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Cascading training into the classroom: the need for parallel planning.

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Cascading training into the classroom: the need for parallel planning.

Abstract

Cascade models of in-service training are widely considered to be a cost effective means of introducing educational change to large numbers of teachers. Data from 511 teachers completing a cascade training programme that introduced current ideas about and procedures for teaching English to young learners, suggests that the factors determining whether cascade training aims actually reach the classroom are complex. The paper considers implications for cascade project planning, suggesting it may need to be a parallel process, if its goal is to enable teachers to use the skills introduced in training in their classrooms.

Keywords

Educational change : In-service Training: Cascade models: Change contexts:
International education : Educational policy and planning

1. Introduction

Attempts to enable classroom implementation of large scale educational changes typically involve the provision of in-service teacher training (INSET). The cascade model (Prophet 1995, Gilpin, 1997, McDevitt 1998, Hayes 2000, Bax 2002) is one strategy widely used to try to provide training for the maximum number of teachers in a cost effective manner, especially where the numbers ultimately needing training are very large, and/or funding to provide training is limited. This well-known model operates on the principle of providing direct training, in the knowledge and skills thought necessary to enable the desired changes in classroom understandings and behaviours, to a relatively small number of specialists or trainers. Recipients of such ‘first level’ training (often those who already have some responsibility for INSET provision in the particular context) are then expected to train other groups (usually consisting of classroom teachers), who may then in turn be expected to more or less formally pass on the essence of their training to their colleagues. If the hoped for ‘cascade’ down from first to subsequent levels can be seen to have occurred, albeit with the training content probably diluted as it trickles down (Hayes 2000), educational planners may consider that they have introduced the means of implementing desired changes to classroom teachers cost effectively, in terms of the Chambers dictionary definition of having obtained ‘ an adequate return for (their) outlay’

This intuitively sensible model can however fail to live up to its potential for ‘cost effectiveness’ if the ultimate aim of the strategy is to see trainees beginning to implement

changes in their own classrooms. Such an aim implies both relevant and contextually appropriate training for trainees, and teaching contexts that will support their post-training implementation attempts. This paper suggests that educational change policy makers and planners need to take an active interest in both aspects, if the cascade training skills are to have any real chance of becoming visible in trainees' classrooms.

The first section of the paper provides background information on a recent ELT cascade initiative in China. Next data is presented, illustrating teachers' perceptions of contextual factors likely to impede the actual 'cascade down' of their training into their classroom practice. The third section of the paper briefly discusses some components of the context within which any educational change is situated, the conflicts that may exist between different components, and recent thinking about means of supporting change implementation in classrooms. Bearing this in mind, I consider how the planners of cascade projects might proceed at the initial planning stage in order to bear both cascade content and context in mind and illustrate what such planning might have entailed for this particular cascade initiative. The paper concludes by suggesting that a broader approach to planning cascade projects, while likely to require a slightly larger financial investment over time, may ultimately help to increase the possibility of training aims being implemented in classrooms, and so actually provide a better return on outlay.

2. Background

Despite longstanding discussion in the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature (Kennedy 1987, Markee 1997, Hayes 2000) of the apparent ineffectiveness of using

purely power-coercive strategies (Chin and Benne 1970) to introduce educational change, such strategies continue to characterise many large-scale educational change initiatives. Early in the new millennium Education Bureaux throughout China were informed that from September 2003, all primary schools would be expected to introduce English in the third or fourth year of schooling, rather than in secondary school as had usually been the case previously. The National Curriculum draft guidelines which outline the basic requirements for the two national curriculum levels to be covered at primary school, emphasise the oral use of English for playing games, singing songs and listening to and telling stories, with a gradual move to slightly more formal comprehension and production of words and sentences in upper primary classes (see Appendix 1 for Level one descriptors).

