210 Interviewer: Okay, and the culture of the students, the culture of your teacher or

1211 like your co-teachers and the culture of China and in general, how were you

1212 prepared for that?

1213

1214      Participant 10: We weren't. [laughs] and I don't think anything can prepare you

1215      for that. Because it is so [laughs] It so foreign and it's so different. And you've

1216      just got to be open to accepting everything. And not trying to fight it. Because at

1217      the end of the day it's not your culture, it's theirs. And you're guest in their

1218      country. Um it was difficult but everyone was very lovely. And um... It took its

1219      time but you do adapt in the end.

1220

1221      Interviewer: Do you feel that you were prepared for the classroom? That TEFL

1222      prepared you? For the classroom in general for the teaching?

1223

1224      Participant 10: Ah you know what, more academically than anything. But um I

1225      don't think I'd find it difficult for them **to** prepare you for that kind of scenario. Um

1226      unless they have an example of anything before you, as far as I can remember

1227      no. I don't believe so.

1228

1229      Interviewer: What would you say the objective of a TEFL is, like why does it

1230      exist?

1231

1232      Participant 10: Um [pause] I guess to give the opportunity to people who, **do** you

1233      want to go abroad to teach but don't have the right degree. So, our purpose was

1234      that we wanted to go and teach in China for a year and we didn't have the

1235      experience. Um and TEFL is what we heard. And we were quite surprised that

1236      120 hours was all you needed. But it worked out perfectly for us. Yeah. It was

1237      just a way to get the degree. Quickly.

1238

1239      Interviewer: OK. And now the hundred hours online, I want you to focus on that

1240      for a second. Um do you feel that that was user-friendly?

1241

1242      Participant 10: Yes definitely. You weren't able to progress to the next level

1243      before you got a certain percentage on the previous level. So that was good. So

1244      it wouldn't give you an overall mark at the end they would make sure that you

1245      completed the first level before moving on so you had a proper understanding of

1246      it so. You can't cheat it. You have to know what you talking about. And the fact

| 1247 | that it's all multiple choice and it slide show and it's not just lectural essays or |
| 1248 | stuff like that. Yeah. I'd say definitely. |
| 1249 | |
| 1250 | Interviewer: And do you feel that you were supported during the online part of it? |
| 1251 | |
| 1252 | Participant 10: I didn't need to speak to anyone. So, I had no correspondence |
| 1253 | with anyone apart from the teacher in the classroom but by that point we were |
| 1254 | almost at the end of our TEFL. |
| 1255 | |
| 1256 | Interviewer: OK. That's perfect. And then. If you had any suggestions for a TEFL |
| 1257 | company. Like if you had to give the TEFL company some suggestions about |
| 1258 | how to improve, what would you say them? |
| 1259 | |
| 1260 | Participant 10: Say the question that you asked which is how they prepare you |
| 1261 | for the classroom and if they had like, example videos or example stories from |
| 1262 | teachers; who **were** doing it or **had** done it. Just that you could get some hands- |
| 1263 | on advice. Sort of someone who's done it and it's honest and it's like this is what |
| 1264 | you're gonna get. |
| 1265 | |
| 1266 | Interviewer: That's perfect. Thank you so much. |