

Appendix 8

China partner proposed project details

**UK - China Research and Materials
Development Awards**

Title: Lesson study as an Innovative Approach for Pre-service Teacher Professional Development in Guangdong Province

Award type: EMaDA

China partner/Created by: School of English Education (SEE), Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

RESEARCH FOCUS

Over a 13-month period, this project intends to explore the effectiveness of lesson study for pre-service teachers within internship schools in Guangdong province, highlighting benefits and challenges in both rural and urban contexts, while offering practical guidance on how this can be integrated more effectively as part of current pre-service English teacher development. The project will also make broader suggestions within the context of pre-service teacher development for consideration at local policy level.

Compared with Chinese school teachers' common practice of "collective lesson preparation", the lesson study to be explored in this project is an *inquiry-oriented form of professional development*. This is not yet a common practice in China's pre-service education, but it is one of the core principles/requirements that has been emphasised in recent national English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory and General Senior High School Education (2022) and CSSCI journal articles written by Qiang Wang, the director of the basic education new English curriculum standards revision committee; lesson study therefore has emerging national relevance. To facilitate the research, lesson study will be carried out as an exploratory practice in selected internship secondary schools of the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and another 11 universities/colleges in the Guangdong area.

Lesson study teams will be set up to form local school-based learning communities in participating secondary schools during pre-service teachers' internship, aiming to promote pre-service teachers' research-oriented development and pedagogical skills that can better solve classroom-based pedagogical issues raised by the front-line teachers.

A multiple case study approach will be adopted to investigate how pre-service teachers transform into reflective teaching practitioners through teaching, learning and researching. Collaborative meetings and enacted lessons will be video recorded, reflective journals and lesson plans from the pre-service group will be documented, and interviews with pre-service teachers will all be conducted over the project period.

The potential findings will explore how, if at all, lesson study improves pre-service teachers' quality of teaching, the challenges encountered and corresponding potential solutions, how contextual factors shape teachers' beliefs and their teaching behaviour, and the critical moments that inform their transformation into more effective and reflective practitioners.

Based on these insights, pedagogical suggestions and implications will be made to teacher education and policy makers, and initial guidance for teachers in pre-service education will be created.

DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC OUTPUTS REQUIRED AS PART OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY

A. Research output:

Informed by the existing needs and the potential finding, below are the anticipated outputs,

A. disseminable research report. (Primary audience: Local decision makers and policy makers)

The report will reflect on the following questions:

1. Does lesson study improve pre-service teacher's quality of teaching with specific attention paid to secondary school students' core competencies?
2. Is there any difference in the levels of effectiveness of lesson study in urban and rural areas internship schools?
3. What are the challenges in implementing lesson study for pre-service teachers? What solutions might be considered?
4. How influential are contextual factors on teacher beliefs and teaching behaviour, with specific consideration of how they affect lesson study? E.g., the school environment and culture, other teachers, support provided from the university, etc.
5. Are teachers more reflective because of lesson study? In what way?
6. What aspects of lesson study make teachers most reflective?

- The report will be professionally presented with a separable section that can be used to inform the Guangdong Provincial Education Department on the support that schools in rural sectors need and offer some specific guidelines for education reforms at local policy level.
- The report will document the process and methodology used by the research team to help record and monitor school-based lesson study for pre-service training that allows teachers to grow and become reflective teachers in both rural and non-rural sectors.
- The report will reflect on the collaboration of the lesson study teams, highlighting the joint-efforts of the UK-China partnership and its contribution made to the field of language education.

B. Material development. (Primary audience: Pre-service teachers)

Based on the initial research, the following materials will be developed

A digital¹ lesson study teaching materials pack that supports pre-service secondary school teachers effectively facilitate and participate in lesson study within internship schools, with key suggestions on how to reflect and develop both individually and within the teaching group. The pack will consider how to effectively use available digital resources, local online learning platforms and other resources for reflection and adaptation of practice. Its ultimate aim is to support teachers integrate reflective practice into their daily work and support long term sustainable improvement of English teachers.

C. Provide a short shareable summary guide (translated) for school leaders or department heads on how to effectively promote lesson study amongst teachers in their schools, highlighting key benefits.