The introduction of English in the Chinese context, in a manner that is appropriate for primary level, is clearly an immense undertaking, and the project on which this paper is based represented one attempt to support this process in a single province. The formal project lasted for two years. Most funding was provided by the Provincial Education Bureau with further support from the British Council. After a brief familiarisation study to help plan the design of the cascade training itself, two short, in-country Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) training courses were held to identify suitable participants for trainer training. Three months of first level trainer training (hereafter *level one*) was then provided for over 100 trainers who came to the UK in four groups over an eighteen month period. Earlier groups were predominantly made up of those with existing in-service teacher training responsibilities at city district or town county level.

Later groups consisted largely of practising primary school teachers thought to have trainer potential.

The first two months of each *level one* training dealt with the principles and practice of TEYL in a manner that aimed to be consistent with the basic requirements of the national curriculum.. During the third month trainers designed/adapted the design of training materials for a three week course to ‘cascade’ these principles and practices down to Chinese primary school English teachers. The design of both the UK programme and the programme for Chinese teachers tried to model the following INSET principles, very similar to those on the RESC checklist (Hayes 2000:143)

- The need for trainers to begin by finding out about teachers’ previous experiences, and their existing beliefs and behaviours in order, wherever possible, to make links between these and the new ideas/practices to be introduced.
- The need for trainers to help teachers to understand and be able to explain to others **why** different practices were being recommended.
- The need to provide opportunities for teachers to experience and think about new ideas and activities themselves, through trainer demonstrations, before expecting them to apply them.
- The need to provide teachers with opportunities to practise planning and managing new techniques and activities, and chances to think about and obtain feedback on such practise from peers and trainers.

In addition, during the final month the *level one* trainers were explicitly introduced to, encouraged to identify a rationale for, and given the chance to practise, training skills and techniques needed to train in the manner implied by the above. The materials design burden was heavier on the first group who had to design them from scratch than on subsequent groups who adapted the training materials in the light of their use on level two training programmes (see next paragraph). Hence the time available for trainer training during this final month increased as the project progressed.

The second level training (henceforth *level two*) took place in the school holidays immediately following each group's return to China.. Each group of approximately 25 *level one* trainers, (supported by two UK consultants) took responsibility for a single three week training course for up to 800 practising primary school teachers, using the training materials and training skills that they had developed. Most members of *level one* groups were required to participate in *level two* training as assistants to a previous group prior to their study in the UK. This enabled them to experience the *level two* training materials and training process in action, and so have this experience to refer to during their own month of materials design and trainer training. By the end of two year project period over 3000 primary school teachers had attended these *level two* training programmes.

The final stage of the formal 'cascade' project began to be discussed about half way through the project. It eventually followed on from the *level two* training programmes and involved cooperation between a small group of representatives from all four *level one*

groups. Their role was to adapt the various versions of the training materials for use as a TEYL book to disseminate ideas, their rationale, and relevant techniques and activities more widely. The first draft of this book is, at the time of writing, being used as the training material for a further *level two* training, increasing the number of *level two* trainees to approximately 4000.

On the surface then ‘cascading’ of understandings and skills relevant to helping teachers implement the basic requirements of the national curriculum had apparently occurred. The particular characteristics of young learners, what these imply for the conditions in which they learn language best and the techniques and practices that help them to learn, had been introduced, explained, demonstrated, practised, reflected on in the light of practice and practised again by some 3000 teachers. Moreover in future, through the book based on training materials used (quite successfully according to evaluations) with the *level two* teachers, an introduction to TEYL ideas and practices, expressed in accessible language by Chinese *level one* trainers, will be available for primary teachers across the province.

The project planners provided tangible financial and administrative, and so indirectly also important moral (Fullan 1992, Markee 1997) support for the first two levels of the cascade, and for the dissemination of the ideas introduced therein to teachers across the province through the book. However, while clearly supporting the cascade project itself, the data below suggests that planners had not considered the extent to which the classroom contexts in which many teachers have to apply their training, represent barriers

to the actual use of training ideas and activities. This focus at the initial planning stage only on the provision of training, thus appears to have compromised achievement of project aims.

