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Research

The continuing professional development experiences and needs of English language teachers

Countries: China, Japan and Korea

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Foreword

English continues in its role as a global lingua franca and acts as a bridge between cultures across the world. As English language education continues to evolve through innovation, or, as the past 3 years have shown, through circumstance, so must the development and access of teachers to appropriate resources that support them in their work.

Digital engagement, both in teaching and teacher development, has been gathering pace for many years as technologies improve and devices and connections become more widespread, but the potential advantages of online development and teaching has not always been fully recognised and has met with some understandable reluctance. However, while the Covid-19 pandemic pushed many online without ideal preparation or tools it has also acted as a catalyst for wider acceptance of such mediums and accelerated their introduction into mainstream education systems.

As the grip of the pandemic slowly resides, a waterline remains and teachers are now generally more accustomed to accessing online platforms and using them both for teaching, and as a part of their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) journey. But challenges clearly remain in acceptance, motivation and access to adequate resources. It is unlikely that education systems will retreat away from the progress made in digital delivery of teaching and training and therefore it is important for organisations that support English teacher CPD to understand where we now are, and where future need may emerge. By extension, it is necessary to understand what English teachers prefer, use and require in their contexts related to digital offerings and resources, while also reacting to the potential future trends and needs in specific country and demographic contexts with specific solutions that are relevant to local teachers.

This online CPD for teachers of English in China, Japan and Korea study, commissioned by the British Council English Programmes team, China, and undertaken by a research team brought together by Trinity College London, represents a significant step forward in understanding the digital trends and needs of English teachers in China, Japan and South Korea, and offers insight into future development directions. Where possible the research focus has attempted to identify specific needs based on urban and rural, or more disadvantaged contexts, to better understand local needs.

Digital offers and resources are, of course, constantly updating and evolving, but the snapshot presented by the study offers valuable insight into how governments, local authorities and English teachers in local contexts can be supported in future. While much is still to be learned, I am confident that the content within can act as a valuable foundation of evidence for future strategy, programming and offers of CPD that support English teachers digitally in the 3 targeted countries, I am likewise confident that its use will support future opportunities for co-operation and collaboration across a spectrum of stakeholders in the years to come.

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July, 2022

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Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts degree
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCEAS	British Council East Asia Study
BE	Basic Education
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education degree
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
EBS	Educational Broadcasting System (Korea)
ELEC	English Language Education Council (Japan)
ELT	English Language Teaching
FLTRP	Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (China)
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JALT	Japan Association for Language Teaching
M.Ed	Master of Education degree
MEXT	Japanese Ministry of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
NTTP	National Teacher Training Program (China)
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Executive summary

Introduction

The British Council commissioned Trinity College London to conduct a landscape review of online professional development (PD) for teachers in basic education in China, Japan and South Korea. Data was collected from November 2021 to April 2022 through both quantitative (an online questionnaire) and qualitative (online or telephone interviews) tools used with teachers across primary and secondary education in the three countries via varied gatekeepers and contacts; sampling was opportunistic, rather than representative. Questionnaires were developed initially in English and then localised for each context and translated to the primary national language for online distribution after piloting. A sub-sample of questionnaire respondents was interviewed in each country. In China, additionally, a small group of facilitators of professional development was also interviewed.

Respondents

The total number of valid questionnaire respondents was 7259 (China: 6469; Japan: 394; South Korea: 396), 106 of whom were interviewed (China: 74; Japan: 11; South Korea: 20). Questionnaire data was analysed both quantitatively (using SPSS and Excel) and qualitatively (using a general inductive approach), for open response items. Chinese interviewees only were purposefully sampled, stratified both to context (income level and rurality) and engagement with CPD (high or low). Interview data was analysed using a general inductive approach to identify themes in the data of relevance to the study aims. While sample sizes in the three countries were satisfactory, the distribution of Chinese respondents across provinces was not representative, with 47.5 per cent of respondents coming from Sichuan (low-income) and 25 per cent from Hubei (middle-income); as such, respondents from high-income provinces were under-represented in the sample and certain findings may reflect characteristics and challenges specific to the two dominant provinces. Primary and secondary contexts were both represented, although there was a strong bias towards secondary teachers in the Japanese sample (79 per cent) and slight biases towards secondary in China (59 per cent) and primary in South Korea (57 per cent).

Key findings from China

Survey findings

The most highly prioritised PD needs of Chinese respondents were 'Teaching 21st century skills and abilities' (selected by 49 per cent of respondents), 'Teaching reading' (40 per cent) and 'Motivating students' (38 per cent); bottom of the list of 16 choices provided were, perhaps surprisingly, 'Teaching English online' (18 per cent) and 'Preparing students for English examinations' (19 per cent). Respondents were asked to indicate their recent face-to-face and online PD activities. The two most frequently selected face-to-face activities were peer observation of colleagues (82 per cent) and participation in teacher professional development groups (81 per cent); bottom of this list were formal courses leading to certification (10 per cent). Recent online activities included online courses, seminars or workshops (69 per cent) and watching online videos about teaching (57 per cent); formal courses also ranked low online (13 per cent), as did listening to educational podcasts (12 per cent) and finding teaching materials online (11 per cent). Concerning factors that influenced respondents' decision to participate in online PD, a clear trend was evident in the most highly prioritised factors: an interest in activities that have direct, practical implications and use in one's own classrooms (e.g. 'It helps me to solve problems I face in my teaching'). Respondents reported little difficulty getting online for PD, both at home and at work, and through a range of platforms (especially WeChat, QQ and Ding Ding), although some (45 per cent) felt that high data costs limit their online activities. Responses to a range of Likert scale items eliciting their attitudes towards PD indicated high levels of interest in online PD, especially if free. There were also generally high approval levels for current PD provision by authorities, although many feel that they lack sufficient time to participate in PD activities. With regard to languages, survey data indicated support for activities taking place both in English and Chinese with, on balance, an expressed preference for the former.

Two open-ended survey items inquired about areas of their work where respondents felt they needed more support and their suggestions for more effective PD in general. Once more, respondents clearly prioritised PD activities that are of direct use in their classrooms. In response to the first of these items, they indicated needs for a wider range of support resources (e.g. international resources, 'authentic' materials, etc.) and for practical teaching skills (e.g. methodology, classroom teaching skills). Their elicited suggestions for improving PD indicated strongly that it needed to be practical and based in current (often less than ideal) classroom realities. There was a strong interest in online activities, particularly because of the convenience and time flexibility these offered, and in video observation and international collaboration with colleagues in other countries.

The Chinese sample was also stratified to identify 1233 'disadvantaged' respondents, whose schools were located in villages or towns (i.e., rural) in low-income provinces. Their responses were compared with the remainder of the sample (urban and middle- or high-income). Differences identified were generally small, although this data should be interpreted with particular caution, due to significant biases in the sample (see 5.2.1). Disadvantaged respondents were found to be slightly more likely to prioritise PD needs in 'motivating students' and aspects of ELT pedagogy (e.g. 'teaching pronunciation', 'teaching vocabulary') than their peers. They were also found to have slightly lower levels of participation in most PD activities, consistent with slightly lower levels of school-organised PD activities available to them. They also indicated less available time for PD and a slightly higher preference for face-to-face PD.

Interview findings

Purposive sampling of interview respondents allowed us to include similar numbers of teachers from urban and rural contexts in high-, low- and middle-income provinces, including both those who had and had not engaged recently in PD. As such, the findings are likely to be more balanced between different backgrounds, provinces and perspectives than the survey data.

While survey respondents had indicated a clear preference for teaching 21st century skills in their self-evaluated PD needs, this was less evident among interviewees, who were more likely to identify needs related to motivating learners and engaging them in the classroom. Support with differentiated instruction was also often mentioned, particularly among rural respondents. Those who discussed demonstration lessons (popular in Chinese PD) often indicated that these needed to be more realistic and reflective of their working contexts. Consistent with survey responses, plenty of interviewees indicated a need for support with methodology, use and adaptation of coursebooks, and support with 'core competencies' (核心素养), a recent policy initiative in China. A number indicated a need for more help with speaking skills, with several of these also discussing falling motivation levels towards English among both learners and parents, and others interested in improving their own proficiency levels in English.

The majority of interview respondents (43 per cent) expressed generally positive opinions, although rarely strong enthusiasm, towards online PD, often stressing its convenience, flexibility and lower cost, and also indicating generally positive attitudes to online PD among authorities. However, smaller numbers of respondents expressed preferences for face-to-face PD (20 per cent), with others offering a more balanced discussion of relative merits of the two (21 per cent) or no clear preference for either (12 per cent). Interviewees shed useful light onto how to balance between use of Chinese and English in PD, indicating Chinese may be better for more complex theoretical aspects of PD and English for content related directly to classroom practice. Those that had participated recently in online PD tended to report a rather limited range of top-down activities, particularly lectures/webinars and remote lesson observations with some interactivity (e.g. discussion afterwards). This contrasts somewhat with survey responses; other, more teacher-led activities were only occasionally discussed. Evaluations of online PD activities varied widely. Consistent with survey responses, there was nonetheless a strong belief that activities should be practical, collaborative, and useful (particularly concerning content) for their day-to-day teaching. For those respondents who had not engaged in online PD recently, causes for this varied, including a lack of opportunity (particularly in rural areas and sometimes for English subject only), a lack of time, or excessive workload, and, only occasionally, cost.

Three PD facilitators who were also interviewed largely corroborated the above interview findings, indicating that teachers are very much aware of their own PD needs, prioritising improvements in language proficiency, help with learner motivation, exam preparation and lesson planning, as well as developing learners' critical thinking skills. They also identified a need for teachers to understand principles rather than simply techniques, particularly from demonstration lessons, indicating that PD activities were often based on a transmission of information, rather than reflective in orientation. They were also generally positive about online PD, reflecting similar advantages and concerns to the teachers, and suggesting that while both international and more local themes were useful, the latter was more likely to have direct relevance for teachers' classroom practice.

Recommendations for China

The following recommendations are offered for English teacher professional development in China:

- Practical, realistic materials and activities: In order to be perceived relevant, PD activities should be practical in orientation, including useful and even directly useable materials, recognising current realities in varied contexts across China at both secondary and primary levels.
- Supporting understandings of theory: Despite the need for a primary focus on practical materials, there was also clear evidence of interest in, and a need for, deeper understandings of aspects of teaching theories (e.g. core competencies, deep learning) and particularly how these link to classroom practice.
- Support for current textbooks: Teachers express a strong need for materials that support and link to their current curricula and textbook content; working together with relevant publishers is likely to be effective to this end for PD providers.
- Diversifying online professional development activities: There is a need for a wider range of online PD activities to be explored and implemented, particularly those involving teacher-led and collaborative approaches.
- Further research on recent policy changes: There is evidence that recent policy initiatives (e.g. double reduction and core competencies) are influencing teachers' needs and practices, warranting future research into the impacts they are exerting.

Key findings from Japan

Survey findings

The most highly prioritised professional development (PD) needs of Japanese respondents were 'Motivating students' (selected by 63 per cent of respondents), 'Teaching speaking (60 per cent)' and 'Teaching 21st century skills' (44 per cent). Deemed least important were 'How to find teaching materials online' (6 per cent), 'Preparing students for exams' (11 per cent) and 'Teaching vocabulary' (12 per cent). Most frequently mentioned recent face-to-face professional development activities included peer observation of colleagues (60 per cent) and participation in courses, seminars and workshops (57 per cent). Teacher-led approaches were less often mentioned, with classroom action research (2 per cent) second bottom to teaching competitions (0.3 per cent). Courses, seminars and workshops were the most frequently mentioned recent online activities (55 per cent), with online reading (22 per cent) second; all other options were reported by less than 20 per cent of respondents, and it is notable that 25 per cent stated that they had not participated in any online PD recently. More respondents indicated that they had taken part in face-to-face PD (90 per cent) than online PD (75 per cent) over the past 12 months – perhaps surprising given the timing of data collection at the end of the COVID–19 pandemic. Japanese respondents prioritised the same three factors as Chinese teachers when making the decision to participate in online PD or not: 'It helps me solve problems I face in my teaching', 'It provides activities and materials that I can use in my own classroom' and 'It keeps me up to date with new ideas and developments'. Least important for them were language choice, the providing organisation and the opportunity for promotion or salary increase. Unsurprisingly, Japanese teachers indicated little difficulty getting online, particularly at home, and few cost-related issues, reporting a wide range of online platforms (topped by Line, email and YouTube) and devices (especially smartphones and laptops) used. Concerning Japanese teachers' views about professional development, the Likert scale items that elicited the highest agreement rates from respondents indicated strongly that they had

little time to take part in PD (90 per cent agreed), as well as clear interests in free sources of online PD (90 per cent agreed) and new ways to continue their PD online (88 per cent agreed). They also indicated very low approval ratings of current PD provision in Japan, with 61 per cent feeling that they are not satisfied with the quality of PD they have access to.

The two open-ended items at the end of the survey revealed an important finding not so apparent in the quantitative items – that many respondents (over 30 per cent) feel strongly that they need to improve their own English proficiency. This was clearly corroborated by the most commonly mentioned suggestion for making PD more effective by far – to improve teachers' English proficiency, despite the fact that the question required respondents to focus on how effective professional development can be provided. The second most popular suggestion also related to English proficiency, focusing on the need for PD activities to be conducted entirely in English. There was also evidence in these open items that many respondents felt a need for support with their general pedagogical skills, such as classroom management and interpersonal practices, and interests in lesson observation and locally contextualised PD activities.

Interview findings

Interviews were conducted with 11 Japanese respondents (3 primary, 3 junior high and 5 senior high). Here again there was a regularly indicated interest in improving English proficiency, particularly to facilitate teaching in English. Peer observation and interest in new methodological initiatives (e.g. assessment methods, interactive teaching) were also mentioned. Interviewees expressed a range of attitudes towards online PD, with most acknowledging both positive (e.g. convenience, cost) and negative (e.g. limited interaction with peers) aspects. Attitudes to current PD provision by educational authorities, including online, were generally rather negative (consistent with survey responses), revealing that much provision is 'generic', 'superficial' and 'mandatory', indicating a clear top-down emphasis. Examples given of online activities that interviewees had participated in were mainly short courses, seminars and webinars/lectures (live webinars were preferred to recorded sessions), with occasional reference to alternative formats (e.g. interactive professional development groups).

Recommendations for Japan

The following recommendations are offered for English teacher professional development in Japan:

- Japanese teachers' expressed need for support in developing their own English, particularly to be able to teach in English indicates that initiatives aiming to develop English proficiency, potentially alongside building content understanding, are likely to be useful and popular;
- Further research into Japanese teachers' current dissatisfaction with PD provision will be useful. Our findings support a clear need for more teacher-driven PD, rather than the top-down, accountability-oriented provision that seems to predominate;
- Further research into what may be excessive workloads among Japanese teachers is also required alongside initiatives that support and promote teacher well-being and quality of life;
- International PD providers, in order to cater effectively for Japanese teachers' needs, may benefit from partnering with local organisations and authorities;
- PD themes and offerings are likely to be most attractive to teachers if they have immediate practical relevance or utility in the classroom and are tailored to Japanese contexts;
- Concerning online PD, increasing interest among Japanese teachers suggests that this is likely to be a growth area, with teachers preferring free, live and interactive sessions.

Key findings from Korea

Survey findings

The most highly prioritised professional development (PD) needs of South Korean respondents were 'Teaching speaking' (selected by 45 per cent of respondents) and 'Teaching reading' (45 per cent), closely followed by 'English assessment' (44 per cent), 'Teaching 21st century skills' (42 per cent) and 'Teaching writing' (41 per cent), indicating a stronger skills interest than among Chinese or Japanese respondents. However, similar to those countries, 'Preparing students for exams' (8 per cent) and 'Finding teaching materials online' (11 per cent) were ranked towards the bottom of the available options, along with 'Lesson planning' (11 per cent). Most frequently mentioned recent face-to-face professional development activities included courses, seminars and workshops (56 per cent), reading activities (48 per cent), informal discussions with colleagues (44 per cent) and peer-observations (43 per cent). As in Japan, teacher-led approaches were less often mentioned, with classroom action research (7 per cent) second bottom to teaching competitions (4 per cent). Participation in courses, seminars and workshops was also the most frequently mentioned recent online activity (66 per cent), with watching online videos about teaching (53 per cent) also popular. South Korean respondents prioritised the same three factors as Chinese and Japanese teachers when making the decision to participate in online PD or not: 'It provides activities and materials that I can use in my own classroom', 'It keeps me up to date with new ideas and developments' and 'It helps me solve problems I face in my teaching'. Two of the least important factors were also consistent with Japanese and Chinese responses - language choice and the opportunity for promotion or salary increase. South Korean teachers indicated almost no difficulty with getting online and good stability and speed, although, perhaps surprisingly, cost was a prohibitive factor for 41 per cent of respondents spending time online. Laptops were preferred over other devices for online activities and two local platforms (Kakaotalk and Naver Café/Band) were most popular. Concerning South Korean teachers' views about professional development, similar to Chinese teachers, there was strongest interest in online professional development, particularly involving free resources and innovative activities, with a preference for PD to be in English rather than Korean. Despite this enthusiasm for online activities, a majority nonetheless indicated a preference for face-to-face PD (61 per cent).

Responses to the two open-ended items at the end of the survey indicated a clear interest in more opportunities for teacher professional development and a valuing of diversity and variety in effective PD. A number of respondents indicated an interest in PD activities involving overseas organisations such as the British Council, while a smaller number indicated an interest in improving their own English. Further suggestions for effective PD indicated a need for collaborative, long-term, participant-oriented activities in response to the current tendency for shorter-term top-down provision, similar to Japan.

Interview findings

Interviews were conducted with 20 South Korean teachers (9 primary, 6 junior high and 5 senior high). Interviewees reiterated the interest in skills-oriented support evident in survey responses, particularly reading and writing (with some implying aspects of literacy), and there was also evidence of interest in developing, or keeping up, their own English proficiency. Interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about the value of online PD, recognising its advantages (e.g. convenience) and future potential more than any potential drawbacks, although barriers to accessing some online (e.g. international) resources were also mentioned. Concerning online provision by authorities, while some teachers praised various aspects, such as the development of professional learning communities (PLCs), others

levied specific criticisms, particularly that authorities were not ensuring teachers were sufficiently informed of the range of opportunities available, but also a lack of systematisation or practical utility of provision offered. Examples of online provision experienced over the last 12 months included commercially branded courses (e.g. 'Teacherville', 'BBC', etc.) and apps (e.g. Clubhouse) as well as Zoom-delivered programmes and PLC (formal and informal) activities. Similar to Japanese respondents, there was a generally stronger preference for live, rather than recorded online sessions and an awareness that blended PD involving online and face-to-face elements may be the optimum combination.