D. Offer a recorded online bilingual informational video for university facilitators and school leaders on how to best support lesson study in internships.

E. Future Collaboration Opportunities (Optional)

There is also interest in further collaboration in the following research areas emerging from this research and collaboration project. These are not intended to be funded directly by the EMaDA award and are listed primarily for separate consideration and discussion. However, where direct relevance with the project objective can be identified, and if this can be carried out within the available budget, an additional research paper can be outlined in the application for consideration in addition to the report and materials output. Research papers focusing on the following topics are of interest to School of English Education:

- The development of pre-service teacher's research skills and pedagogical content knowledge during internships.
- Designing innovative and meaningful learning spaces through new technologies.
- Lesson study for pre-service teacher's professional development.

The impact of UK-China partnership on developing lesson study as an innovative research approach.

POTENTIAL/DESIRED IMPACT

The research may bring impacts as follows:

- Theoretical aspects: Develop a context-sensitive lesson study model for both local pre- and in- service teachers and teacher educators to address their contextual needs and further support their professional development and pedagogical innovation. With the assistance of external advisors as the theorists (e.g., relevant experts, researchers and subject consultants from both UK-China partners), to guide the application of a lesson study model and fine tune its implementation to support improved pre-service English teacher education.

¹ Digital = online or available through digital means, and may include different applicable media. E.g., video, audio, text, etc

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- Contextual aspects: Help build a future collective learning community that creates a supportive and collaborative culture among teachers. Through teacher collaboration, this project will encourage pre-service teachers to critically reflect and enhance their pedagogical skills and content knowledge; this will support teachers to make effective changes to their lessons and finally over time improve students' learning outcomes.
 - Policy aspects: Better inform and raise awareness of local governments such as Guangdong Provincial Education Department, the provincial policy makers and administrators who are in charge of, or running pre-service English language teacher education programs, with research data and findings; help decision makers stipulate more context-sensitive policies to facilitate, supervise, and evaluate pre-service English language teacher education programs for its long-term betterment.
 - Publication aspects: Dissemination of the findings to the other provinces in mainland China through publications on CSSCI journals, academic conferences, and online media can allow the lesson study guidance to be expanded to other provinces and other practitioners in pre-service education for national impact and improvement of pre-service models.

PROJECT CONTEXT

Teacher education in today's China: A new open teacher education system

Education has been recognized as the primary solution for China's revitalization. To enhance the quality of education, China has been carrying out curricular reforms targeted at basic education since 2001. It is during these curriculum reforms that the importance of teachers as change agents has been "discovered". The quality of the teacher has a close connection with the quality of teacher education. Over the past few decades, in order to generate high quality teacher, the State Council of China has issued a series of actions and policies to reform teacher preparation and establish "a new open teacher education system":

- In 1995, teacher certification practice was enacted.
- In 2001, a *Decision of the State Council on the Reform and Development of Basic education (Decision in short)* was issued in which "teacher education (jiaoshijiaoyu)", a more professional term, was first used to replace "normal education (shi fan jiaoyu)", a local term reflecting the past planning economy. Additionally, the *Decision* proposed "an open teacher education system" with existing normal colleges and universities as the main training body, with other non-normal HE institutions as participatory members to prepare teachers, connecting pre-service teacher cultivation and in-service training. (Before 2001, only normal colleges and universities were qualified to train teachers.)
- In 2018, *Advice on Comprehensively Deepening the Construction and Reform of Teachers in the New Era* clarified the policy guarantee of "increasing the support to normal universities" to cultivate "high quality, professional and innovative teachers".
- In 2019, *China's Educational Modernization 2035* further defines "the open, coordinated and linked teacher education system with Chinese characteristics with normal universities as the main body, high-level non-normal universities as the participants, and

high-quality primary and secondary schools (kindergartens) as the practice base."

With two-decade of effort, China has generally transformed from the past closed normal education system to the new open teacher education system (Hu 2020; Zhang, 2020). Currently, there are altogether 187 normal universities and colleges and 383 non-normal HE universities running teacher-education programs (Hu 2018). With their long history and expertise in running teacher training, the normal universities are considered to have stronger educational traits and are thus "educationally competitive"; The non-normal universities are often comprehensive universities which have little tradition in preparing teachers but have an edge in certain disciplines and are thus "academically competitive" (Zhang 2020). The impact of including both normal and non-normal universities to run teacher training programs is yet unclear.