3. The Data

All 750 teachers attending the third *level two* training programme were asked two questions at the beginning of one session in their final week. (see Table 1 below). These questions focused specifically on the concrete classroom techniques/activities for developing young learners' skills in a manner consistent with learner characteristics and national curriculum requirements, that had been introduced, demonstrated and practised during the programme. Teachers were given a maximum of 20 minutes to answer. 511 (68%) responded. (In all percentages below the first figure relates to respondents and the second to the total number of training programme participants)

INSERT TABLE 1

Responses to question 2 (b) were coded and then thematically grouped into a number of broad areas reflecting different aspects of the wider educational and/or subject-specific context. Issues listed in Table 2 below were all mentioned by at least 10% of respondents as impediments to the use of the techniques/activities introduced during the training in their own classrooms. Some examples of individual responses, selected to try to reflect the range of responses under each heading, are provided in Appendix 2.

INSERT TABLE 2

Tables 1 and 2 show that more than half of all teachers attending the *level two* training felt that aspects of their classroom contexts represent barriers to their application of the cascade training. Class size and space make it difficult to manage the suggested techniques and activities, and the prevailing educational culture does not easily accommodate the overt evidence of pupil activity, which they imply. The limited number of hours available for the subject and the fact that tests are based on content of the textbook makes completing the book a priority, leaving little time for suggested techniques and activities. Contrary to the basic requirements of the national curriculum, most tests do not assess skills but concentrate on formal knowledge about language. Since it is test results on which learners' (and teachers') performance are judged, teaching has to focus on likely test content. Textbooks in any case do not provide sufficient examples of contexts within which to situate such activities, and since primary school English teachers' workloads are heavy, it is hard to find time to prepare their own materials. Perhaps because so little time is actually devoted to developing language skills, children find it difficult to understand teachers when they do try to use English to explain or give instructions for carrying out such activities. Finally, for some teachers, key stakeholders in both their working and their wider social contexts (parents, head teachers and local administrators) see little point in children learning English, and are indifferent to what the teachers do as long as exam results are good.

4. The context of educational change

Educational change and English language teaching (ELT) project literature (Coleman 1996, Holliday and Cooke 1982, Holliday 1994, Kennedy 1988, Louis and Miles 1992, Fullan 1993, 1999, 2001, Wedell 2000, 2003) has long pointed out that in all educational settings what actually happens in classrooms is influenced by hugely complex, dynamic, sets of interdependent geo-political and socio-cultural contextual factors, in both the immediate and the wider environments. Studies of state-sector English as a Foreign Language teaching (EFL), contexts around the world provide evidence of the difficulty that educational change planners have in coping with such complex circumstances (Al Hamzi 2003, Berry 2003, Butler 2004, Gahin and Myhill 2001, Nunan 2003, Wedell 2003, 2004). They repeatedly illustrate situations in which one or more contextual factors directly conflict with the stated aims of the learning programme in ways that make it virtually impossible for teachers to meet them,

For educational change to be implemented in classrooms more or less as intended, it is necessary for educational change planners to try to ensure that teachers are supported as fully as possible by their immediate and wider working environments. However, since the range of factors that influence these environments is so far-reaching and may fluctuate unpredictably over time, it needs to be simplified in some way if planning is to be made manageable. One way of doing so when introducing changes to single school subjects is by limiting detailed consideration to the immediate classroom context of the subject area in question, in the above case primary English. Within any such given subject area the above data suggests that one can identify a minimal set of subject-specific contextual factors, which need to be in harmony with the aims of the course of study or particular

INSET initiative, if they are to support their achievement. These are illustrated in figure 1 below. The degree to which these factors can be fully harmonized will of course be influenced by the less controllable wider context. However if, as the above data suggests, one or more of the components are clearly inconsistent with the aims of the course of study (or of a cascade project to help implement those aims), it is unlikely that they will be met.