Recommendations for South Korea

The following recommendations are offered for English teacher professional development in South Korea:

- The evident interest in developing learners' language skills among teachers suggests a focus on these in future PD provision would be impactful;
- PD resources and initiatives should have practical relevance and classroom utility to appeal to teachers' self-identified needs;
- South Korean teachers' enthusiasm towards online PD indicates that there are a range of opportunities in this area, particularly through live, interactive sessions offering free, practical resources;
- As online PD initiatives increase, there is a felt need among teachers for more systematic and clearer communication of events and opportunities from authorities and PD providers;
- International organisations with an interest in supporting South Korean teachers' PD should exhibit sensitivity to the contextual constraints and needs of local teachers; this may be done most effectively through partnership with local organisations and materials developed with South Korean curricula and contexts in mind;
- There is scope for long-term, teacher-led, collaborative CPD among South Korean teachers of English, particularly through formal and informal PLCs that are already beginning to develop;
- PD opportunities that help teachers to develop their English proficiency, particularly their English for teaching would likely be successful and are consistent with current government policy.

Limitations

The following limitations to data collection and timing of the study should be noted for all three countries in addition to the provisos made concerning the Chinese sample above (see Respondents above):

1. Respondents to the survey were accessed via online modalities only, and opportunistically, including through British Council contacts and online resources with only limited support from gatekeepers working within Chinese basic education. Teachers with lower levels of digital activity are likely to be underrepresented, as are those with less interest in social media or international networks.
2. Some respondents may have declined to participate for political and/or cultural reasons that are indicative of more negative attitudes towards western organisations; their opinions will obviously be underrepresented in the sample.
3. The survey was conducted towards the end of a period when the COVD-19 pandemic was exerting a clear influence on the personal, academic and professional lives of teachers and their learners, and the findings, particularly with regard to their professional development habits in the previous 12 months, are likely to reflect this.

Chapter-1
Introduction

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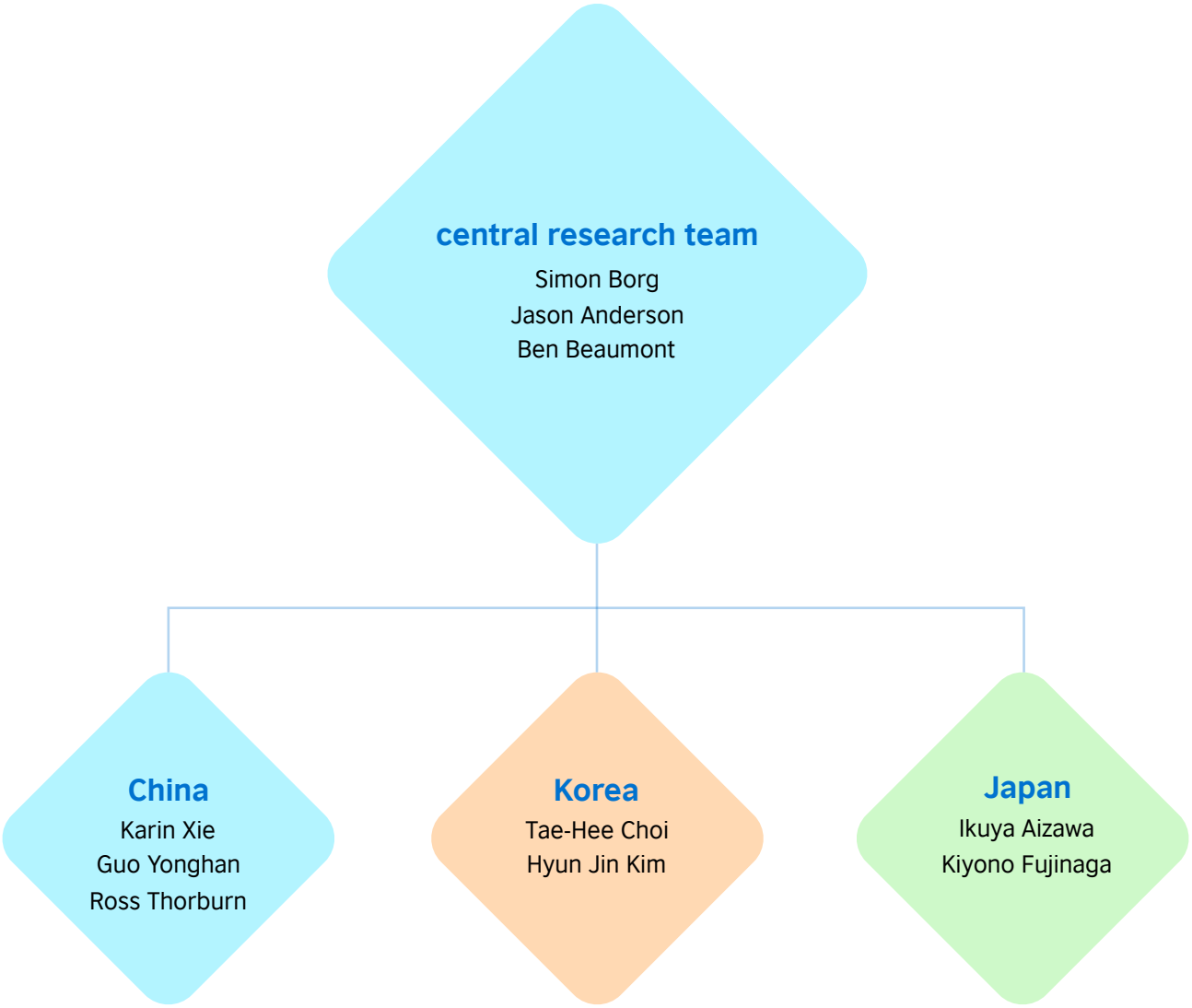
Trinity College London was commissioned by the British Council to conduct a landscape review of online professional development for teachers of English in basic education settings (government primary and secondary schools) in China, Japan, and South Korea. This report presents the outcomes of this review. A brief discussion of literature on teachers' professional development is followed by a summary of the research methodology for the study, then the results (based on surveys and interviews) for each country are presented in turn. The report concludes with recommendations for how the professional development of teachers of English in the three countries can be further supported.

The Trinity team included a central research team consisting of Simon Borg, Jason Anderson and Ben Beaumont, as well as three local research teams. For China, the team members were Karin Xie, Guo Yonghan and Ross Thorburn, for Japan they were Ikuya Aizawa and Kiyono Fujinaga, while the Korea team consisted of Tae-Hee Choi and Hyun Jin Kim.

The Trinity team



Chapter-2
The ELT context

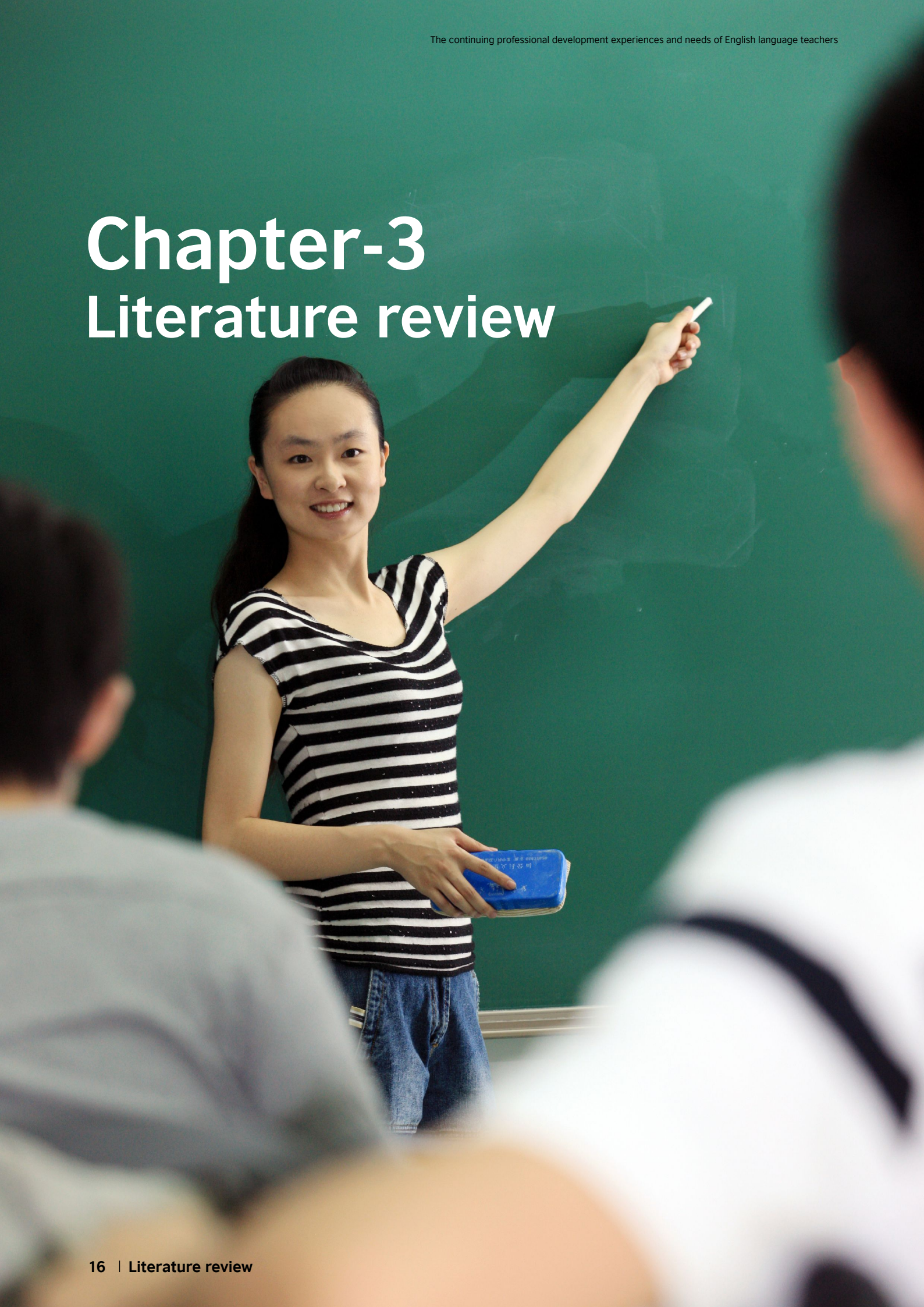
Three short overviews of English Education in China, Japan and Korea are presented here.

Mainland China is divided into 23 provinces (each with its independent education bureau, overseen by central Government), five autonomous regions (where there are minority/ethnic groups with different languages and cultural backgrounds) and four municipalities directly under the Central Government. There is a national Ministry of Education, but county-level governments have primary responsibility for the delivery of school education. Compulsory education lasts nine years and consists of primary school (grades 1-6) and middle school (grades 7-9). High school (grades 10-12) is not compulsory. English is normally taught as a compulsory subject from Grade 3. English is also included as a subject in the national high school and university entrance examinations. Textbooks are chosen by schools from a list approved by the Ministry of Education. Public school teachers must pass the National Teacher's Certificate Examination, which is available in four categories (kindergarten, primary school, middle school and high school). Applicants need to be graduates of universities or normal colleges.

Japan is divided into 47 administrative/geographic units known as prefectures. Overall responsibility for curricula and standards lies with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), but prefectures and municipalities are responsible for the implementation of programmes. Compulsory education lasts nine years and consists of six years of Primary school and three of Junior High school (over 98 per cent of students continue to Senior High school too). English classes typically start in the 3rd year of primary school (though some schools start earlier). The Ministry of Education provides all schools with textbook materials for Grades 3 and 4 English lessons, which are treated as 'foreign language activities', rather than an assessed school subject. From Grade 5, English formally becomes a school subject and is taught through Ministry-approved English textbooks, produced by private textbook companies. The textbooks are selected by Boards of Education for Elementary and junior high schools, whereas at senior high school level, the choice is handed to individual schools. Students in state schools take high-stakes tests for entry into the senior high school of their choice and for university entrance. A licence to teach English is awarded to those who complete a teacher training qualification, (which, depending on the type of licence, can be a Master's degree, four-year degree, or two-year community college diploma) though in order to achieve full-status teachers must also pass an exam run by the Board of Education in each prefecture.

Korea is divided into nine provinces and eight special/metropolitan cities. Compulsory education lasts 12 years and is divided into primary (grades 1-6), junior high (1-3) and senior high (1-3). The ministry of education has overall responsibility for education, though specific decisions are delegated to the 17 educational offices in the respective administrative regions. In state schools, English is compulsory from primary grade 3 onwards and is taught according to textbooks chosen by schools. English is assessed at the national level through the Korean Scholastic Ability Test at the end of year 9, which is used for college admission. There are three ways to obtain a teacher certificate: 1) graduating from a B.Ed. programme, 2) if on a BA programme, doing a minor or a double degree to finish teacher training, 3) obtaining an M.Ed. after getting a non-teaching degree. Following certification, graduates qualify to take an annual teacher recruitment test conducted by the regional educational offices.

Chapter-3
Literature review



The quality of any education system depends in large part upon the quality of its teachers and their teaching (Hattie, 2012; OECD, 2005). In order to maintain the knowledge, skills, awareness, attitudes, wellbeing and dedication that are often seen as important to effective practice (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Day et al., 2007; Freeman, 1989), teachers need not only a rounded pre-service education but also regular, varied and appropriate opportunities for continuing their professional development (PD) throughout their career (Borg, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Since the turn of the 21st century, we have seen substantial changes, both in how PD is offered (particularly the move from top-down initiatives to teacher-led approaches) and how it is delivered, with increasing numbers of PD programmes including online elements, either blended with face-to-face (F2F) or wholly online (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Among the many typologies of teacher PD that exist, the seven elements proposed by the large-scale, international TALIS study (OECD, 2009) have influenced a number of subsequent studies and were employed as a starting point for this project. These are (p. 50):

1. courses/workshops (e.g. on subject matter or methods and/or other education-related topics);
2. education conferences or seminars (at which teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss education problems);
3. qualification programmes (e.g. a degree programme);
4. observation visits to other schools;
5. participation in a network of teachers (e.g. PLCs) formed specifically for professional development;
6. individual or collaborative research on a topic of professional interest; and
7. mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, as part of a formal school arrangement.

Importantly, all of these activities can be carried out either face-to-face or online, albeit with some modifications (e.g. observation visits may become either live or pre-recorded video observations).

Because online PD opportunities have emerged recently and are rapidly evolving, in part due to their potential for financial savings and in part due to necessity (e.g. the Covid pandemic), comparatively little is known about how teachers around the world are both engaging with, and benefitting from, online and blended PD (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020); both of these are areas of particular interest in this report, which focuses on three countries: China, Japan and South Korea, each discussed briefly below.

3.1 Teacher professional development in China

China has a formally-structured professional development framework that is strongly embedded in the state apparatus (Chen, 2020; Ke et al., 2019; Yang & Rao, 2021). Each teacher is expected to take 360 hours of PD every five years (OECD, 2016b), with approximately half of this school-based. While much of this involves top-down training, it also includes a number of teacher-led and collaborative activities, including subject-specific Teaching Research Groups (教研组 /jiaoyanzu), collaborative planning, open lessons with peer evaluation, and action research (Chen, 2020; Ke et al., 2019; OECD, 2016b; Thomas, 2020; Wang & Lu, 2012). In order to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in rural areas, China launched the National Teacher Training Program (NTTP) in 2010, with a three-pronged focus on short-term workshops, distance education and formal university programmes (Lu et al., 2019; OECD, 2016b); by 2016 the NTTP was reported to have reached over 9.5 million rural teachers (Yang and Rao, 2020). Online PD has also expanded rapidly in recent years in China, with evidence of both success and challenges reported from various studies (e.g. Forrester & Motteram, 2005; Robinson, 2008; Wang & Lu, 2012).

3.2 Teacher professional development in Japan

Japan has a highly structured professional development framework, involving extensive mandatory activities during the first year of school placement (up to 300 hours over 90 days; Ahn et al., 2019; OECD, 2016a). After 10 years, they undergo further training, which they must repeat every 10 years in their career to maintain qualified status (Ahn et al., 2019; Mullis et al., 2016), although there are regional variations in different prefectures.

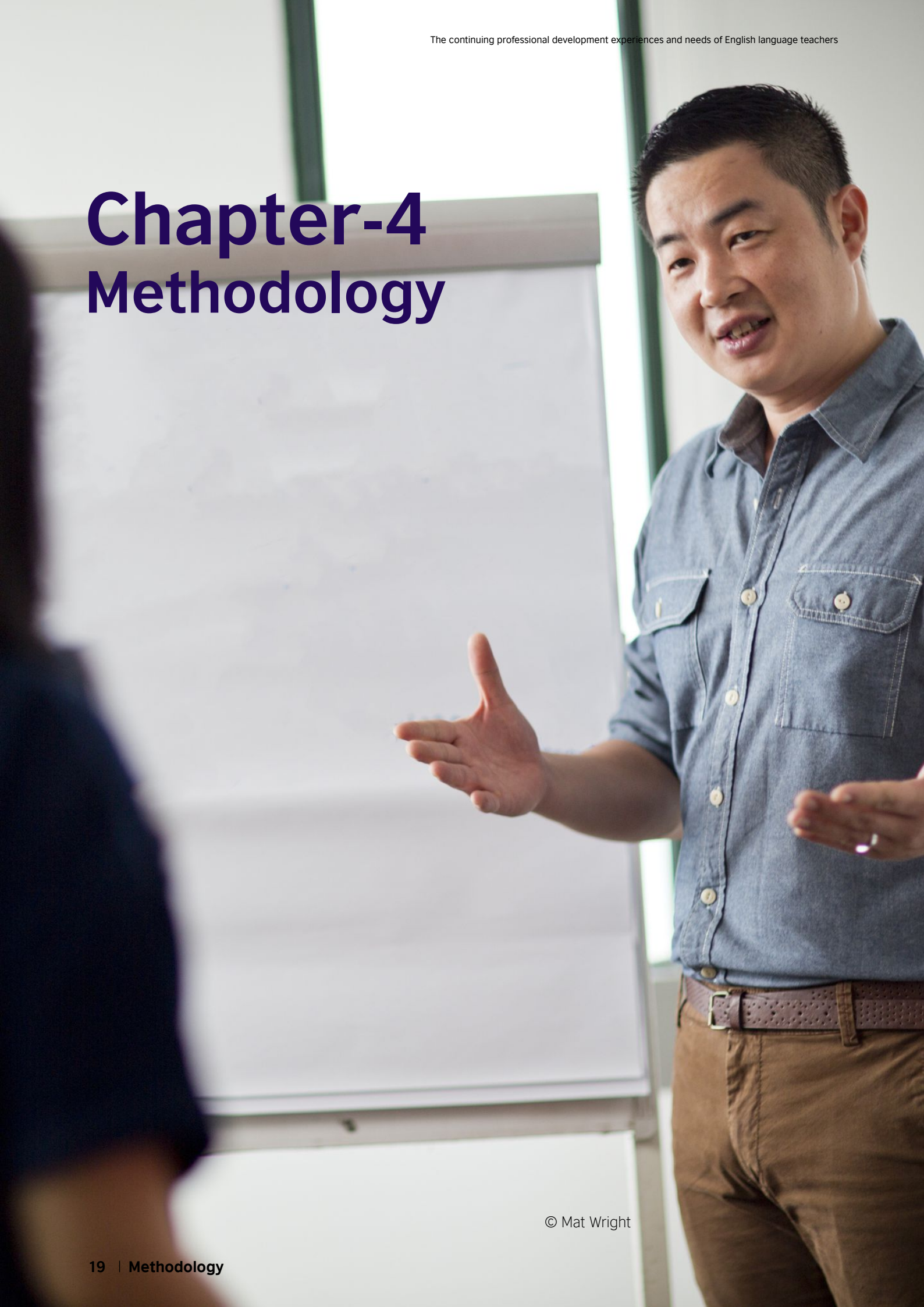
Professional development activities offered by local boards of education include courses and workshops (Mullis et al., 2016), mentoring programmes (Tonga et al., 2022) and the now internationally well-known lesson study (授業研究 /jyugyou kenkyu), in which teachers work in collaborative groups to develop lesson plans and materials, try them out in class while peers observe, and then make further amendments as required (Rappleye & Komatsu, 2017). Also noted as important by Ahn et al. (2019) is the more informal learning that occurs in the teacher's staff room (職員室 /shokuin shitsu), particularly valued by novice teachers. Topics for professional development include a strong focus on aspects of duty, ethics, responsibility and guidance for students (Orakçı 2015).