English language teacher education in China: A field on the way of exploration

English language education has long been criticized for its simplified "English language + education" curriculum separating English and education (Li, 2013). Various skill-based English courses are offered to enhance student teachers' English proficiency; three educational courses include educational principles, educational psychology, and ELT pedagogy. The simplified and separated curriculum results in a gap between English language knowledge and pedagogic knowledge, linguistic theory and pedagogical practice. In other words, it omits student teachers' development of PCK (pedagogical content knowledge) (Yang, 2021). Student teachers' research and humanistic qualities are also ignored (Zou, 2009; Zhang 2020; Yang 2021).

To enhance the quality of English language education and teacher education, Chinese Ministry of Education has issued a cohort of standards:

- In 2017, *Implementation Measures for Certification of Normal Majors in Colleges and Universities (Provisional)*;
- In 2017, *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards -- English*;
- In 2018, *National Standard for Teaching Quality of Foreign Language and Literature*;
- In 2018, *Chinese English Proficiency Scale*.
- In 2022, *Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards – English*

These standards raise high expectations on and requirements for English language teachers and teacher educators to be more proficient and professional. There are positive changes taking place. For example, in teaching practice, some key HE institutions have reformed English language education curriculum, adding courses such as *school English textbook analysis* and *English lesson study* to facilitate student teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) development. In research, there has been a steady increase of research on English language teacher education since 1992 with a total of 252 research paper published in China's CSSCI journals. However, English language education in China remains a relatively weak field (Zou, 2009; Cheng, 2010; Zhang, 2019; Yang, 2021).

English language education in China is defined as an “interdisciplinary field” (Lee & Yarger, 1996: 19) instead of an “independent discipline” (Zou, 2009; Yang, 2021). In contrast, in western academia “English language education” has been recognized as a discipline with its distinct academic status, research framework, research mission and paradigms in the early 1990s (Richards, 1990). Its failure to be recognized as a discipline has led to an incomplete understanding and inadequate research of foreign language teacher education. After a thorough review of foreign language teacher education and development research in China in the past 40 years, Zhang Lian (2019) makes four critical observations below:

- a) the disciplinary positioning of foreign language teacher education and development is still unclear yet, lacking unifying concepts, theoretical frameworks and research paradigms;
- b) the current research still cannot yet provide solutions or understandings to some significant questions related to practice, such as what are the professional knowledge base of Chinese foreign language teachers? What are the content of and standards for foreign language teacher education and development in China? What are the characteristics of Chinese foreign language teacher learning? ;
- c) the research findings are not yet sufficiently applied in foreign language teaching and inadequately communicated among various researcher communities, such as the research community of foreign language linguistics and applied linguistics and the research community and the research community engaging with general education.
- d) the quality of research is inadequate, lacking in depth, breadth, and originality.

Zhang’s research indicates that foreign language education in China is still at an exploratory stage. For future research, Zhang suggests that researchers “take a rational and critical attitude, return to practice itself, to the Chinese context, and to the origin of doing research, and to conduct solid and delicate empirical research to achieve innovation”.

Lesson study as a tool for better teaching and teachers

Zhang Lian’s call for researchers to “return to practice itself” is reflected in new curriculum standards. In *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards -- English* (Revised 2020, p41-42), EFL teachers’ research ability through school-based projects is suggested to solve real teaching problems. More specifically, in *Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards -- English* (Revised 2022, P75-76), lesson study is highlighted as one way to improve the quality of teaching and learning through teachers’ instructional research and teacher education program.

Targeted at classroom reform, lesson study allows teachers to propose research questions around the key issues that affect learning and teaching through district-based/school-based instructional research, a common way for EFL teachers to observe others’ lessons, make comments and polish the lessons for further improvement thereafter (Liu, 2022). In lesson study, teachers engage in a dialogic environment to prepare and enact a lesson, critically reflect on the issues raised in teaching, and enhance the quality of the

lessons in the second or third cycle of teaching. “Lesson study as a tool for professional learning is now practised in many countries and it has helped schools around the world develop into learning communities” (World Associations of Lesson Studies, 2022).