INSERT FIGURE 1

It is of course unlikely that all teachers emerging from the single *level two* training described above would immediately be able and/or willing to fully implement the techniques and activities to which they had been introduced, (Lamb 1995, Li 1998). However, the existence of the subject-specific, contextual barriers suggested by the data can only represent a disincentive for many of those trainees who are positively disposed to try out training ideas in their classrooms.

Differences in classroom contexts within the parts of the province represented by the respondents mean that class numbers range from 40 to 90 and the number of English lessons per week from one to five. National curriculum aims of developing childrens' language skills are often ignored by an assessment system that emphasizes knowledge about language. Textbook content, as the de facto syllabus for most teachers, influences and is influenced by what is assessed and so makes it difficult for teachers to find class time for the more 'time consuming' activities introduced in the level two training. Textbooks additionally provide few suitable examples of such activities for teachers to choose from. The focus on the aspects of language which will be tested, does little to

encourage teachers to use English naturally in the classroom and so, if and when the suggested activities are attempted in English, learners find it difficult to understand, again making them more difficult to carry out. We therefore find a situation where, purely within the subject-specific context, the stated aims of the National Curriculum and the cascade training based on those aims are not, for many teachers, in harmony with class size, time available, learning materials and assessment practices.

In such circumstances the use of training skills in the majority of classrooms, which must surely be the ultimate aim of any cascade training programme, is unlikely to be achieved. This suggests that initial planning of cascade training projects needs to be extended to include consideration of the subject-specific context in which teachers have to work. In the following section I suggest, a parallel planning sequence for cascade training, and then try to illustrate how this might have been realized in the project under discussion.

5. Planning to help cascade training reach the classroom

If initial planning of cascade training projects is to maximise the chances of cascade aims being implemented in classrooms, it needs to consider two parallel sets of issues. On the one hand it needs to try to ensure that the content, process and organization of the proposed training will equip the maximum number of trainees (at each level) with skills appropriate to the achievement of project aims. On the other, as the data suggests, planners need to check whether the situation in the schools and classrooms to which trainees will be returning will be supportive of their attempts to try out their new skills in

practice. The initial planning process could thus in the first instance be viewed as asking and answering two parallel sets of questions to identify whether any significant mismatch exists between cascade programme aims and classroom realities. Where it does, planners need to ask and act upon the answers to a third question, if their cascade project is to affect teaching in classrooms. A suggested sequence is illustrated in figure 2 below

INSERT FIGURE 2

How then might such a parallel planning process have worked in the context discussed here? With the answer to question 2 clearly ‘YES’ planners would have needed to consider what could and could not be done. In the short term, given the significant differences in socio- economic levels and the shortage of English teachers across the province, planners could have done little about either the size of classes, or the variation in the number of hours devoted to English in schools. Similarly the fact that much primary school assessment of English is carried out in ways that directly conflict with stated national curriculum aims is also in the short term difficult to change, given an educational culture which has historically understood the teaching- learning process principally as the transmission of facts, and assessment as the testing of such facts. However, I suggest that systems could have been developed to adapt the working environment in ways which would have lowered some of the barriers to implementation identified above by *level two* teachers.

To begin with if planners had acknowledged the obvious difficulties that class size, limited time and lack of appropriate materials would represent for the implementation of project aims, they might have tried to establish mechanisms to help *level two* teachers,

(and their untrained colleagues), to support each other in beginning to implement the cascade changes in their classrooms. Recent literature on processes supporting educational change implementation (Fullan 2000, Harvey 1996, Harris 2003, Leithwood 2002,) increasingly emphasises the need for collaboration between teachers in schools and between schools within a local area, in order to cope successfully with the complexity that the introduction of educational change brings with it. For such collaboration to take place regularly enough to be genuinely supportive, it needs to be formally recognised as a part of teachers' work, be timetabled, structured and facilitated.