3.3 Teacher professional development in South Korea

Since the introduction of a new teacher education system in South Korea in 2011 (Yoo, 2018), teacher professional development has followed a comparatively top-down, evaluation-based approach involving a credit system with two grades of teaching certificate (Lee et al., 2019; Mullis et al., 2016; Yoo, 2018). Teachers who score low on their yearly appraisal may be required to take over 200 hours of PD each year, while those that score more highly are rewarded with the opportunity to take research-related sabbaticals (Yoo, 2018).

In order to count towards teachers' mandatory PD requirements, training programmes must be approved; these are most often delivered through education offices/centres, affiliated universities and private sector providers. Delivery modes have historically been quite traditional, involving residential courses, workshops and lectures, distance learning courses and only limited in-class support (Lee et al., 2019; Mullis et al., 2016; Yoo, 2018). While there is comparatively little research on teacher PD in South Korea (Yoon, 2016), research eliciting teachers' opinions on current PD provision generally reports rather negative impressions, indicating it has little relevance or effectiveness for teachers (Kim & Kim, 2014), is based on a transmission approach to PD and too repetitive (Lee et al., 2019), and often involves excessive levels of accountability (Yoo, 2018). The South Korean Ministry of Education is currently attempting to modernise the system, with recent policy edicts indicating that PD programmes must be participant-centred, case-based and encourage teachers to create rather than transmit knowledge (MoE, 2018). Evidence from more collaborative PD interventions that have proven to be successful (e.g. Park & So, 2014; Yoon, 2016) may offer useful guidance for the changes currently being undertaken.

Chapter-4
Methodology



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4.1 Aims

The primary aim of this landscape review was to provide insights into the professional development of teachers of English in basic education in China, Japan and Korea. The following specific questions were addressed in each country:

1. What kinds of (especially free and open) PD provision are available?
2. Who provides it?
3. What areas of their work do basic education (BE) teachers of English want support with (i.e. their PD interests and needs)?
4. What kinds of online PD do BE teachers engage with?
5. What factors motivate them to engage in online PD?
6. What factors limit their engagement?

The study consisted of two phases: an online survey and interviews. Each phase is now described. The research tools are available on request from the British Council.

4.2 Online teacher surveys

4.2.1 Survey design

The online survey for teachers was drafted in English, then localised and translated for each country. Each version thus differed slightly, though all contained the same core sections: an eligibility question to confirm respondents were basic education teachers of English; an introduction providing information about the project; demographic questions about the respondents and their schools; questions about professional development provision and engagement in face-to-face and online professional development in the previous 12 months; questions about the factors that influence teachers' decisions to do online professional development and about how teachers get online. Teachers were also asked a set of questions to explore their attitudes to professional development more generally. Two final open questions asked teachers to comment further on the areas of their work where they wanted more professional development and on how best they felt this professional development could be provided. The final question invited teachers to participate in a raffle prize draw and to volunteer for a follow-up interview. Most questions in the survey were mandatory, though those on gender and disability and the two final open questions were optional. On the basis of local advice in each country, it was decided to use SurveyMonkey in Japan and Korea and Survey Star in China as the online survey platform.

The nature of this study amplified the complexity inherent in designing surveys. One challenge for the BCEAS team was ensuring that the wide range of issues of interest (as indicated in the project objectives) were sufficiently covered without, however, creating an instrument that was unfeasibly long. Additionally, while the survey had core questions that were repeated for each country, each version had items that were localised (such as, for example, questions asking teachers about their knowledge of specific organisations offering PD in their country, or which online platforms they used). Also, as we shared drafts with the country teams it became clear that the wording of statements did not work equally well in all three countries and revisions were needed. The feedback from the country teams and the British Council was also extensive and not always easy to reconcile. And, of course, the final versions of the surveys were translated into the three national languages, placed on online platforms, and piloted, including through 'think aloud' supervised completion by trial respondents. Piloting led to further revisions and more subtle localisation to reduce the danger of misunderstanding and increase the relevance and clarity of items (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2022).

4.2.2 Survey administration

The process of administering the online survey varied from country to country depending on the relevant stakeholders and gate-keepers who could be enlisted in each case. In all three cases, though, official support from national, provincial or district educational authorities was not obtained and the research team thus relied on relevant contacts in each country. In all countries, the British Council disseminated the invitation to complete the online survey amongst existing networks of teachers; in Japan, a number of school principals were also contacted and invited to share the link with teachers in their schools. In China, academics with access to networks of teachers of English were also enlisted to support the project. In Korea, the primary source of support was a teachers' association (KOSETA), which shared the survey links with members and key teacher education institutes. In addition, all members of the research team drew on personal contacts in the target countries and used relevant social media in each context to reach as many teachers as possible. The surveys were launched in the third week of December 2021 and closed at the end of January 2022.

4.2.3 Survey analysis

The numerical survey data were analysed using both EXCEL and the statistical analysis programme SPSS. While the survey platforms used did allow the data to be exported in both EXCEL and SPSS formats, much additional work was required (especially in SPSS) to clean the resulting files, deal with missing data, define the variable names and labels in English, and define and assign values to response options. Various checks were also carried out (comparing results generated by the survey platforms with those from the EXCEL and SPSS files) to confirm the accuracy of the final data files. The result of this process of data preparation was a set of EXCEL and SPSS files for each country which then allowed the quantitative analysis to proceed rapidly. Descriptive analyses were utilized, with a focus on frequencies and percentages, and these are presented below in both tables and charts. In the case of China, additional analyses were performed in order to compare the results of teachers from more and less advantaged contexts (considering both province income level and rurality) in the country.

Open-ended survey responses were analysed thematically; for example, where teachers were asked to comment on the topics they would like professional development to focus on, the answers were reviewed and grouped according to content; teachers' comments about how best they felt professional development could be delivered were similarly categorised.

4.3 Teacher interviews

4.3.1 Sampling and conduct

At the end of the survey, teachers were invited to volunteer for a follow-up interview. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to explore in more detail some of the themes covered in the survey. Local research teams conducted the interviews in the primary national language (Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Korean). An interview guidance document was provided to support the process and this included general advice on interview conduct as well as on the questions to be asked.

Once the surveys were closed, lists of interviewees for each country were drawn up and contacted using the details they had provided. For Japan (40 volunteers) and Korea (63), the process was straightforward and a target of 15-20 interviews per country was set but for China there were almost 3000 volunteers and a sampling strategy was devised to target a total of 75 teachers. For China only, subgroups of respondents were identified based on their degree of engagement with online professional development (engaged/not engaged). Interviewees were purposively sampled in each of these subgroups to ensure that each included a balance of teachers from both rural and urban contexts across different income bands (high-, middle- and low-income provinces). Care was also taken to ensure that a balance of respondents from primary, lower secondary (junior high school) and upper secondary (senior high school) levels were included in the interview sample. With regard to gender, the vast majority of interviewees were female, as found in the general sample of survey respondents.

In China, an additional set of interviews was conducted with three teacher researchers (who had some responsibility for co-ordinating teacher development activities).

The confirmed number of interviewees for each country was as follows:

China	75 teachers + 3 teacher researchers
Japan	11 teachers
South Korea	20 teachers

4.3.2 Interview analysis

The local teams conducting the interviews were provided with an interview summary sheet. This included a series of headings that corresponded to the questions defined in the interview guide and interviewers were asked to summarise, including direct quotations, what teachers said in relation to each of these headings. The completed summary sheets were then analysed thematically by the central research team using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). For the additional teacher researcher interviews, responses were also analysed thematically according to the key topics that were discussed.

Chapter-5
Results China

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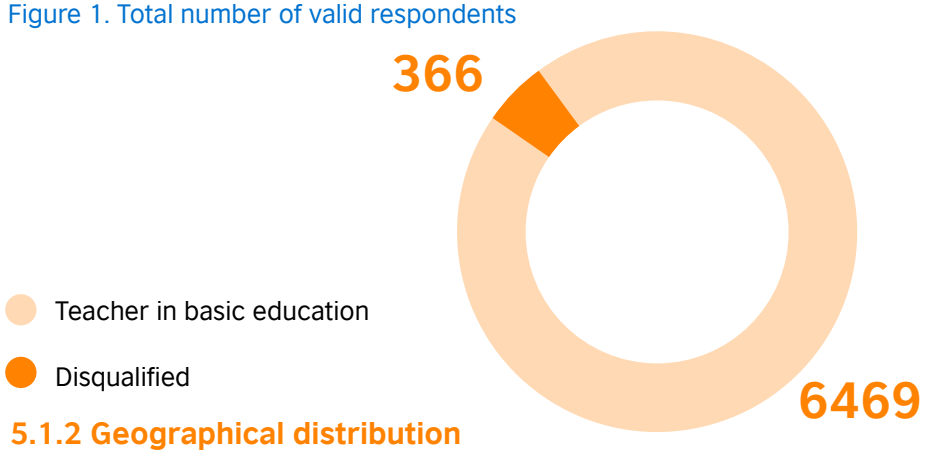
5.1 Survey results: overall

The survey responses for the whole group are analysed first, then in Section 5.2 a sub-analysis is provided which compares the responses of teachers in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged contexts.

5.1.1 Response rate

As Figure 1 shows, of 6835 respondents who started the survey, 6469 were eligible (i.e., they were teachers of English working in basic education) and completed the survey.

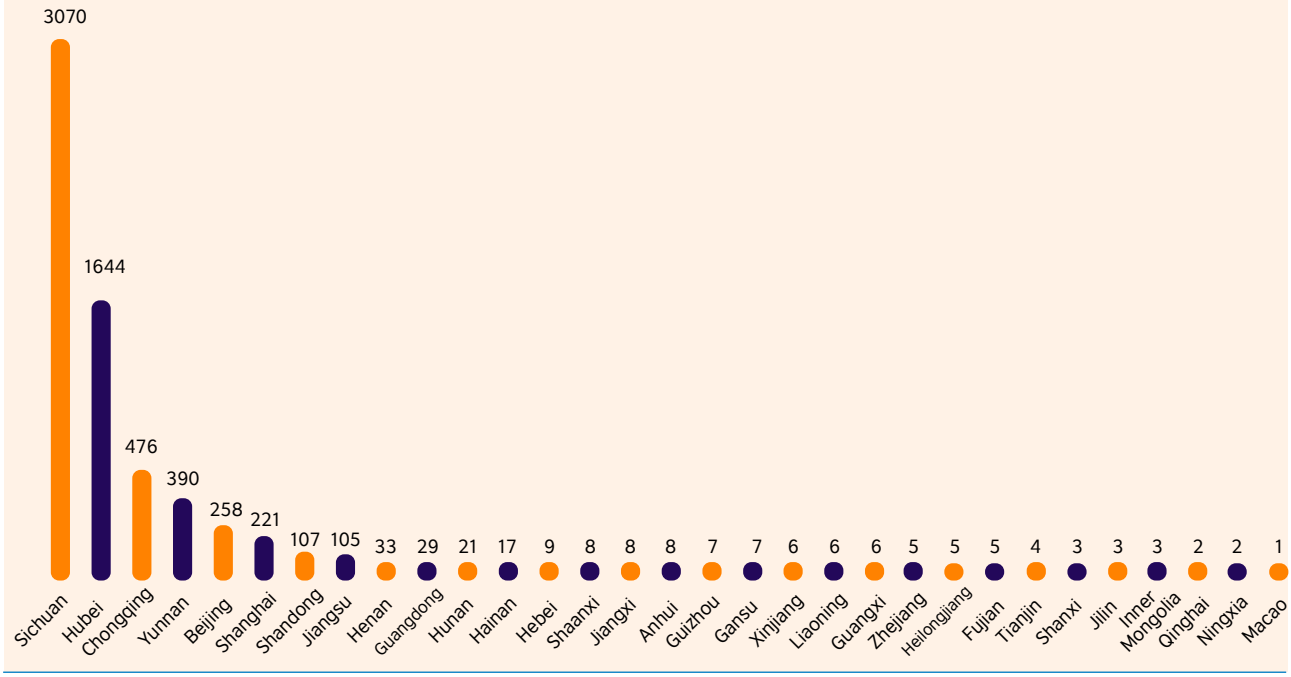
Figure 1. Total number of valid respondents



5.1.2 Geographical distribution

The sample included respondents from all over China. However, the proportional distribution of respondents between provinces is not representative of the country as a whole (see Figure 2). Seventy-three percent of responses came from just two provinces, Sichuan (47.5 per cent, low-income[1]) and Hubei (25.4 per cent, middle-income). Chongqing (7.4 per cent) and Yunnan (6.0 per cent) (middle- and low-income respectively) were also well represented. Four high-income provinces, Beijing (4.0 per cent), Shanghai (3.4 per cent), Shandong (1.7 per cent) and Jiangsu (1.6 per cent), made up 10.7 per cent of total responses, and the remainder of provinces contributed the remaining 3.1 per cent. Any interpretation of the data here presented should acknowledge this bias, specifically towards two provinces, and, on balance, towards the lower end of the income scale across China.

Figure 2. Responses per province



[1]Based on 2014 figures [here].

5.1.3 Respondent demographics

The vast majority of respondents were female (88 per cent), noticeably higher than the reported national balance in basic education (67 per cent primary; 53 per cent secondary; Anderson, 2019), and 98 per cent reported no disability. With regard to age, almost half were between 31 and 40 and only 6 per cent were over 50, indicating a relatively young average age among respondents (see Figure 3).

Teaching experience varied widely, with 30 per cent in the first five years of their career, and 24 per cent with over 20 years' experience (Figure 4). 98 per cent of respondents were full-time teachers, and 82 per cent indicated that their highest qualification was a bachelor's degree (Figure 5). The vast majority were certified English teachers (88 per cent), and most taught only English (81 per cent), indicating that even at primary level many Chinese teachers are subject specialists (see Table 1).

Figure 3. Respondent age

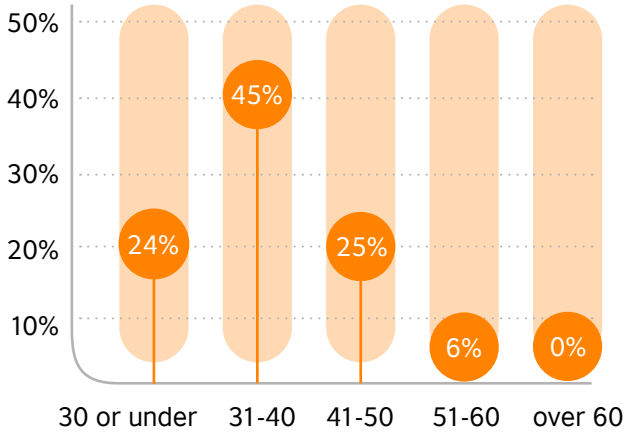


Figure 4. Respondent experience

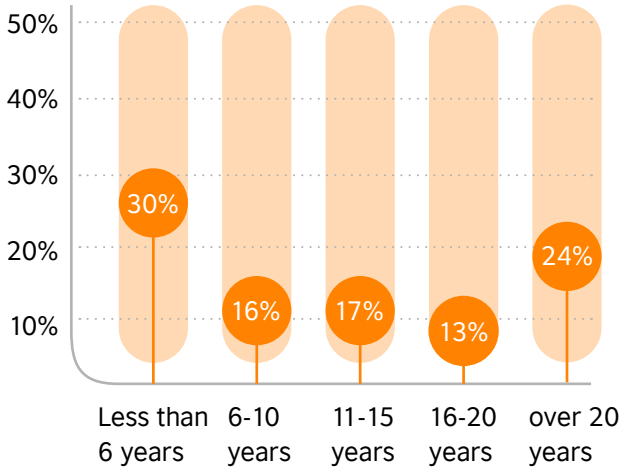


Figure 5. Respondent highest qualification

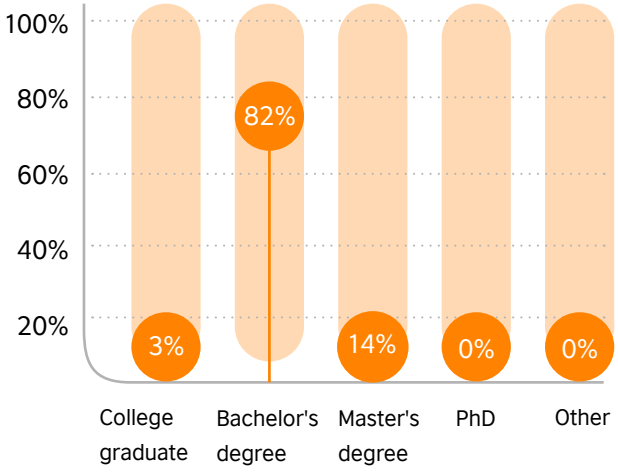


Figure 6. Respondent teaching level

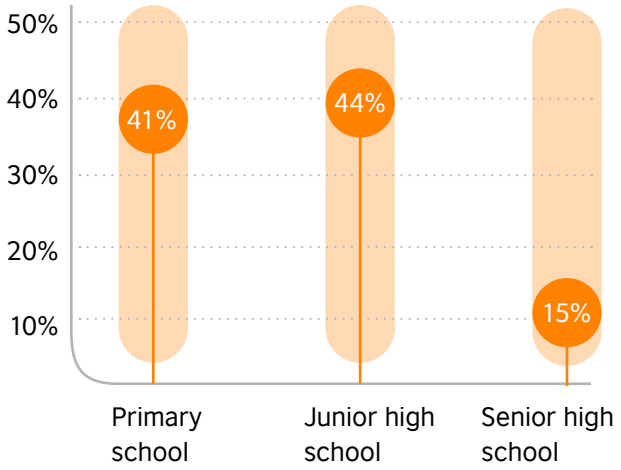


Table 1. Proportion of English language subject specialists by level

	Specialists		Non-specialists	
	N	%	N	%
Primary school	1754	66.7	876	33.3
Junior high school	2543	88.4	333	11.6
Senior high school	941	97.7	22	2.3

The sample included a good balance between primary (41 per cent) and secondary teachers (59 per cent), although senior high school teachers were less well represented (Figure 6); government statistics indicate ratios of: 49 per cent primary, 29 per cent junior secondary and 21 per cent senior secondary (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018[2]), suggesting our balance in this regard is reasonably representative. With regard to respondents' school sizes, these ranged widely, peaking in the 1000–2000 category, and with only 18 per cent below 500, indicating most worked in large institutions (Figure 7). Data on school location shows that the vast majority of respondents work in urban environments, with only 6 per cent indicating that their school was located in a village (Figure 8).