Though school-teachers in China do have a long tradition of carrying out collective lesson preparation sessions, what this often lacks is the need to *study* (not merely prepare or talk about) lessons in a more systematic and research-based way to enhance not only the teaching, but also the teacher learning and teacher professional development.

Pre-service teacher education in the UK: Things that we appreciate and may learn from

Literature at home and abroad introduces the expertise and maturity of British Pre-service teacher education which is school-based and forms a strong tie between HE institutions and local schools. Additionally, teacher education is successfully run by non-normal, internationally renowned comprehensive universities such as Durham University, University of Glasgow, and the University of Edinburgh. As China is exploring its way of operating a new open teacher education system, the British experience is exactly what we urgently need to learn from.

Besides learning from British practice, high quality research on China’s pre-service teacher education is also badly needed. To enhance the academic status and recognition of English language teacher education and development in China, both domestic and international publications are important. However, there are fewer than 20 papers concerning China’s pre-service English language education that have been published in international peer-reviewed journals, with most of them written by native English speakers or Chinese researchers located in Hong Kong HE institutions, and only a handful coauthored by Chinese mainland and international scholars. We believe this collaborated research will bring out the synergy of both Chinese and British partners, yielding high quality research and contributing to a better understanding of pre-service language teacher education in a Chinese and Asian context.

CHINA PROJECT TEAM

The local project team are teacher educators from School of English Education (SEE), Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS). GDUFS is the top university in China specialized in English linguistic studies and SEE is specialized in pre-service English language teacher preparation.

SEE was founded in 2000 and has been teaching English to non-English majors in GDUFS since then. Like many other universities in China, GDUFS has also been adding majors and disciplines and transforming itself into a comprehensive university. In 2005, the education major was set up in SEE. Guided by the goal of “cultivating talents with good English and strong education”, SEE began to prepare teachers for English teaching in secondary schools.

In 2016, SEE began to recruit postgraduate students majoring in TESOL. In 2018, the major of English language teacher education was then formally set up in SEE.

Our project team consists of six members who all have their doctoral degrees and research experiences.

As Dean of SEE, **Professor Jinwei Dong** will provide administrative support to the collaborative research, leading project members and faculty teachers to fully support the research. SEE also serves as an ideal site for an ethnographic research of pre-service English language teacher education.

Associate **Prof. Linqiong Lyu** is Director of the SEE Teacher Education and Research Center. Her PhD study indicates that teachers are not talked or preached into practicing reform initiatives or practices. Not having been taught or lived the ways promoted by curriculum reform, they tend to understand reform initiatives as educational fads such as “group activity” or CLT while missing the content or essence of how and why such activities should be carried out. For those EFL teachers from under-developed areas, for example, the core competences concerning thinking quality and cultural awareness is a far-away cry from their everyday concerns.

Educated in China and the UK, **Dr. Xuying Fan** has been involved in English language teaching and research for over 10 years and has worked in various cultural contexts. Her research interests include thinking skills, teacher cognition, classroom interaction and teacher emotion. She has widely participated in international research networks and published in these areas. Since 2008, she has been involved in a wide range of teaching and research activities (e.g. WALIS conference, IATEFL) and projects during her time as a student at the University of Exeter, UK.

Dr. Xi Lian obtained her PhD from Oxford University and she has already made her footprint in the field of ELT and English learning evaluation of young learners in China.

Associate **Prof. Yeqin Kang** fulfilled her post-doctoral research at Qinghua University, one of the best universities in China, and she is an experienced teacher trainer and educator.

Dr. Jianping Xie achieved her doctoral degree at Hong Kong University and is the person in charge of English Education Division of SEE.

BUDGET

The funding from the British Council is 20,000 - 30,000GBP

This project has received full support from our university which will contribute 100,000 RMB (Approximately 12,079 GBP) of in-kind funding for the Chinese research team to cover its staffing, expert consultancy, admin, and other possible costs in this project in China.