Bearing this in mind, initial planning could have supported the cascading of project aims into classrooms through a conscious decision to establish primary English teachers groups in each district, town or county represented on *level two* training programmes. To provide a nucleus for the formation of such groups, it could have been agreed that each such administrative area should send a minimum of two or three participants to the *level two* training (Bax 2002). The two years of the formal cascade project could have been used to publicise and promote the formation of such groups as *level two* trainees returned to their areas. As encouragement, partial province-level funding for their establishment and for the part-time paid employment of a *level one* trainer or *level two* teacher as facilitator could have been offered to any district or county authority willing to provide matching funding, a space for meetings and to timetable regular meetings within school hours.

If the formation of teachers' groups had been planned as part of the project from the start, the systematic use of *level one* trainers beyond their participation in a one or two *level two* training programmes could also have been planned for. They might for example have been seconded to the provincial education bureau, for a period of time (taking account of their personal circumstances), once the formal cascade training was completed. Their role, working in pairs (as they did for much of the time on the *level two* training programmes), might have been both to act as facilitators or trainers of facilitators for the district, town or county level teachers' groups suggested above, and where possible to disseminate the goals of the cascade training more widely through further smaller scale local *level two* training programmes.

How might such teachers groups have helped lower barriers to the 'cascading' of project training? The literature suggests that teachers need opportunities to interact with each other, to try out new practices, to discuss how they can be made to work within their contexts (Leithwood 2002), to work with and learn from each other (Harris 2003). Such groups, meeting regularly, could have helped teachers to share ideas for dealing with some of the issues that they considered to be impediments to cascading their training into their classrooms.

For example, the two issues most frequently mentioned by teachers were managing activities in large classes and introducing activities despite the shortage of time. Some respondents already had ideas for trying to address these issues.

- *I can try my best to use them for controlling the big class. The songs, games, stories, drama are needed to be adapted for the whole class involved. Sometimes I can divide the children in groups and ask them to play an activity group by group. This may make the teacher very tired, but for the children's interest in language learning most teachers can take the risk of doing that.*
- *Because there is not time to teach them (stories), so I teach the story in the morning before class.*
- *Maybe we can play them (language games) after class as an English corner or party*

Teachers' groups could have provided opportunities for their members to share, try out, report back on and eventually identify locally appropriate ideas for dealing with these two important contextual issues. Similarly they reported the shortage of appropriate teaching-learning materials and of time to prepare their own. Here too group members could have worked work together, jointly creating and trying out contextually appropriate materials, suitable for introducing techniques and activities to their children. Over time, and in the light of use, the group facilitator could have placed materials that had been proven 'to work' in the local context into a 'bank' that all teachers in the district or county could have access to, regardless of which textbook they were formally using.

It was noted above that assessment methods were a further impediment to the achievement of both national curriculum and cascade training aims, and that the cultural context and lack of trained test designers made it difficult to insist on province-wide change. Here too, if planners had identified this issue at the initial planning stage, they

could have decided to begin to look for, publicise, and overtly support the dissemination and popularization of, existing assessment instruments, designed in richer and more educationally open parts of the province, which are more consistent with the aims of the national curriculum and the cascade training. Official public endorsement of assessment methods coming from districts, towns and counties recognised by all to be economically successful, could, over the project lifetime, have begun to generate a growing awareness of alternatives across the province. Such officially sanctioned greater awareness of alternatives might in turn have encouraged some district/county level teachers' groups to point to such tests and suggest that they use them in their contexts also, gradually lowering one further barrier to the implementation of cascade project aims.