Figure 7. No of pupils in respondent schools

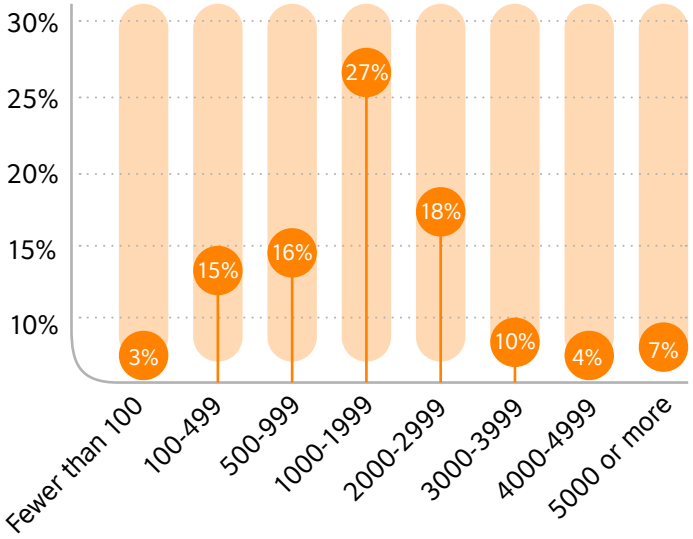
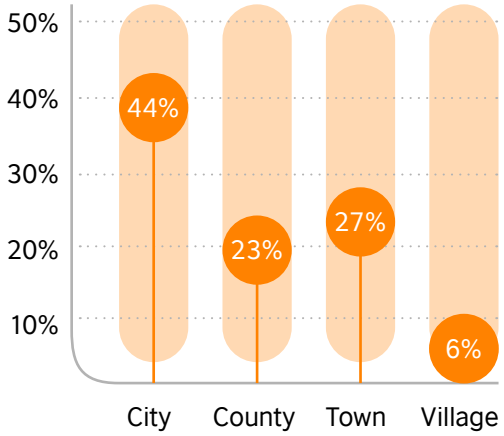


Figure 8. Respondent school location

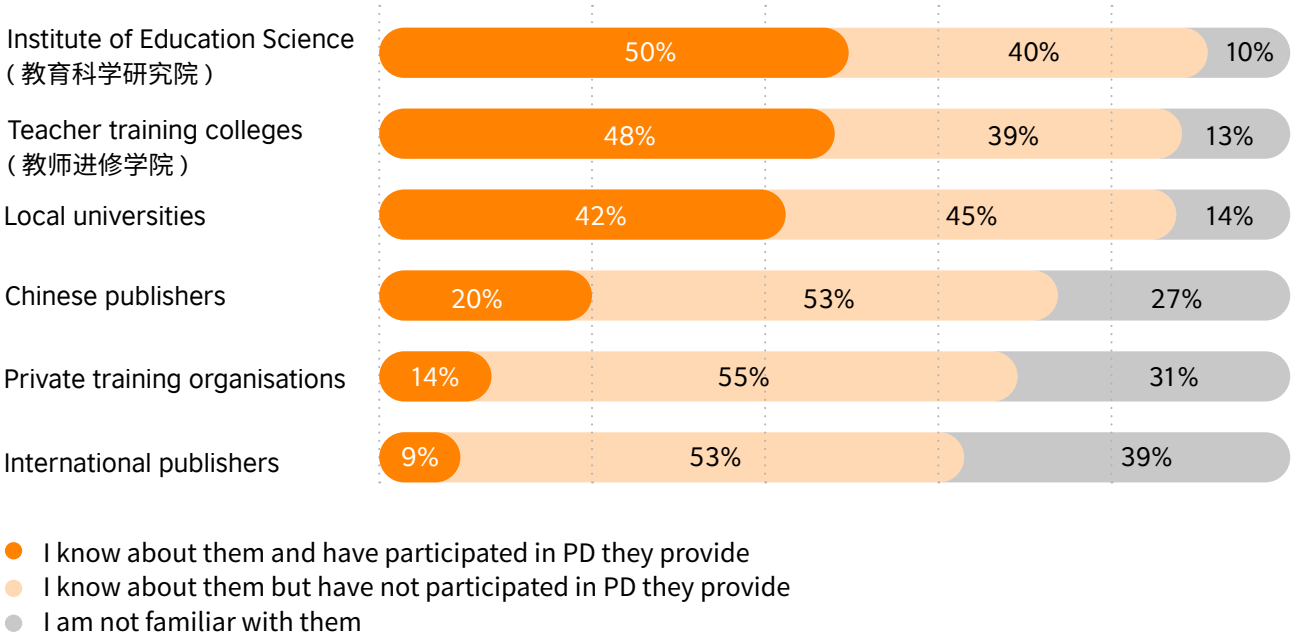


5.1.4 Awareness of providers of professional development

Respondents were asked to indicate awareness of six organisations providing professional development in China (Figure 9). Three seemed to be very well known and extensive providers of professional development, particularly the Institute of Education Sciences (教育科学研究院) and teacher training colleges (教师进修学院), both of which had provided professional development to approximately half of all respondents, closely followed by universities. In contrast to these, only a minority indicated having participated in professional development offered by either national or international publishers, or other private organisations, although most indicated awareness of such bodies.

[2]http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2019/indexeh.htm

Figure 9. Respondent awareness of selected organisations (n = 6469)



Respondents also had the option to indicate whether they had attended professional development offered by organisations not listed in the survey item; 17 per cent of them did. In many cases, though, their responses repeated categories already listed in the figure above. Institutes of Education Science (national institute under MOE and regional ones under education bureaus) were the organisations mentioned most (122 times), followed by teacher training colleges at national and regional level (over 100 mentions). Publishers, such as the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP), Pearson or People's Education Press were listed by 42 teachers. Less frequently, various universities were also mentioned, along with some local private organisations such as New Oriental who sometimes work with schools on a project basis. The British Council was mentioned 10 times in the additional professional development providers named by the teachers.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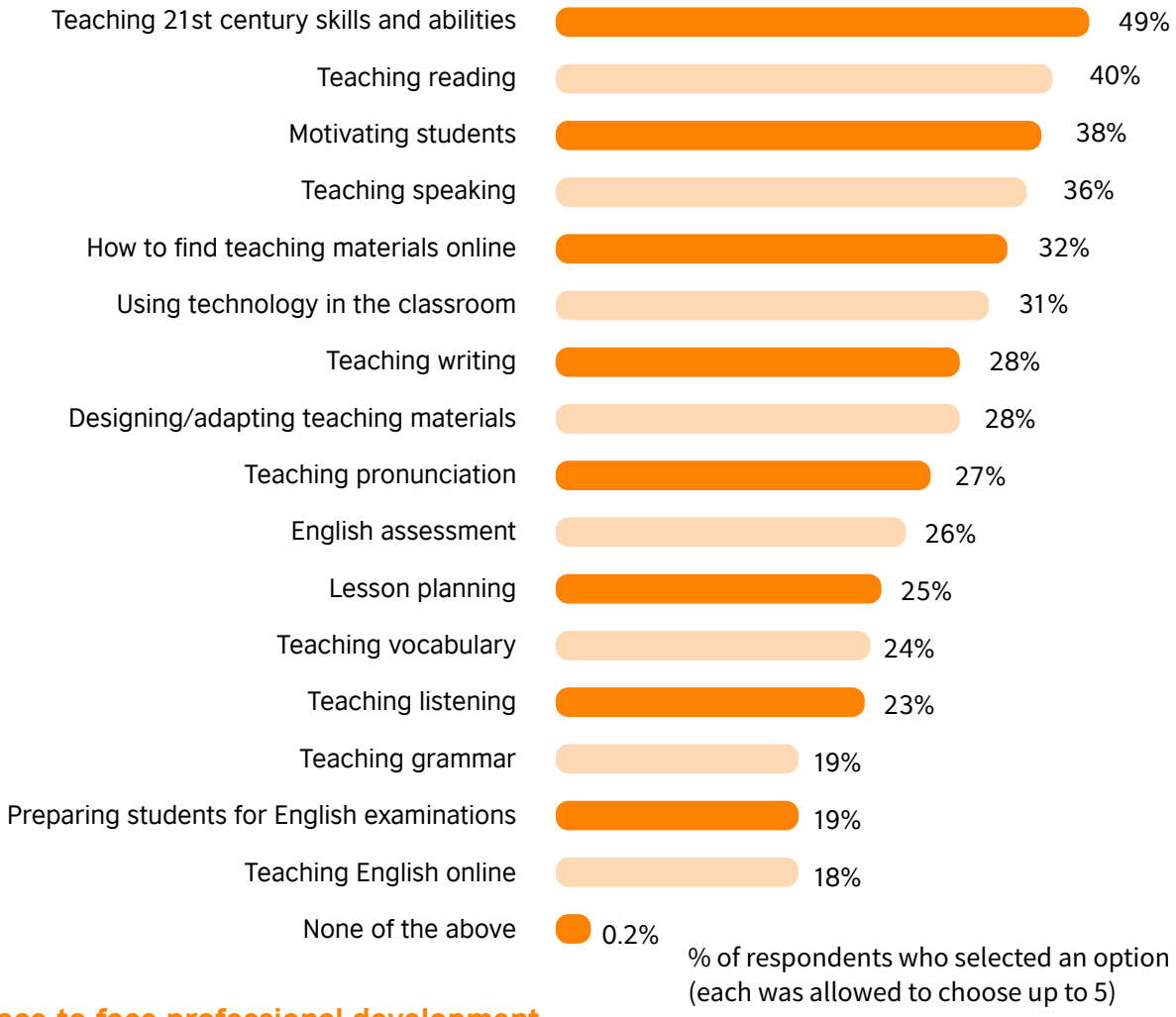
5.1.5 Professional development needs

Respondents were asked to identify their professional development needs by selecting up to five topics from a list of 16 provided (Figure 10). While all topics garnered interest, 'Teaching 21st century skills and abilities' topped the list, with almost half of all respondents choosing this topic. Teaching reading ranked highly, (higher even than teaching speaking), while motivating students was also prioritised. Perhaps surprisingly for a country where high-stakes exams play an important role in education, preparing students for exams was near the bottom of the list; also surprisingly in the current post-Covid climate, teaching English online was the lowest ranked topic.

Figure 10. Prioritized professional development needs among respondents (n = 6469)

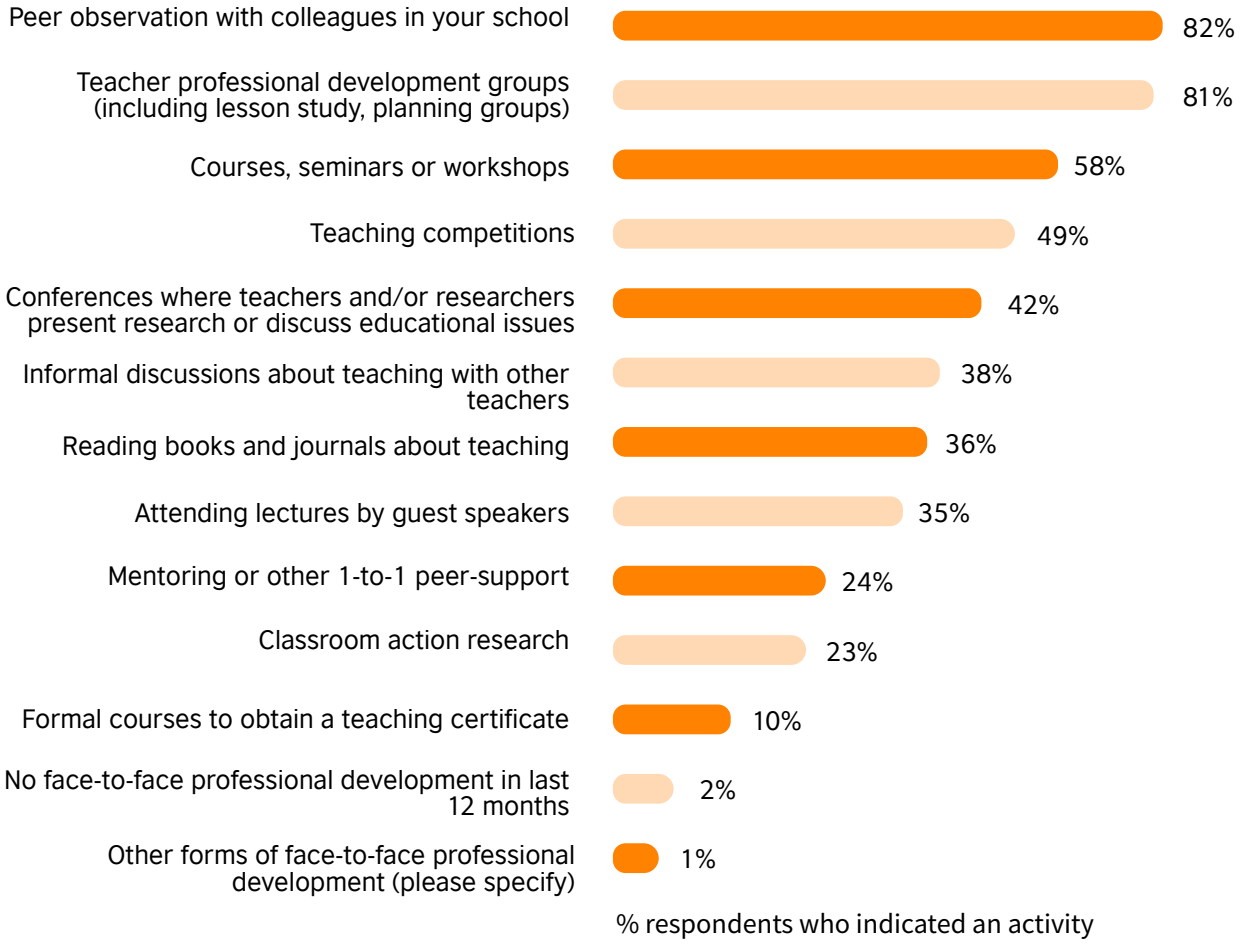


5.1.6 Face-to-face professional development

Respondents were asked to indicate what face-to-face professional development activities they had participated in over the previous 12 months, with 11 relevant activities presented, and additional options to indicate other forms of professional development and 'none of the above' [3] (Figure 11). Peer observation of colleagues and participation in teacher professional development groups (likely including 'jiaoyanzu', 教研组 , a type of professional learning community promoted in China; Chen, 2020) were by far the most frequently selected. As well as courses, seminars and workshops, teaching competitions were also often mentioned, and despite COVID-19 restrictions, conferences ranked fairly highly. Formal qualification courses ranked lowest of the available options with only 10 per cent of teachers having completed any in the previous 12 months.

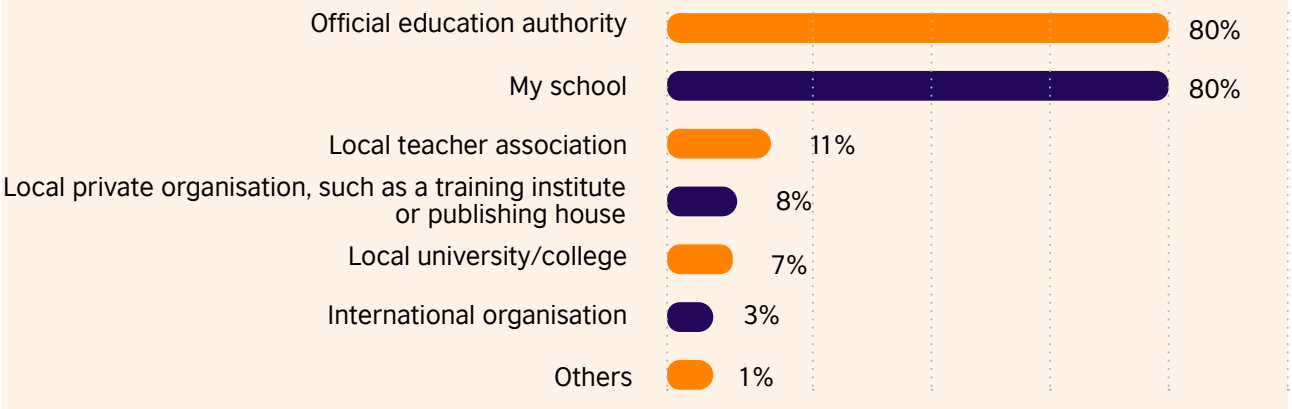
[3]'None of the above' corresponds to the option 'I have not done any face-to-face professional development in the previous 12 months'.

Figure 11. Recent face-to-face professional development activities (n = 6469)



Respondents were also asked to indicate both who paid for these face-to-face professional development activities, and whether they were voluntary. The vast majority indicated that they had participated in free (to them) professional development (84 per cent), although up to 30 per cent also indicated they had contributed to the cost on occasion. While only 9 per cent indicated that their recent professional development had been always compulsory, there was a balance between always voluntary (49 per cent) and sometimes voluntary (43 per cent) among responses. They were also asked to indicate the provider of these activities (Figure 12); the vast majority were provided by educational authorities, either directly (80 per cent) or through the teacher's own school (80 per cent). Private and international organisations were rarely chosen.

Figure 12. Recent face-to-face professional development: Provider (n = 6312)



5.1.7 Online professional development

Respondents' online professional development activities over the previous 12 months were also investigated, with 11 options provided, some of which corresponded to equivalent face-to-face options (Figure 13). Courses, seminars and workshops were most frequently mentioned (69 per cent), and online conferences were also popular (44 per cent). Videos both about teaching and for peer observation also both ranked highly. Relatively few teachers had engaged in searching for teaching materials online, either on official websites or through other sources – in this regard it is notable that the least frequently mentioned online professional development activity was making use of international websites to find teaching materials.

Concerning sources of funding and whether participation was voluntary, responses concerning online professional development were very similar to those for face-to-face professional development (Figure 14). Eighty-six percent indicated it was free of charge and 53 per cent indicated it was always voluntary. Likewise, providers of online professional development reported were also very similar to those for face-to-face professional development.