6. Conclusion

Such parallel planning to support classroom implementation of cascade aims would not of course have removed all barriers and would also have involved a degree of extra cost. However, this extra outlay would have provided at least some support for *level two* trainees trying to deal with four of the five most frequently mentioned barriers to 'cascading' their training into their classrooms. In addition, the very fact that the provincial government actively supported the formation of teachers groups and their regular meetings, and also publicised and endorsed the desirability of more valid assessment methods, would itself have represented a further level of legitimacy for the changes the cascade was aiming to bring about. Such overt high-level support for cascade aims would in turn be likely to encourage positive attitudes towards implementation

among both teachers and their immediate superiors (Fullan 2001, Arnold and Sarhan 1994). Overall, therefore, the extra cost involved might ultimately have meant that the cascade project as a whole gave a greater rather than a lesser return on the financial outlay.

This paper deals with a single specific case. The proposals it makes have not been tried out in practice. However, the case suggests that if cost effectiveness, is considered to be an important reason for adopting a cascade strategy to introduce educational change into actual classrooms, certain implications for the planning of the strategy follow. Firstly, as suggested in question 1 in Figure 2, at the very beginning of the cascade planning process, planners need to ask two parallel sets of questions to identify the extent to which the aims of their proposed INSET training are in harmony with key factors within the subject-specific classroom context. If they find that contextual barriers to **application** of training content do commonly exist in classrooms, their planning needs to develop a second dimension, chronologically parallel to the planning and implementation of the training itself. It is only some time after planners have worked through this parallel process, as appropriately as possible for their particular context, that they can realistically expect to start finding visible evidence of cascade training aims appearing in a large number of classrooms.

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Table 1 questions asked and teachers' responses

Question asked	Response
<p>Question 1 Do you think that the techniques/activities for developing young learners language skills that you have been introduced to can be used in the Chinese primary English classroom? YES / NO</p>	<p>502 =98.2% (66.9%) answered YES</p>
<p>Question 2 a) Apart from your own lack of experience/confidence in using these techniques/activities, are there any factors that might make it difficult to use these in your classroom? YES / NO b) If YES please list the three most important factors for your classroom</p>	<p>435= 85.1% (58%) answered YES, and listed one or more factors.</p>

Table 2. Teachers' perceptions of factors making it difficult to use cascade training techniques/activities in primary classrooms.

Contextual factors making it difficult to implement cascade training techniques/activities	Number/percentage of respondents (all participants) mentioning this
1. Class sizes; large numbers, the difficulty of managing large numbers, physical space.	245 47.9% (32.6%)
2. The small number of lessons per week and the pressure to 'finish the book' to meet the demands of the test, both making it difficult to find the time needed to use suggested techniques/activities.	181 35.4% (24.1%)
3. Incompatibility of testing content/format with the use of techniques/activities and the critical role of test results in leaders' judgements of students' and teachers' performance.	92 18% (12.3%)
4. Learners' language level and inability to understand meanings and instructions, and their cultural reluctance to participate.	84 16.4% (12.2%)
5. Inappropriacy of textbooks and so shortage of materials to support the use of suggested activities.	77 15.1% (10.2%)
6. Teachers' workloads and so their lack of time to plan classes and materials which incorporate these techniques/activities	74 14.5% (9.9%)
7. A general lack of understanding of/interest in the purpose or process of language learning in the school and wider environment	58 11.3% (7.7%)

Figure 1: Key subject-specific components of a classroom context

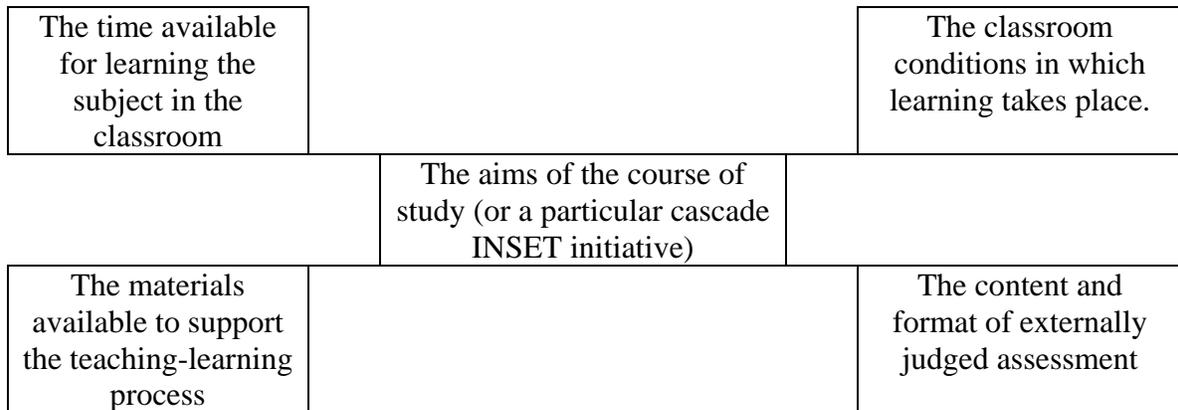


Figure 2. Subject-specific cascade project planning as a parallel process

Planning of training content and design	Consideration of context to which trainees will be returning
<p>Question 1 What are aims of the training in terms of new teaching-learning skills and behaviours? What do these imply for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the training content? • approach? • length ? <p>What is the scale of the training, and so who are the most appropriate trainees at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 • Level 2.....? 	<p>Question 1 What are normal features of the schools/classrooms to which most trainees will be returning, in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • typical conditions for learning? • time typically available for learning ? • materials usually available for learning? • The content/format of the assessment of learning ?
<p>Question 2 Are there any features commonly found in school/classroom contexts that may make it difficult for trainees to apply the training skills/behaviours with their own learners?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">NO</p> <p>Focus on detailed planning / implementation of the cascade training only, as above.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">YES</p> <p>Question 3. Given existing realities in the wider educational/socio-economic context, what systems can be developed to provide ongoing support to trainees’ as they try out cascade skills / behaviours in their classrooms?</p> <p>Plan and budget for/ establish contextually realistic support systems, in parallel with planning/implementation of the cascade training.</p>

Appendix 1. Basic Requirement for Primary School English. Level 1

The basic requirements are designed into two levels for primary school pupils from age 8 to 12. Level 1 is for grade 3 and 4, Level two is for grade 5 and 6.

	Performance Descriptions
Listen and Do	Be able to recognise and point at objects or pictures according to what is heard. Be able to understand and react to simple classroom instructions. Be able to do things according to instructions, such as pointing, colouring, drawing pictures, acting physically, doing hand craft. Be able to understand and react to simple English stories with the help of pictures or actions
Speak and Sing	Be able to imitate from recordings Be able to greet each other in simple English Be able to exchange simple personal information such as names and age. Be able to express simple feelings or emotions such as likes and dislikes Be able to guess meaning or say the words from acting or miming. Be able to sing 15-20 children's songs and 15-20 nursery rhymes. Be able to speak out words or phrases according to pictures or printed words.
Play and Act	Be able to play games in English and communicate with each other in the game with simple English Be able to do simple role plays in English Be able to perform English songs and act out simple English plays eg: little Red Riding Hood.
Read and Write	Be able to read and understand simple picture stories in English Be able to recognise objects first and then understand words describing them. Be able to read and understand simple picture stories in English Be able to write correctly letters and words that have been learned
Audio and Visual	Be able to follow simple English cartoon films or other English programmes at a similar level The time spent for audio and visual should be no less than 10 hours per school year with an average of 20-25 minutes per week.

Appendix 2. Selected responses to question 2(b) by theme

1. Issues to do with class sizes; numbers, the difficulty of managing large numbers, physical space.

Mentioned by 245 = 47.9% (32.6%)

With 60 or 70 minds thinking different things in class it is hard to have them all to pay attention to the class

The pupils are so excited they make noises. It makes the teacher who is having classes next to my classroom sick. They'll complain about and so does the head master.

One time I used a puzzle in my class. It made the pupils create their imagination. It made the class become vivid. The children made their pictures but they didn't listen to the teacher. The teacher couldn't control the class, they were too excited.