Figure 13. Recent online professional development activities (n = 6469)

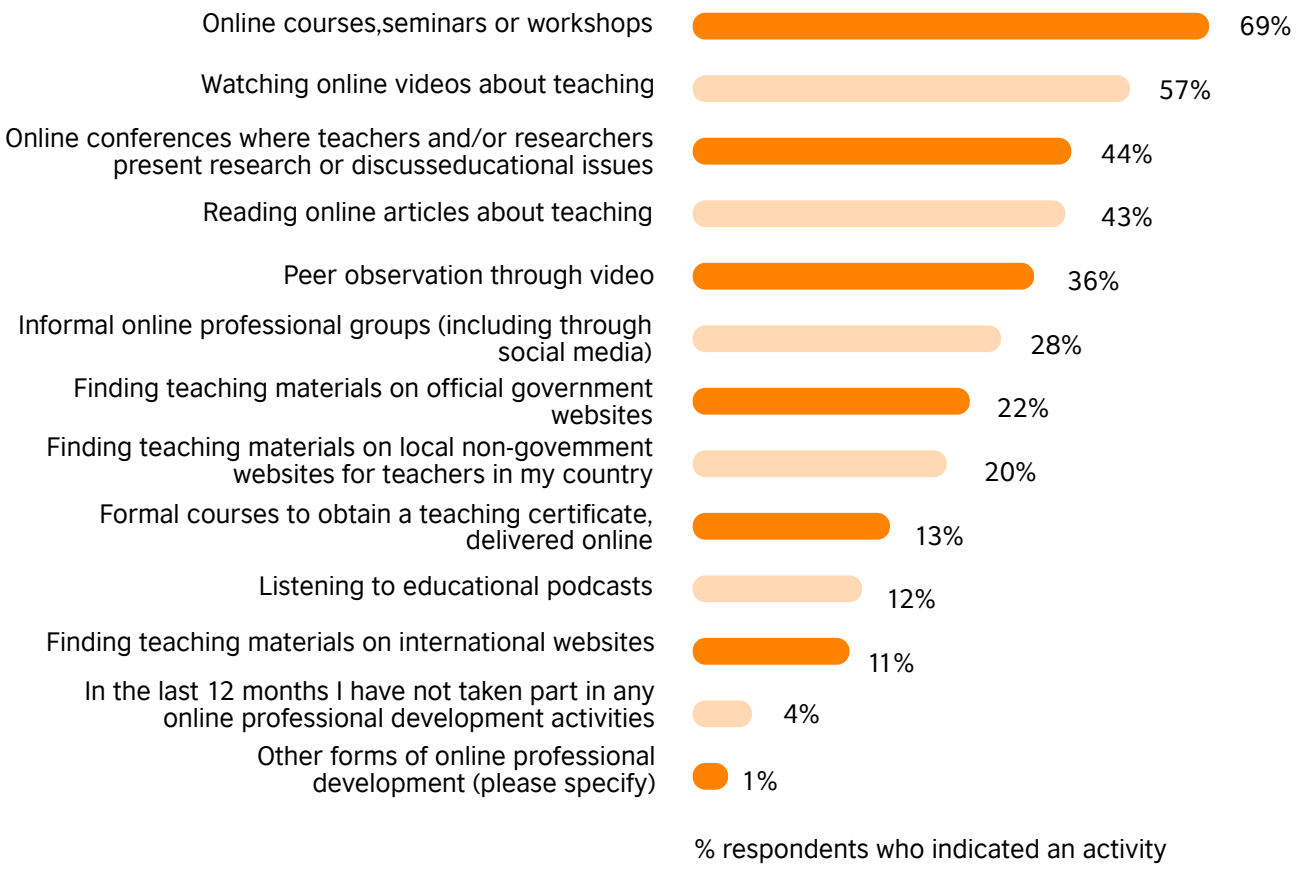
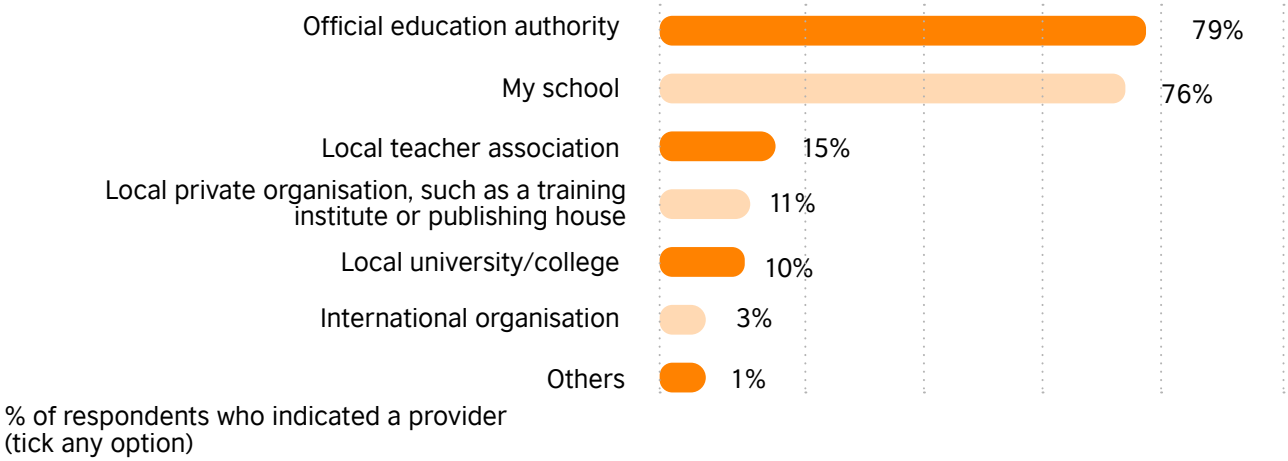


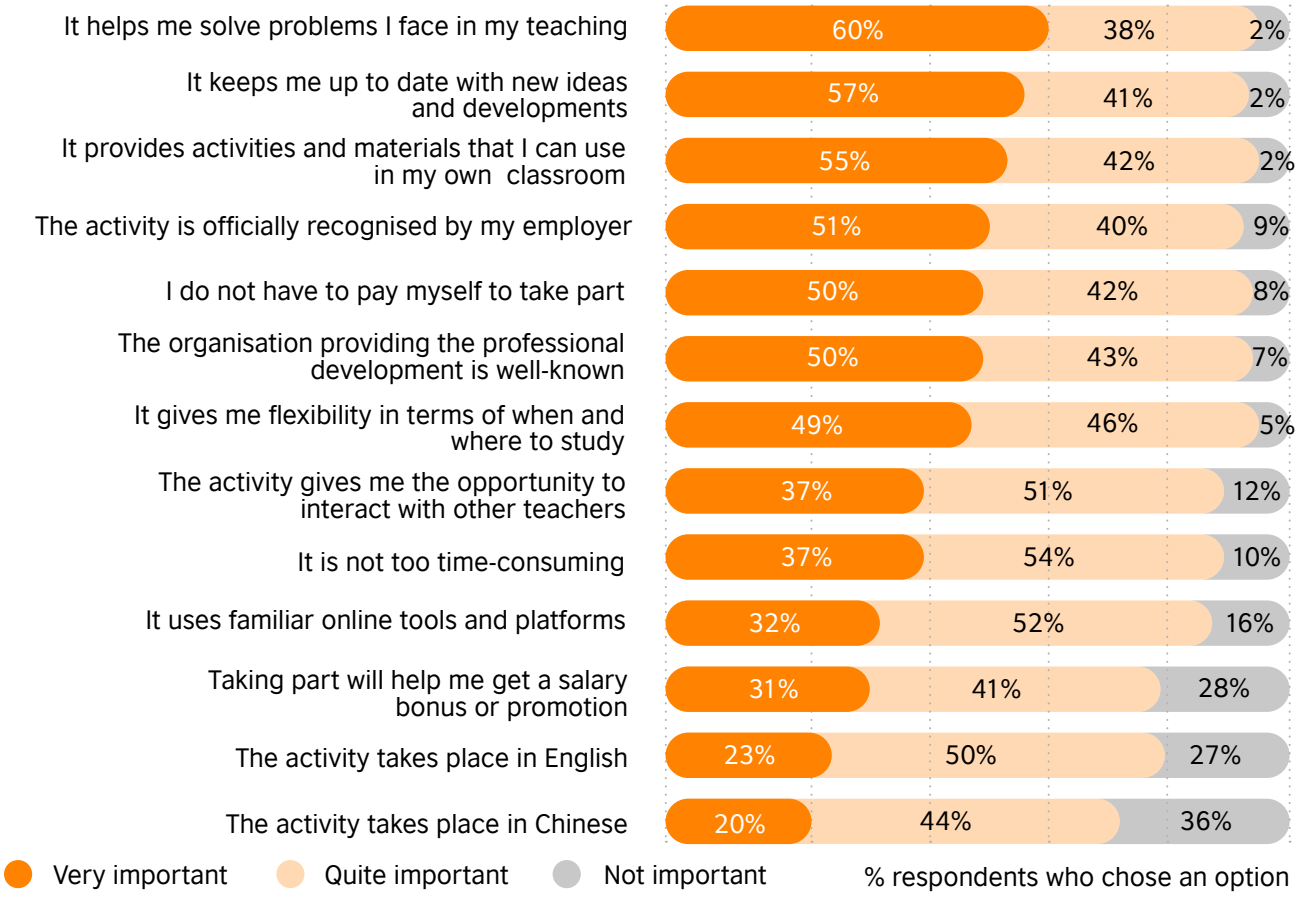
Figure 14. Recent online professional development provider (n = 6238)



% of respondents who indicated a provider (tick any option)

Respondents were offered 13 potential factors that might influence decisions to participate in online professional development, and asked to indicate their importance (Figure 15). All factors offered were considered either important or very important by over 60 per cent of respondents. However, the three most highly ranked factors related specifically to the practical utility of professional development for the classroom (including whether it can solve problems they face, update them with new developments in the field, and provide activities and materials that they can use when teaching). However, for many, it was also important (40 per cent) or very important (51 per cent) that their employer recognised the activity. It was also notable that the language used in the professional development activity seemed to be less important than any other factors, with a slight preference for English over Chinese – although paradoxically, over 60 per cent of respondents indicated a preference for both languages, suggesting an interest in multilingual professional development activities that was supported by interview data (see 5.4.4).

Figure 15. Factors that influence decisions to participate in online professional development (n = 6469)



Teachers also had the option of identifying other factors that influenced their decision to do online professional development. Three hundred teachers did so, though the analysis identified 117 that were either non-answers (such as 'nothing to add' or 'no'), unclear in meaning (such as 'life-long learning') or not relevant to the question (such as 'the school's teaching task is too heavy, which affects the professional development activities participated in'). Another 53 answers also simply referred to 'improving professional development', 'self-improvement' and similar ideas.

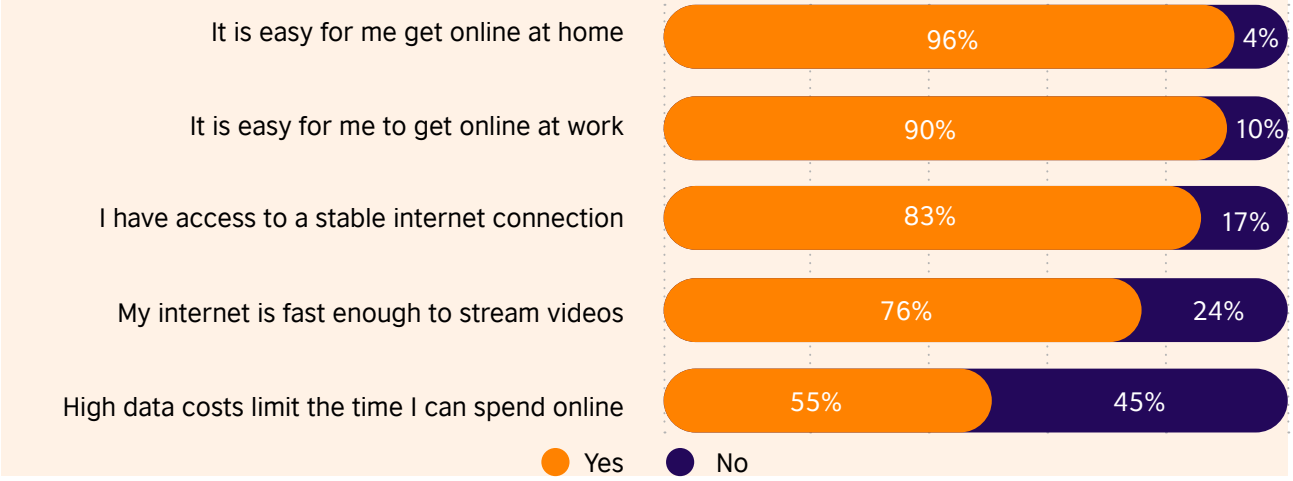
Amongst the responses that did identify factors that influence teachers' decision to engage in online professional development, one dominated and there were 62 references to the importance of practical ideas and activities that improve teaching in the classroom. Some examples are 'can improve teaching ability', 'practical, useful', 'can actually promote the improvement of teaching ability', 'help yourself improve your teaching', 'can help me better apply to my work' and 'provide practical teaching aids instead of traditional theoretical learning'. While not an additional factor itself (similar ideas were included in the previous list teachers were asked to choose from), these responses confirm teachers' over-riding concern with professional development that is of direct use to them in the classroom.

Another factor that was mentioned several times (23 teachers) was the content of professional development. 'Interesting' was a characteristic that was mentioned regularly, in addition to 'informative', 'latest' and 'cutting-edge'. Several other factors mentioned less frequently included online professional development that was relevant to their professional needs, easy and convenient to participate in, having a flexible schedule, free of charge and which provided them with resources to use in class. Some also mentioned certificates as a factor that made online professional development more attractive.

5.1.8 Getting online

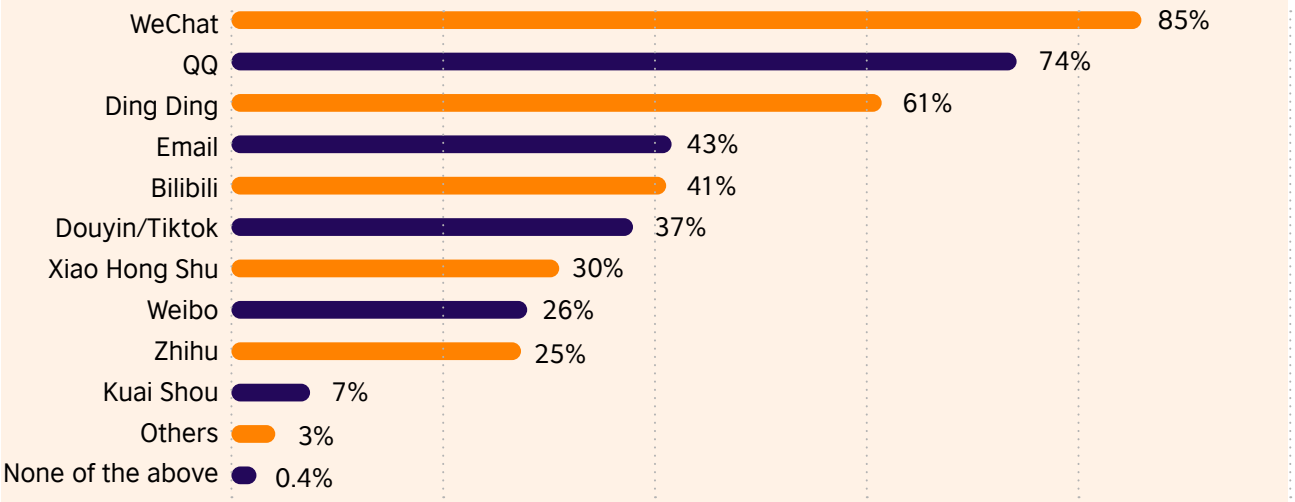
One section of the survey investigated respondents' online access and preferred platforms. The vast majority indicated good connectivity, with over 90 per cent judging that they can get online easily both at work and home, although data costs are a limiting factor for 55 per cent of respondents, and 24 per cent cannot stream videos (Figure 16). Both of these are likely to limit teachers from exploiting online resources to the full, particularly given that four of the five most popular online professional development activities (watching videos, peer observations and participating in both conferences and workshops) are all likely to require streaming capabilities. Concerning a lack of internet access among respondents, this was rare; only 4 per cent indicated that they cannot easily get online at home, and 10 per cent at work.

Figure 16. Internet connectivity (n = 6469)



Among the varied online platforms that respondents reported using, WeChat, QQ and Ding Ding – all Chinese platforms – were all very popular, with over 60 per cent of respondents making use of them (Figure 17). Concerning devices used, the majority of respondents indicated that they had online access via mobile phone (83 per cent) and/or laptop (73 per cent).

Figure 17. Which online platforms/tools do you use (work or leisure)? (n = 6469)

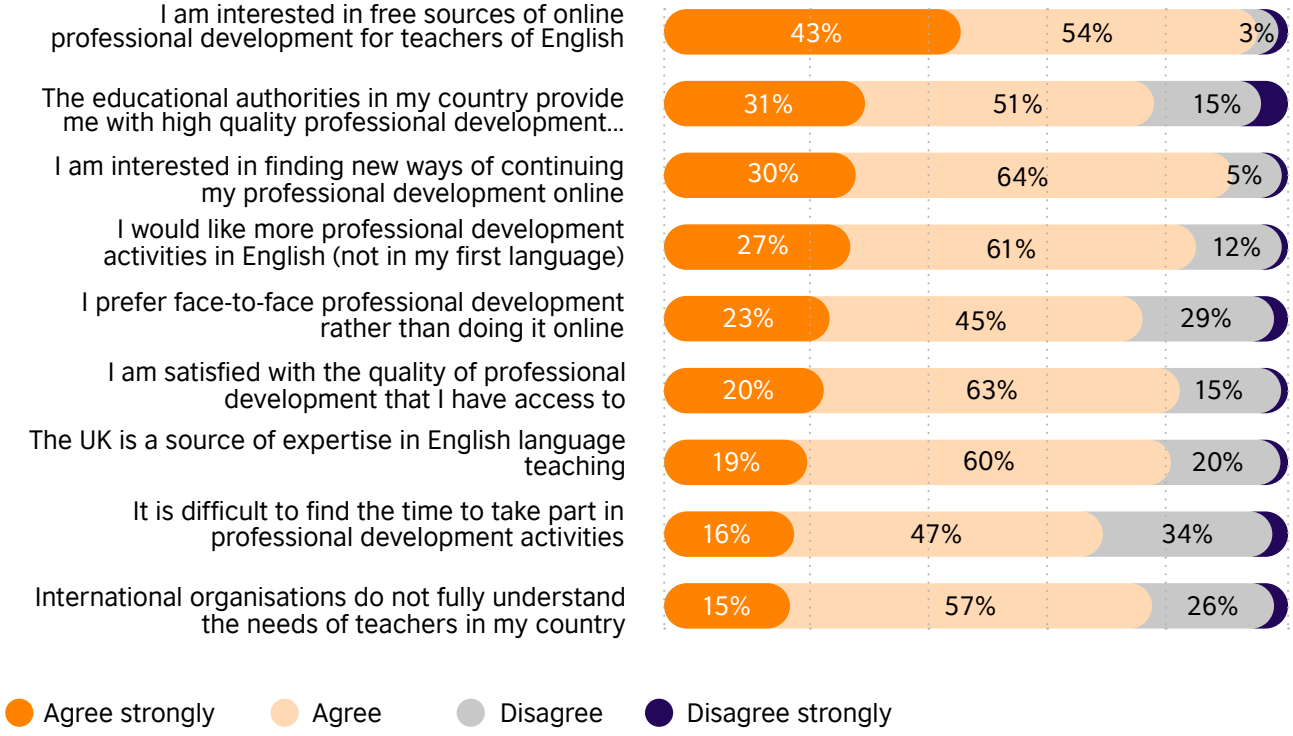


% of respondents who indicated a provider (tick any option)

5.1.9 Views about professional development

The final quantitative survey item elicited respondents' views in a number of areas relating to professional development, both online and face-to-face (Figure 18). It is notable that two of the most strongly-supported opinions indicated an interest in continuing professional development online, particularly through free sources (97 per cent agreed/strongly agreed with this item), and while a majority indicated that they preferred face-to-face professional development, this item elicited comparatively low levels of agreement (68.5 per cent) relative to most other items. There was also evidence of general satisfaction with the professional development provided by educational authorities (82 per cent agreed/strongly agreed). With regard to language choice, 88 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with an item indicating a preference for professional development activities in English over their first language. Evidence that Chinese teachers feel they lack sufficient time for online professional development was also present in the responses, with 63 per cent agreeing with an item about this issue. Finally, while a majority agreed that the UK is a source of expertise in ELT (79 per cent), a majority also felt that international organisations do not fully understand the needs of Chinese teachers (72 per cent).