Sometimes when we played we found the place was not enough, such as we wanted to play a game 'change seats', there were so many pupils in the classroom we couldn't play well.

2. Issues to do with the small number of lessons per week and the pressure to 'finish the book' to meet the demands of the test, both making it difficult to find the time needed to use suggested techniques/activities. Mentioned by 181= 35.4% (24.1%)

- *There is only a short time for me to teach the whole book, so I can't spend too much time on songs, stories etc*
- *If I use these techniques it will take a lot of time. I can't talk about grammar and the students do not have a good total. The headmaster will be angry with me.*
- *Some of the activities need much time to finish, but there are only 40 minutes in a session. The time is limited so of course the effect of the activities is limited too.*
- *Time is so limited, though they (techniques and activities) are really interesting.*

3. Incompatibility of testing content/format with the use of techniques/activities and the critical role of test results in leaders' judgements of students' and teachers' performance.

Mentioned by 92=18% (12.3%)

- *I couldn't use them (techniques/activities) in my classes. We have an important exam at the end of term so the time is limited. I want to but I cannot.*
- *We must pay more attention to the results of the examination, so we have to read words and sentences again and again without any more techniques.*
- *It's because of the test. I have to make my teaching suitable to the education Office. If my students' results are not good I will be punished or be fired.*
- *Our school's assessment criterion is far away from my teaching. Although the National Curriculum is given, the school leaders often comment on teachers according to the test result, especially the children's reading and writing.*

4. Issues to do with learners' language level and so their inability to understand meanings and instructions, and their cultural reluctance to participate.

Mentioned by 84=16.4% (12.2%)

- *It is hard to use stories or drama in my classroom because it is very difficult for my students to understand the meaning.*
- *Stories include many vocabularies and the students' vocabularies are limited. Even if I tell the story for them, I am afraid if they can't understand it.*
- *Most children (especially countryside children) are shy and so it is difficult to encourage them to join a story and drama.*

- *Because the children are not good at English and there are too many children in the classroom it's difficult to use these techniques in my teaching*

5. Issues to do with inappropriacy of textbooks and so a shortage of materials that support the use of suggested activities.

Mentioned by 77=15.1% (10.2%)

- *The content of the textbook is too much and too difficult for the children, just grammar words and sentences.*
- *The textbook we are using now is not suitable for the students' real level. It's too hard. They have to memorise many words, which will be tested in the examination. It will push them to think that English is not a language but a test.*
- *If we teach the same class for many years it's hard for me to show them new ways of learning. We need some good games, good simple story books, good drama books, good original songs urgently.*
- *The most difficult is when we want to use a technique, but we have no aid material. It needs us to make it ourself.*

6. Issues to do with teachers' workloads and so their lack of time to plan classes and materials which incorporate these techniques/activities

Mentioned by 74=14.5% (9.9%)

- *Every teacher always teaches maybe four to five classes in school and there are 50-60 pupils per class. That is to say every teacher has to teach about 250 to 300 pupils.*
- *English teachers usually have many classes and many grades to teach. Maybe we don't have so many time to decide the game, the song and so on.*
- *We have too many classes and we have no time to prepare for every class carefully. We don't have so much energy to afford it.*
- *Sometimes we can't find songs or rhymes which are suitable for the teaching content. It's impossible for us to go through the net for every lesson.*

7. Issues relating to a general lack of understanding of/interest in the purpose or process of language learning in the school and wider environment

Mentioned by 58= 11.3%.2 (7.7%)

- *The parents don't know English , they don't know why their sons or daughters must be learnt English.*
- *The headmaster doesn't pay attention to it (English teaching). The parents are too interested in the examination.*
- *Our school leaders don't attach importance to English. The English teachers in our school have no pressure and impetus. If you do a good job or a bad job the school leaders don't pay attention.*
- *Chinese children tend to sit still and do exercises. I think it needs quite a long time to change the condition from the very beginning of Young Learners.*