Figure 18. Attitudes towards professional development (n = 6469)



5.1.10 Further professional development

There were two optional open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The first was:

Please write one or two sentences to tell us about areas of your work as a teacher of English that you would like to receive more professional development support for.

There were 4951 responses to this question. Sample size calculators indicated that analysing a random selection of 350 would provide representative conclusions and this analysis is presented here.

Chinese teachers' responses to the first open-ended item were characterised by substantial variety, with a very wide range of ideas being mentioned infrequently. Two particular themes did, though, dominate. The first, with 44 responses (12.6 per cent of the 350 randomly chosen for analysis) highlighted an interest in having access to a wider range of resources to support teaching and learning. Examples of comments in this category were:

'international English teaching resources'
'need more authentic material'
'free online resources'
'have better resources'
'Hope to find more free and good resource platforms to share'
'free online practice resources'
'how to obtain high-quality teaching resources'
'we need reasonable, rich and free teaching resources'
'how to find more free teaching resources online'
'have more and richer free teaching resources'.

The second major category in this question, with 38 mentions, was teaching skills; teachers were interested, as part of their professional development, in learning about practical skills and activities they could use to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Examples of comments in this category were:

‘training of English teaching methods’
‘classroom teaching skills’
‘practical teaching methods in the classroom’
‘teaching skills and methods’
‘improve teaching skills’
‘effective teaching methods’
‘teaching skills and methods’
‘teaching activities’

Teachers did sometimes refer to the teaching of specific skills, such as speaking or reading, but they typically expressed an interest in teaching methods generally.

Beyond these two dominant categories, there were some others which were highlighted several times without exceeding 10 mentions. These were:

- EdTech (10), such as ‘smooth use of technology in the classroom’ and ‘the integration of English teaching and information technology’
- Observation (7), such as ‘hope to observe the public classes of students of all levels’ and ‘go to other schools to
- listen to regular lessons instead of model lessons’.
- Lesson preparation (7), such as ‘how to better prepare for lessons’
  Motivating students (6), such as ‘stimulate students' interest in learning’ and ‘how to arouse students' interest’.
- Assessment (5), such as ‘match the current educational examination system in China with relevant foreign research or advanced theories and methods of education and teaching’.

5.1.11 Effective professional development

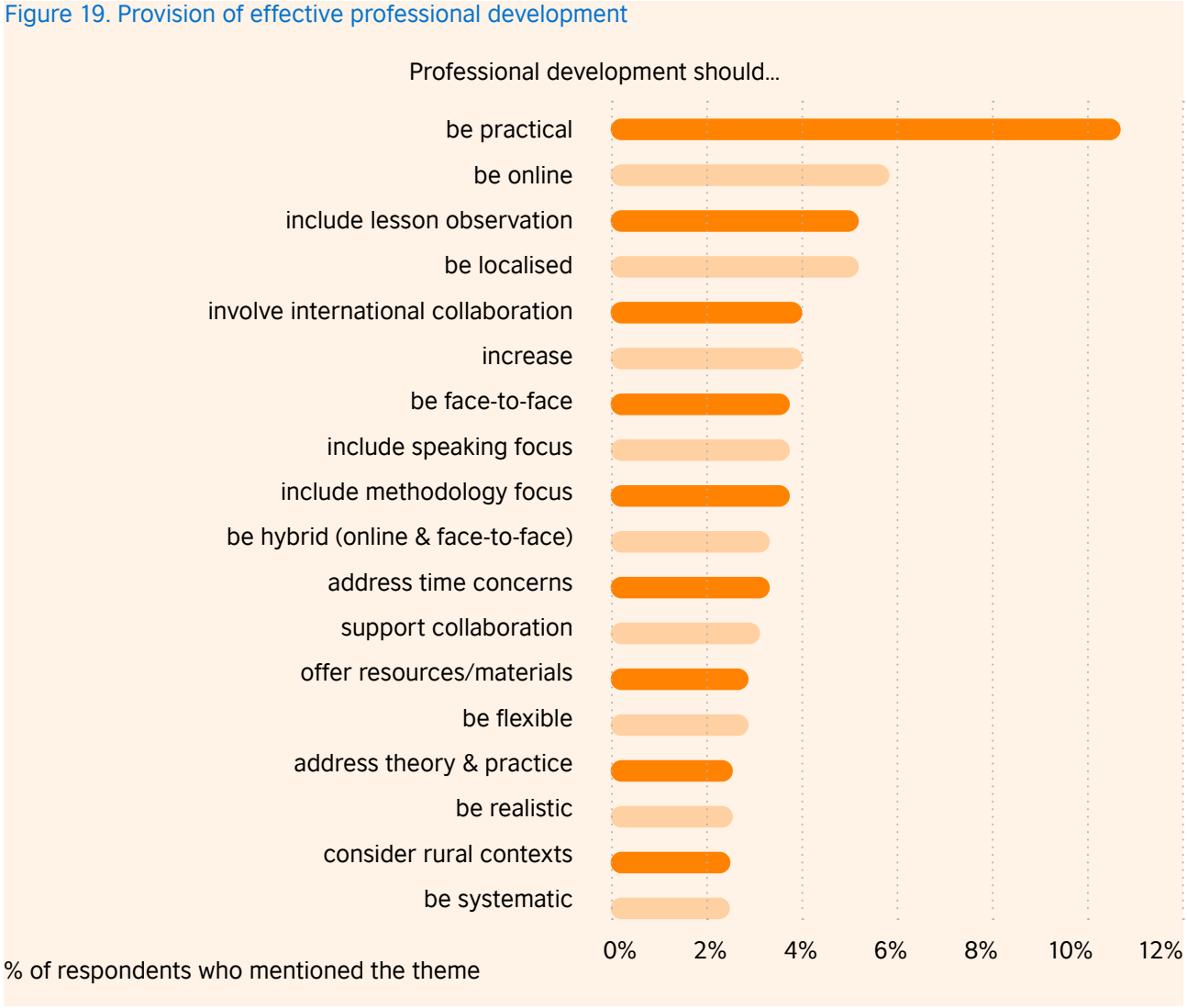
The second optional open-ended question was:

If you would like to make any suggestions for how effective professional development can be made available to teachers of English in primary and secondary schools in China please use this space.

There were 3217 responses to this question and, once again, a random sample of 350 was analysed.

Open-ended Item 2 elicited respondents’ suggestions for how to provide effective professional development to Chinese primary and secondary teachers. The sample was analysed both for most commonly mentioned themes (coded and then quantified), and for how these themes were often linked together. As Figure 19 below shows, by far the most commonly mentioned theme was reference to practical professional development that is useful in the classroom. With regard to preferences for online, face-to-face or hybrid delivery, while online professional development ranked higher, this may be influenced by the overall survey focus (and delivery online), and it is important to notice that interest in both face-to-face and hybrid modalities was also high. Consistent with the practical focus, a number of respondents indicated that professional development should involve opportunities for lesson observation (including demonstration lessons), both face-to-face and online. A number also indicated an interest in greater international interaction, including collaboration with colleagues in other countries, as well as professional development support and input from ‘experts’ (explored further below). Also frequently mentioned — to some extent in tension with the previous theme — was an interest in professional development being localised, specific or relevant to teachers’ current contexts of practice and classroom realities, sometimes with critical reference to past professional development events. The two most commonly mentioned topic foci for such professional development were speaking and teaching methodology.

Figure 19. Provision of effective professional development



While the proportional balance of these individual themes among responses is interesting, potentially more insightful is how they were often linked together, offering visions for how the respondents felt different elements could be combined in professional development delivery, content and organisation. The interest in online learning was often linked to interest in practical ideas, the flexibility that online learning offers, and the possibility of examples or lesson demonstrations through, for example, video observation. The following two quotes are representative, the second also interestingly proposing a means for organising such professional development – this interest in more systematically organised learning was also common in the dataset:

Personally think that online training can be more, because the time is flexible.

An optional online learning menu is provided every semester. Each learning menu training focuses on a small practical problem. The menu training cycle is about a week, and the duration of each class is no more than half an hour.

The strong interest in a practical focus for professional development activities, was often linked to reference to classroom realities, with a number of respondents also implying a theory-practice disconnect in current professional development delivery, as implied in the following response:

> *The teaching difficulties of front-line teachers should be collected first, and then answered in a more targeted manner, so that theory and practice can truly be connected.*

Respondents' suggestions for more international collaboration regularly included proposals both for collaboration with, or observations of, colleagues in other countries, and invited lectures/webinars from international speakers; among these comments, an undertone of being disconnected from the wider ELT community was sometimes detectable:

> *Hope to have the opportunity to communicate with foreign primary and secondary school teachers.*

> *Regularly hold international exchange lectures to bring us a vision of the world.*

A large number of respondents who made reference to lesson observations (including others observing their own lessons) also mentioned both demonstration lessons and direct in-school training support and asked for, as in this example, 'more quality classroom observation and training.'

Concerning professional development topics, while frequent, references to aspects of methodology (e.g., 'latest' or 'most advanced methods') were not generally insightful, regularly expressed interest in aspects of speaking most often implied an interest in developing aspects of pronunciation or sub-skills of speaking (both for themselves and their learners), rather than how to facilitate speaking opportunities for learners.

> *Voice, especially oral expression at normal speaking speed.*

> *Provide ... practical help, such as professional training in speech and language.*

Finally, while the majority of survey respondents worked in urban environments, it was noticeable that a number of those who requested more needs-oriented, bespoke or localised professional development support also made reference to rural environments, summarised well in the following quotes:

> *Carry out more instructive trainings that are really suitable for practical teaching in rural schools.*

> *Conduct more online and especially offline training activities, especially training activities suitable for rural schools.*

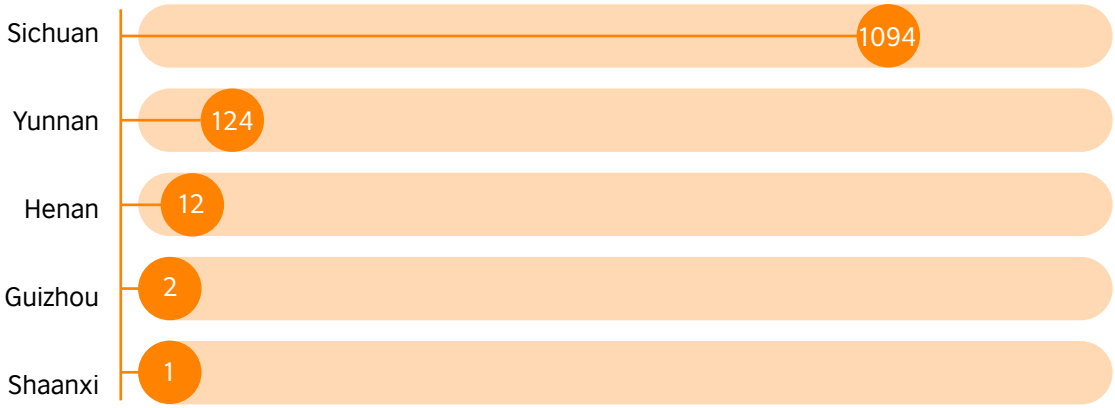
5.2 Survey results: disadvantaged teachers

In order to understand the extent to which more disadvantaged teachers may have different professional development experiences and needs, a subset of the data was analysed both separately and comparatively to the wider cohort. Two demographic factors were combined to do this: province income band and rurality, offering a stratified subsample of reasonable size: 1233 'disadvantaged' respondents, all of whom indicated that their schools were located either in villages or towns in low-income provinces. They are compared to 'non-disadvantaged' respondents, which includes all other participants (i.e., all urban respondents, and respondents from middle and high income provinces working in villages or towns).

5.2.1 Understanding the sample

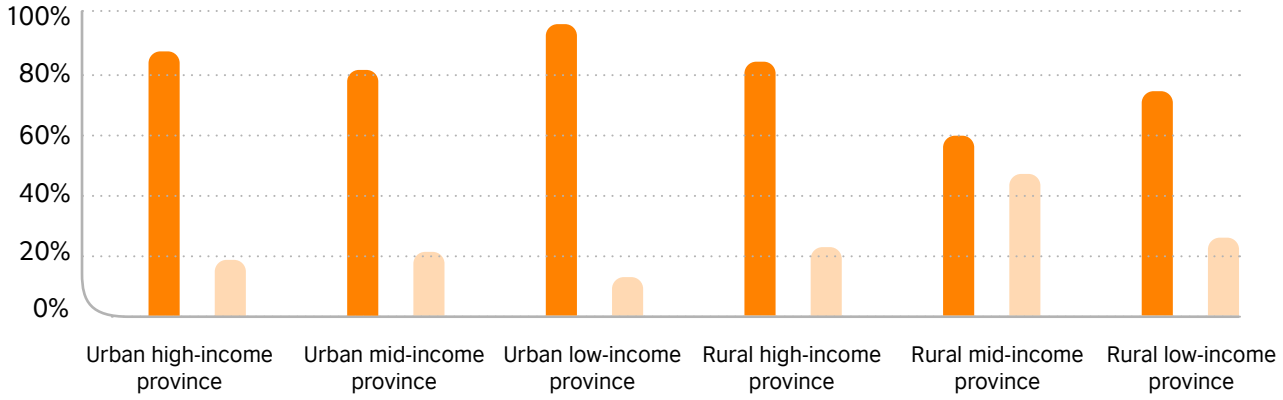
Because the dataset is not representative of Chinese teachers as a whole, the sample analysed here captures only part of the already biased dataset, predominantly from one province (Sichuan; 89 per cent). While this is also the majority province for all respondents, the proportion is higher here, and this should be kept in mind in the analysis below. For example, educational practices or policies that are specific to Sichuan are likely to influence the findings more.

Figure 20. Responses per province: disadvantaged respondents



It should also be noted that because secondary schools, particularly upper secondary (senior high) schools are more likely to be located in urban centres, with at least some rural learners commuting to these, respondents working in villages are more likely to be primary school teachers. This bias towards primary schools is further compounded by higher dropout rates in disadvantaged areas, meaning that there are simply fewer secondary learners in such areas (Qian & Smyth, 2008). Thus, the lower percentage of ELT specialists found in disadvantaged contexts (73 per cent vs 83 per cent) will be influenced by the fact that rural respondents are more likely to be primary teachers, who are less likely to be subject specialists (Figure 21).

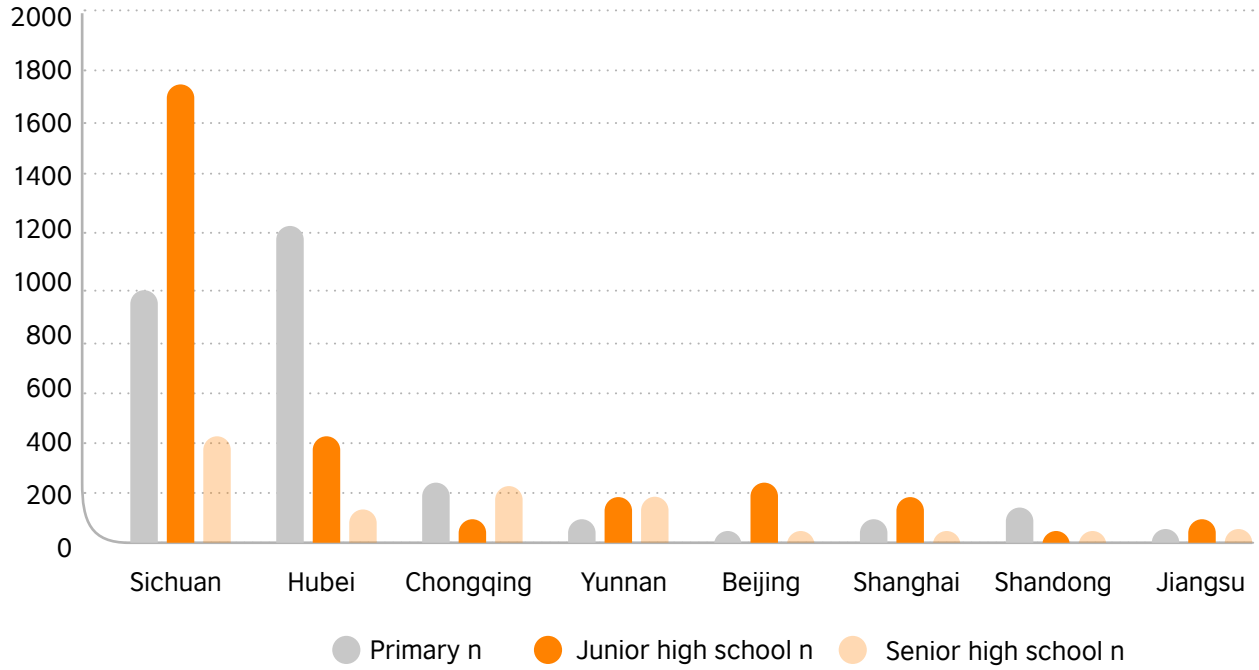
Figure 21. Percentage of ELT specialists by level of disadvantage



Additional so-called “lurking variables” may be important explanatory factors behind differences here presented, such as the much higher proportion of respondents from Hubei (middle-income) working in primary education than from Sichuan (low-income) (see Figure 22), which clearly influences the higher proportion of non-subject specialists in both urban and rural mid-income provinces seen above.

Figure 22. Respondents per province by school type (frequency).

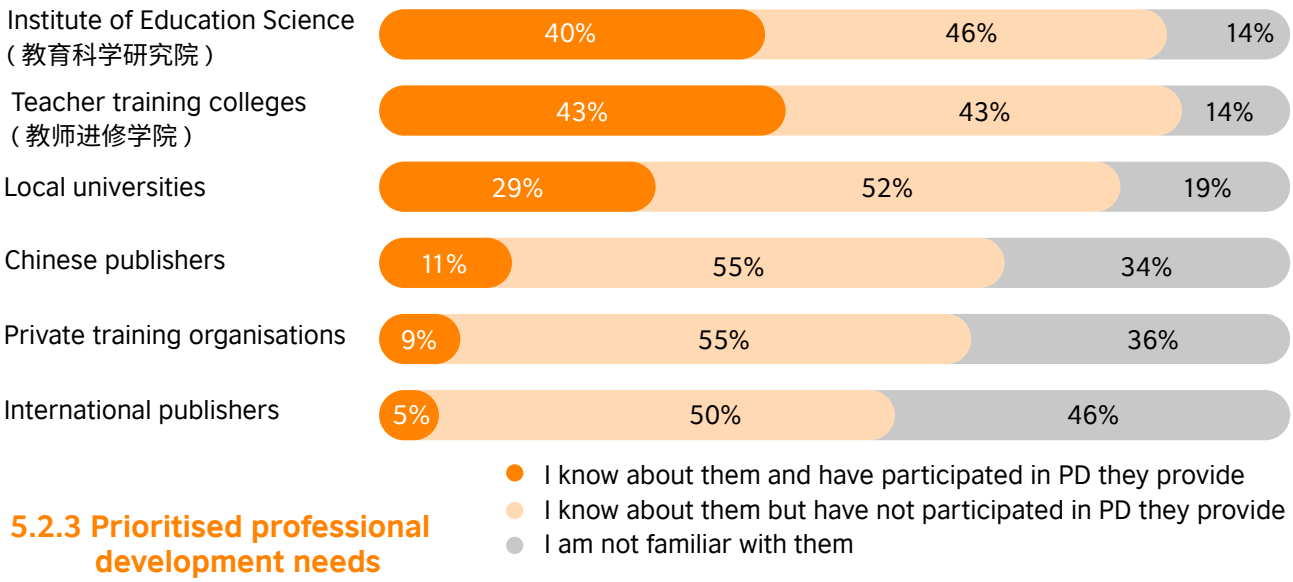
Note. Only provinces with >100 respondents are shown here.



5.2.2 Awareness of selected organisations

Concerning awareness of providers of professional development, there were similar levels of awareness of the six organisations in the question, although somewhat lower levels of participation in professional development offered by them (compare Figures 9 and 23). For example, only 40 per cent of disadvantaged teachers had participated in professional development provided by the Institute of Education, compared to 50 per cent of non-disadvantaged respondents, and only 29 per cent had participated in professional development offered by local universities, compared to 42 per cent of non-disadvantaged respondents.

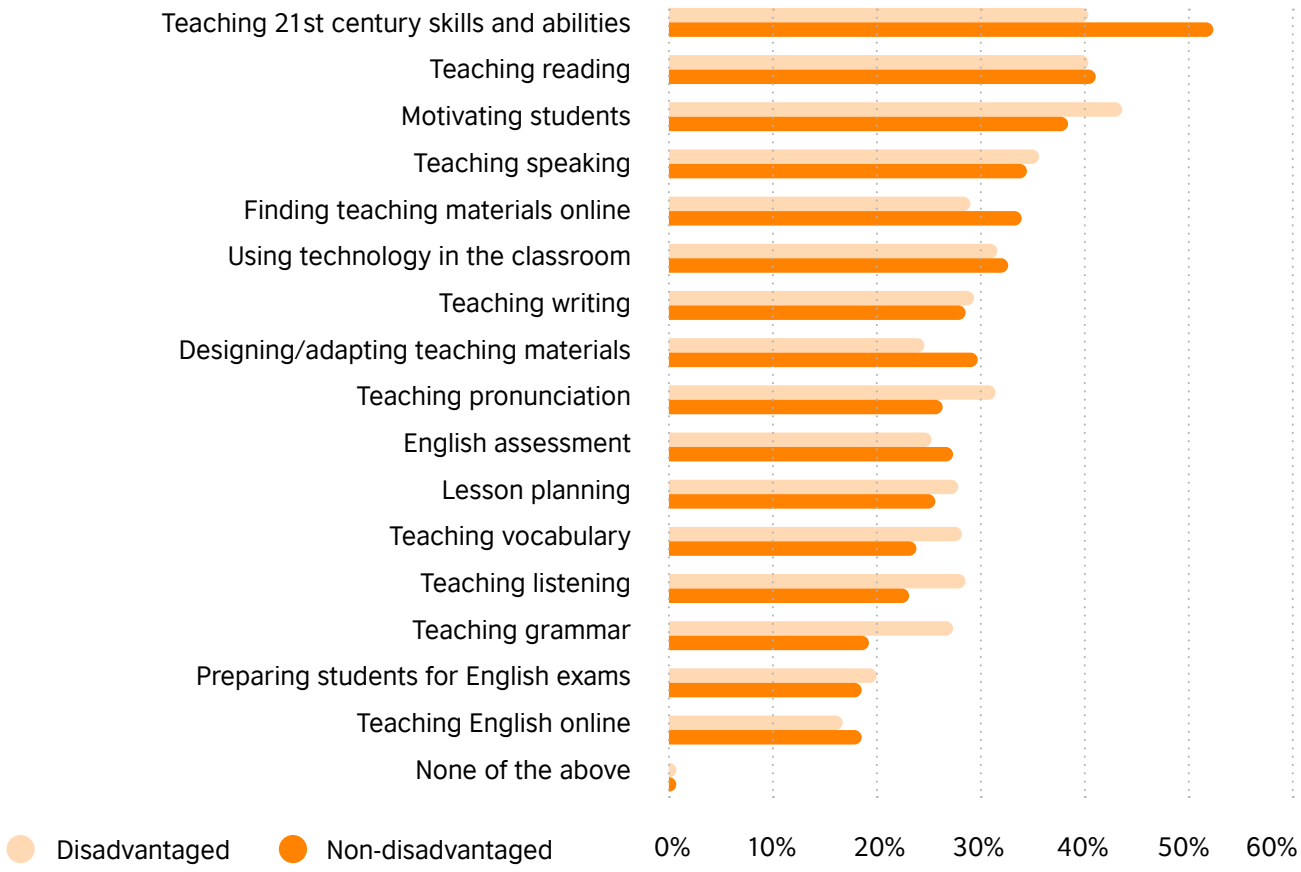
Figure 23. Awareness of selected organisations (Disadvantaged only: n = 1233).



5.2.3 Prioritised professional development needs

Perhaps the most noticeable differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged respondents concerned their self-reported professional development needs (Figure 24). For disadvantaged respondents the most frequently selected topic was "motivating students". Also slightly more popular were certain basic aspects of ELT pedagogy: teaching speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary and listening (i.e. skills and systems). Over 10 per cent less popular was the topic of teaching 21st-century skills and abilities, possibly suggesting that some of these teachers still feel a need for fundamental training in language teaching (likely influenced in part by the higher likelihood of their being primary school teachers).

Figure 24. Respondents' prioritized professional development needs by disadvantage level



The following comparison of the top and bottom five professional development needs in both groups may also be useful for noticing broad similarities and several key differences:

Top 5 professional development needs

Disadvantaged		Non-disadvantaged	
Motivating students	**42%**	Teaching 21st century skills	**51%**
Teaching 21st century skills	**40%**	Teaching reading	**40%**
Teaching reading	**40%**	Motivating students	**38%**
Teaching speaking	**37%**	Teaching speaking	**35%**
Teaching pronunciation	**31%**	Finding teaching materials online	**33%**

Bottom 5 professional development needs

Disadvantaged		Non-disadvantaged	
Designing/adapting TLMs	**23%**	Teaching vocabulary	**23%**
English assessment	**23%**	Teaching listening	**22%**
Preparing students for exams	**20%**	Teaching grammar	**19%**
Teaching grammar	**19%**	Preparing students for exams	**18%**
Teaching English online	**17%**	Teaching English online	**18%**

5.2.4 Recent professional development activities

Concerning recent professional development activities, the most important difference to notice is that disadvantaged respondents, on average, nearly always indicated lower engagement with each of the activities offered, both face-to-face and online (see Figures 25 and 26). Differences were slightly greater concerning online activities, reflecting slightly greater challenges getting online for disadvantaged respondents. However, other, somewhat more surprising differences are also noticeable. For example, peer observation through video was only slightly less popular among disadvantaged respondents, while reading activities (both face-to-face and online) seem to be significantly less popular among them, suggesting that differences observed are not simply to do with connection speeds or costs. Disadvantaged respondents reported similar professional development providers to the wider cohort, although one detectable difference was the reporting of less professional development activity organised by respondents' schools (70 per cent face-to-face; 66 per cent online) when compared to the wider dataset (80 per cent face-to-face; 78 per cent online). Concerning issues of payment for professional development, non-disadvantaged respondents were slightly more likely to report having participated in professional development that was free of charge, both face-to-face (85 per cent vs 78 per cent for disadvantaged) and online (88 per cent vs 80 per cent for disadvantaged); other differences were smaller. And concerning whether recent professional development was voluntary or compulsory, it was noticeable that disadvantaged respondents were less likely to report "always voluntary", and more likely to report "always compulsory", both face-to-face and online (Figure 27).

Figure 25. Recent face-to-face professional development activities by disadvantage level

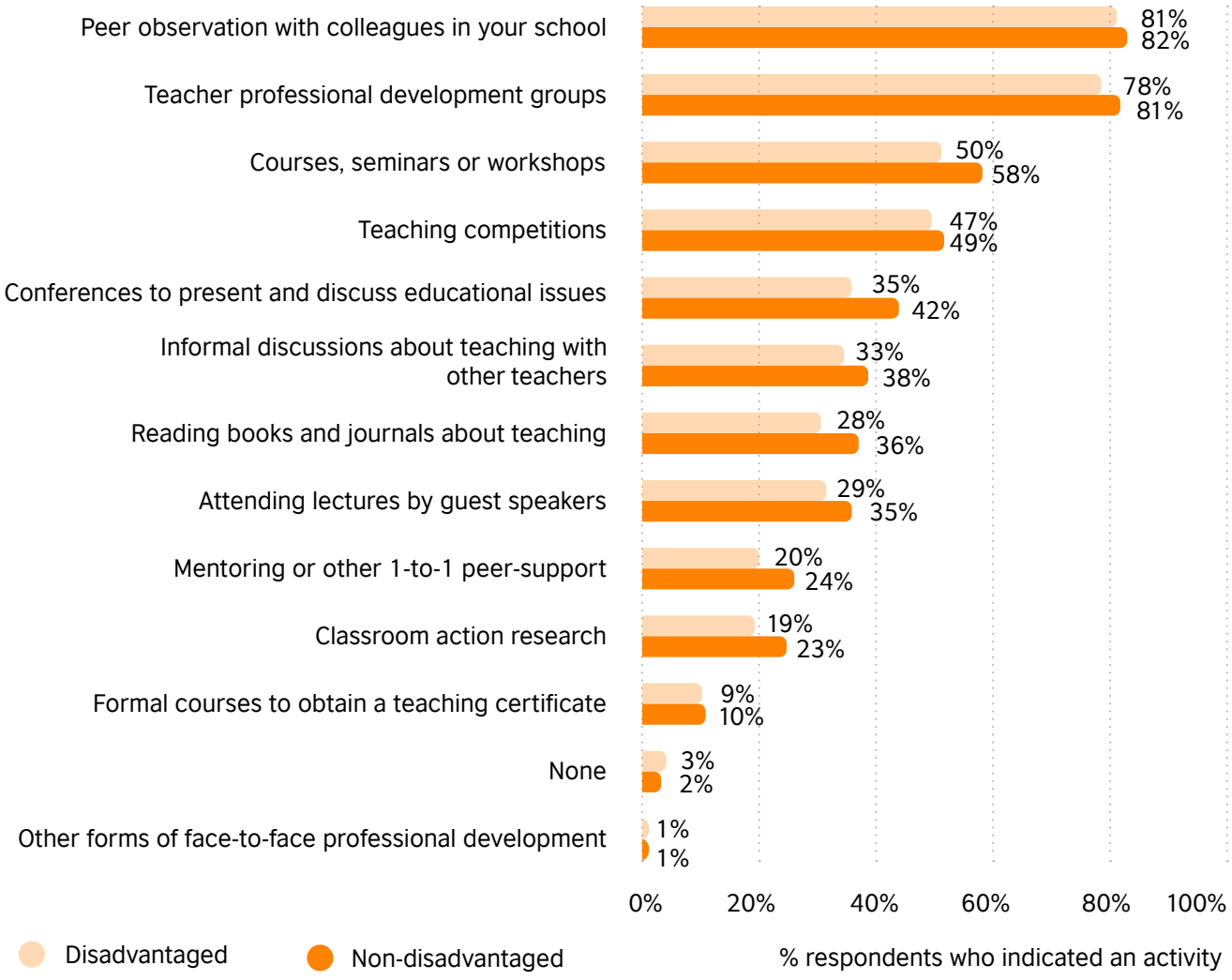


Figure 26. Recent online professional development activities by disadvantage level

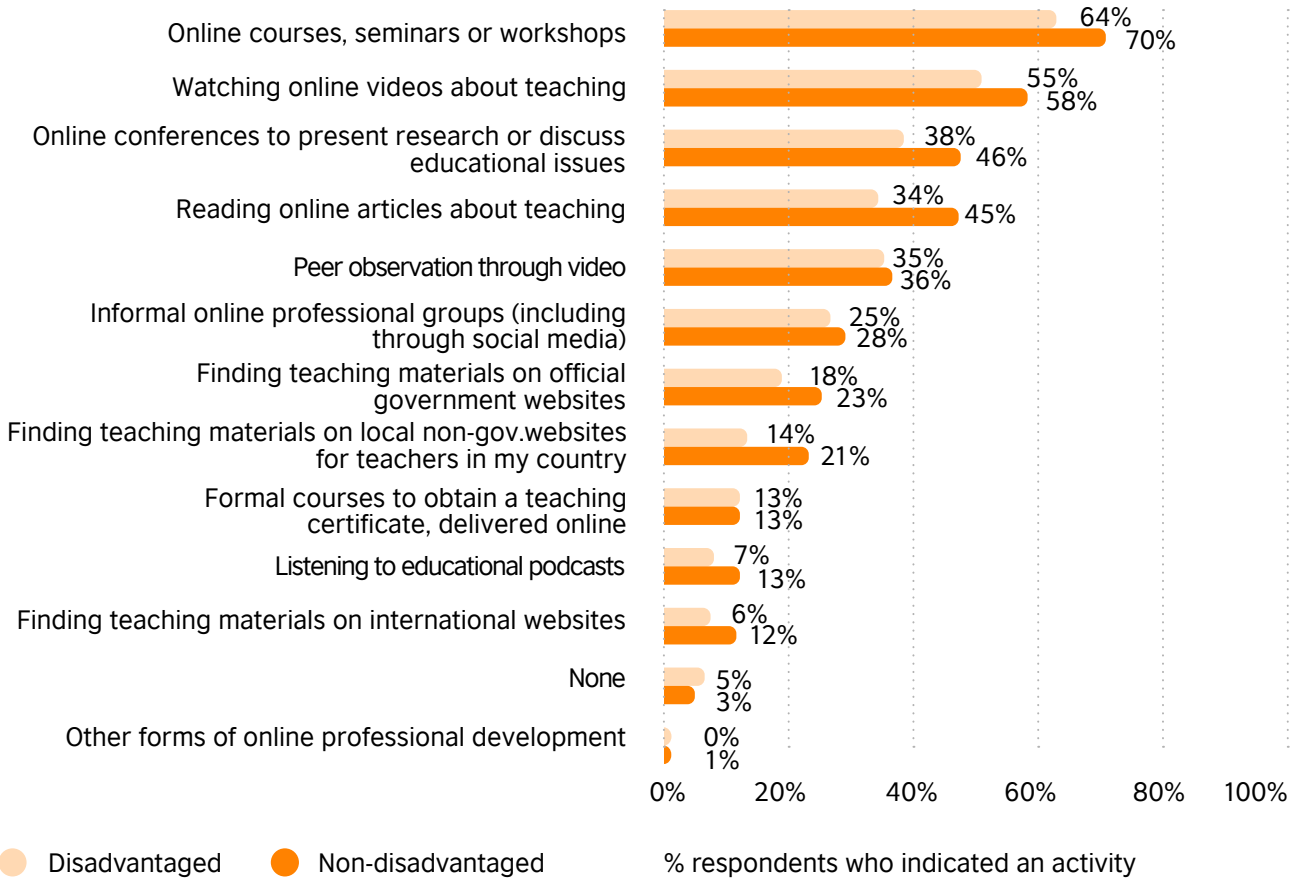
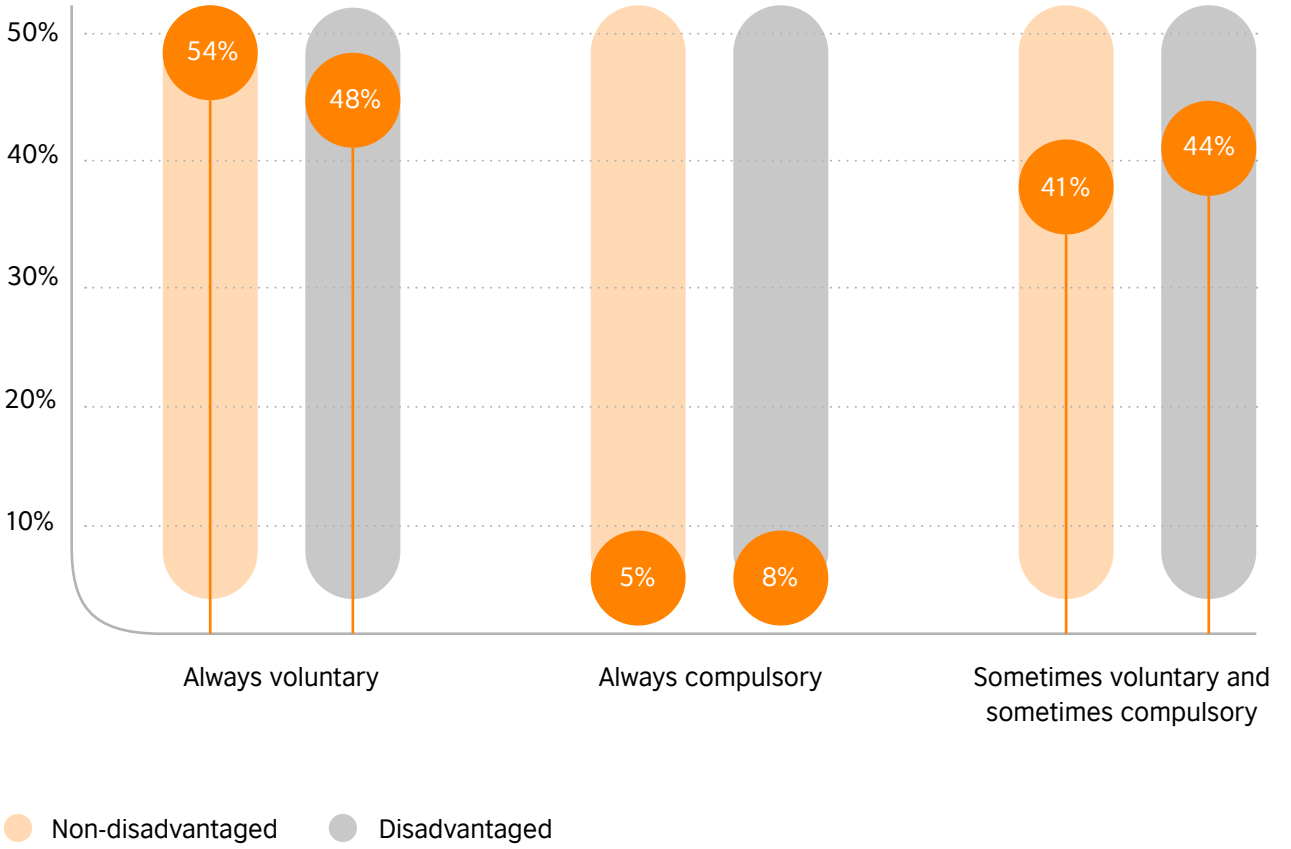


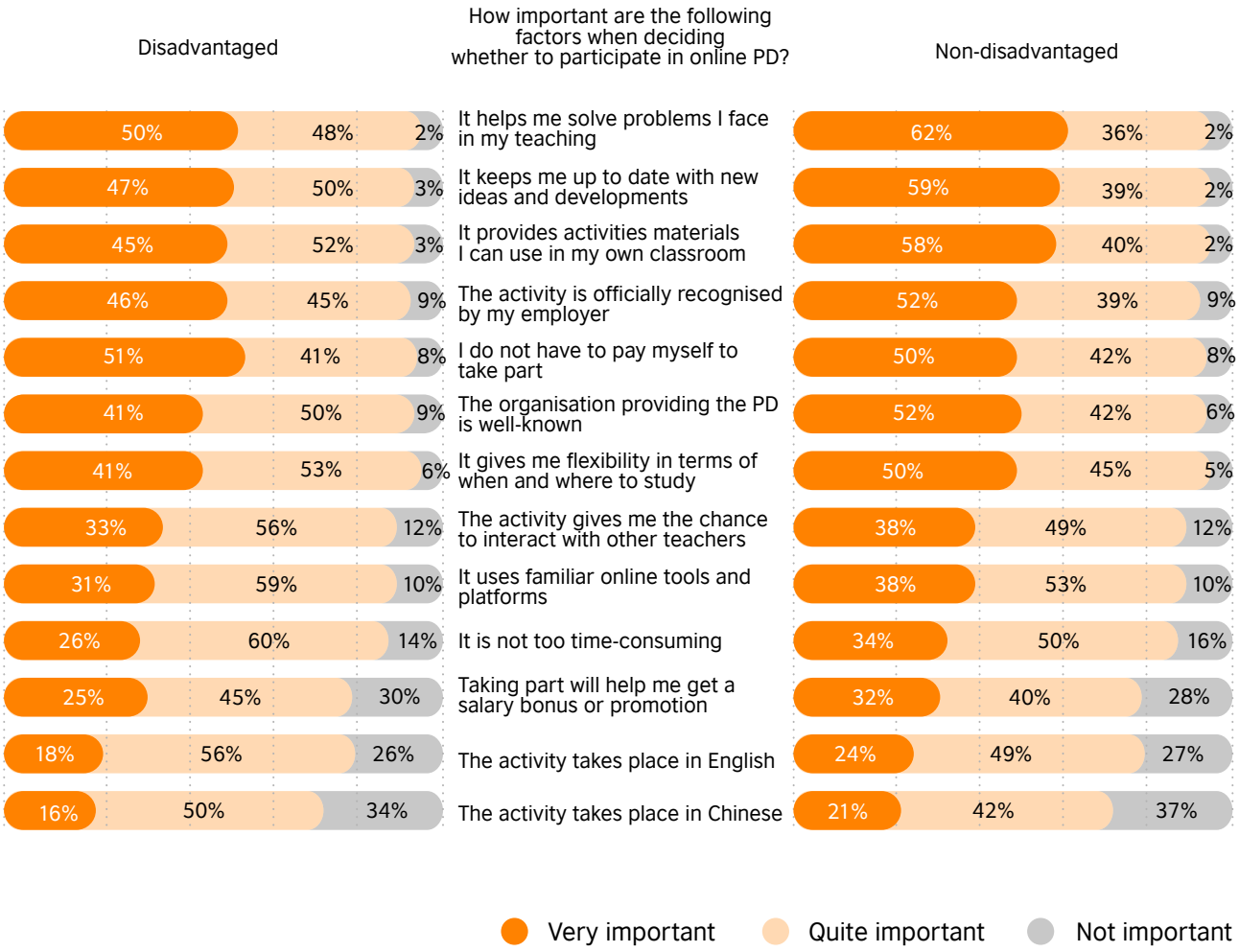
Figure 27. Recent online professional development: Voluntary, compulsory or varied, by disadvantage level



5.2.5 Factors influencing participation in online professional development

Broadly similar patterns were found between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged respondents with regard to their assessment of the importance of different factors when deciding whether to participate in online professional development (Figure 28).

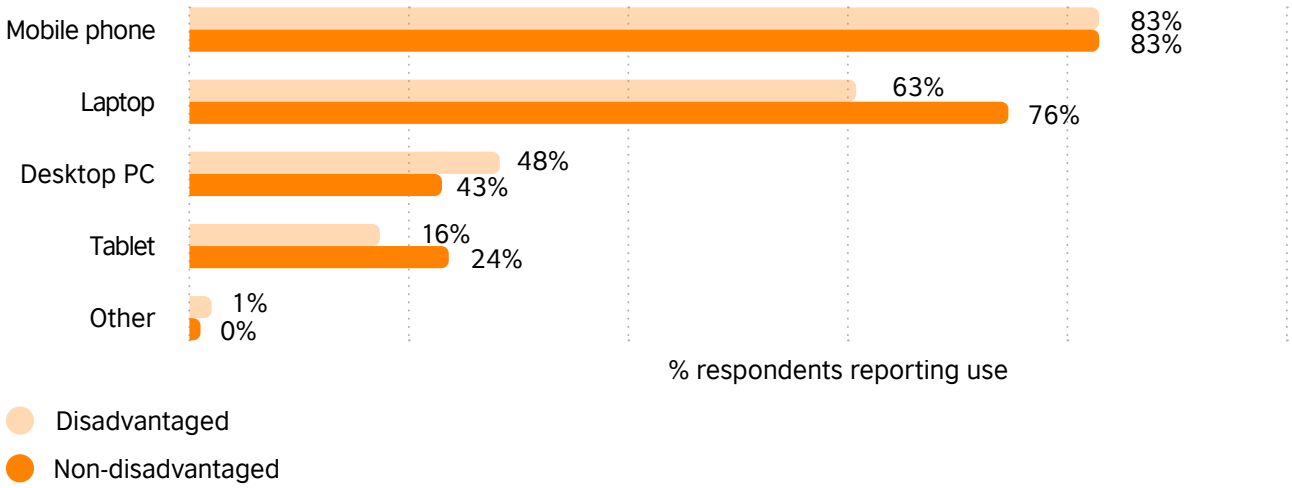
Figure 28. Importance of factors influencing participation in online professional development by disadvantage level



5.2.6 Online activity

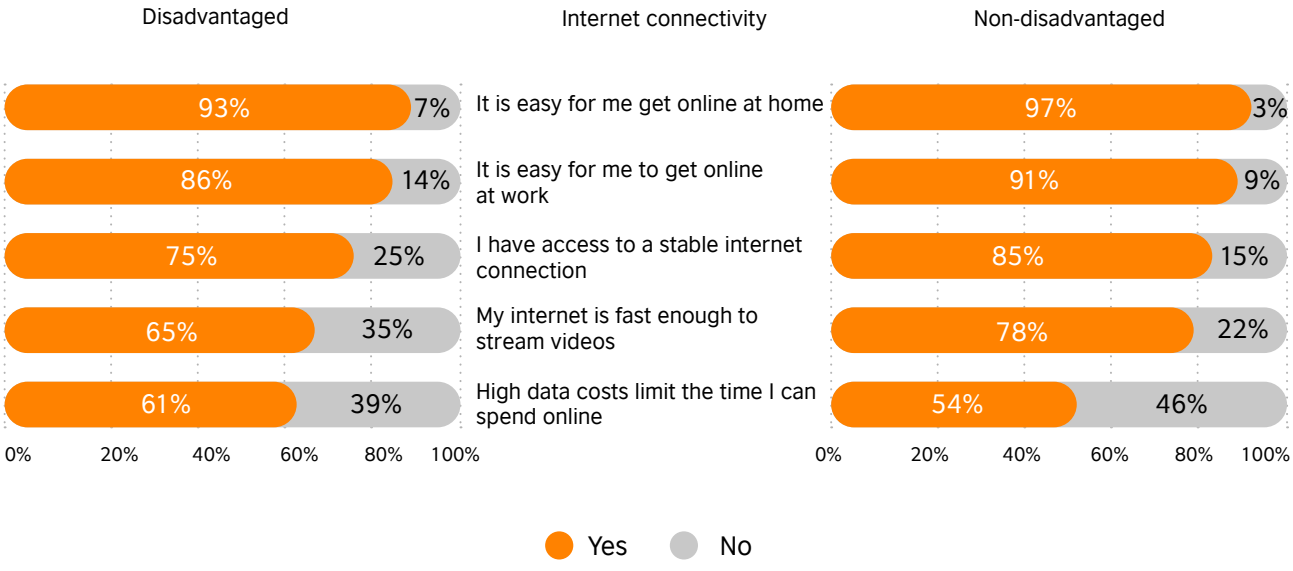
One area where noticeable differences might reasonably be expected is online activity. However, with regard to online platforms/tools that respondents used, the most popular ones were the same (We Chat, QQ and Ding Ding), although Bilibili, Xiao Hong Shu, Weibo and Zhihu were all less popular among disadvantaged respondents, and both QQ (5 per cent difference) and Ding Ding (9 per cent difference), more popular. Concerning devices used, mobile phones were equally popular among disadvantaged and advantaged respondents, although disadvantaged respondents were less likely to report use of laptops or tablets and more likely to report use of desktop PCs – another potential indicator of expendable income (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Devices used by disadvantage level



Differences in internet connectivity were also fairly minimal, although difficulties were greater for disadvantaged respondents, as would be expected. The greatest differences seemed to relate to connection stability, speed, and unsurprisingly, cost: 61 per cent of disadvantaged respondents found this a prohibitive factor in their online activity (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Internet connectivity by disadvantage level

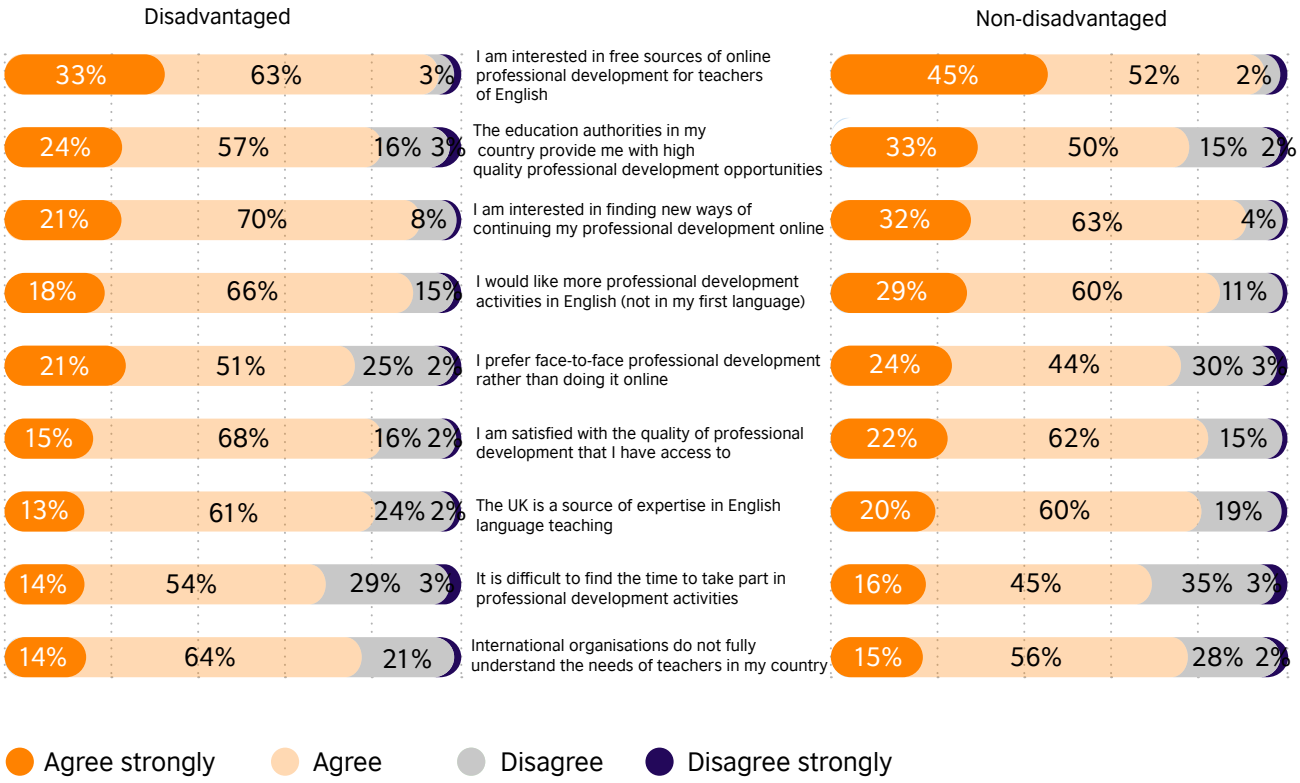


5.2.7 Attitudes to professional development

Finally, responses to the opinion items at the end of the questionnaire were fairly similar to those of non-disadvantaged respondents, although once again, they were less likely to indicate strong agreement with any of the options offered (Figure 31). The largest differences were disadvantaged respondents indicating less time for professional development activities and slightly greater preference for face-to-face development.

These differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged respondents are largely consistent with what might be expected. Disadvantaged respondents were more likely to indicate less disposable income, less time, fewer opportunities and possibly less motivation for professional development, as well as indicating greater likelihood of internet connection challenges, and a need for a focus on more basic professional development topics (possibly influenced by the larger number of primary teachers in the sub-sample). However, perhaps the most important finding of this comparative analysis is that, despite large differences in income levels across China, particularly between rural and urban areas (Qian & Smyth, 2008), we find relatively small differences in the professional development needs, interests and experiences of teachers working in the most disadvantaged circumstances, or at least among those available within the respondent cohort.

Figure 31. Attitudes to professional development: More and less-disadvantaged respondents



5.3 Interview findings: teachers

As explained earlier, as a supplement to the main survey data and to build a more detailed understanding of the online professional development activities, needs and preferences of Chinese teachers in basic education, seventy-five of the survey respondents were interviewed via phone or video call by the local research team.

5.3.1 Professional development needs

All interviewees were first asked about their general professional development needs to supplement insights gained from the survey item on this topic (see 5.1.5). An important initial observation is that comparatively few of the interviewees in their responses to this question prioritised the most frequently selected professional development topic from the survey itself, 'Teaching 21st century skills and abilities' – only four references to 'core competencies' and single references to critical thinking and Bloom's Taxonomy could be linked to these; however, evidence for most other topics prioritised in survey responses was clear in the interview data.

◆ Motivation, differentiation and planning

One of the most commonly mentioned professional development needs related to learner motivation (n = 13; including 'interest' and 'engagement' in English, and student 'confidence'), sometimes linked to the declining status of English in schools. As one teacher put it: "If the activities aren't interesting the students go to sleep" (senior high, urban; Beijing). Also common was mention of differing abilities among groups (n = 9), including reference to lower achieving learners, mixed abilities and a need for support on how to provide effective differentiated instruction, particularly from teachers in rural areas. A number of teachers also mentioned lesson and curriculum planning/design (课程 or 课堂设计) (n = 9).

◆ Demonstration lessons

Eleven teachers made reference to demonstration lessons, some requesting more of these, but others critiquing the somewhat unrealistic, often rehearsed, 'model' lessons by 'expert' teachers that they observed. Of those that critiqued these, some mentioned the fact that they weren't really reflective of their own contexts, learners and challenges; this was particularly evident among teachers working in more disadvantaged (rural, lower-income) contexts. Thus, many of those who made specific requests in this area indicated a need for more realistic/real lessons or direct observational support in their own classrooms:

> *What I really want is coaching from an expert who can help show me how to better teach children from the countryside. (primary, rural; Hubei)*

> *I want to observe real teachers teaching real students. (junior high, urban; Hubei)*

◆ New ideas and methods

A large number of interviewees (n = 16) expressed an interest in new ideas and 'theories' for teaching, particularly concerning methodology, but also how to teach 'core competencies' (核心素养 ; see Wang & Luo, 2019) as well as activities and techniques that they could use in their class. While some references to 'new directions' and 'international cutting-edge methods' were rather vague, others requested ideas to help keep their learners engaged in lesson activities. Several specifically requested some kind of injection of ideas from beyond their contexts, including other parts of China and insights into the practices (including use of English) of 'foreign teachers'.

◆ Textbooks and teaching resource materials

Numerous interviewees discussed challenges

they faced with regard to their textbooks (n = 14). For several, these challenges related to a need to adapt or supplement them with appropriate alternative material, also often mentioning that such material was not easily available online. There was indication among responses from several provinces that new textbooks had been introduced recently, and while several who had received training on how to use these felt that this had helped, others were struggling to prepare lessons with these and meet ambitious curriculum demands.

EdTech

Nine interviewees mentioned the fact that they would value more professional development support for aspects of educational technology, including the use of hardware (e.g. projectors) and design tools (e.g. PowerPoint), but also the potential for online and hybrid learning. For example, one teacher wanted to know more about using online tools to conduct formative assessment of learners.

Discussion of the four skills

Concerning discussion of the four skills, speaking (n = 11), reading (n = 6) and listening (n = 4) were most frequently mentioned. Many teachers mentioned a lack of awareness of how to 'teach' speaking skills, with some specifically referencing and presuming that a knowledge of phonetics/phonology, including 'authentic pronunciation', was useful here. This was often linked to certain classroom challenges, particularly the low motivation of learners to speak, challenges with using English in the classroom, and the current declining status of English relative to other subjects:

> *Parents are not serious about getting their kids to learn English, because they think China is becoming a stronger country so the world should start learning Chinese instead of us learning English. We think it's an international language, but parents think differently about this. (primary, urban; Hubei)*

However, other teachers prioritised reading skills, some even commenting on a recent, gradual shift in focus away from oracy (see Wang & Luo, 2019). Several mentioned a need to make textbook content interesting, but others linked this to high school exams and recent curriculum changes that have made reading more challenging for learners, particularly in high schools.

Awareness of own English proficiency needs

The most commonly perceived personal need related to teachers' own English proficiency (n = 22), particularly speaking skills and pronunciation. A number of the respondents who indicated this did not teach solely English – it was more common among primary school teachers. It was notable that a number of these interviewees, including one who had done an MA TESOL in the UK, felt that their speaking skills had got worse over the years, and expressed a desire to improve this (evidence, perhaps, that these interviewees were not teaching primarily in English):

> *When I was a student, my English was quite good. But since becoming a teacher I've found my English getting worse. I've forgotten a lot. (primary, rural; Hubei)*

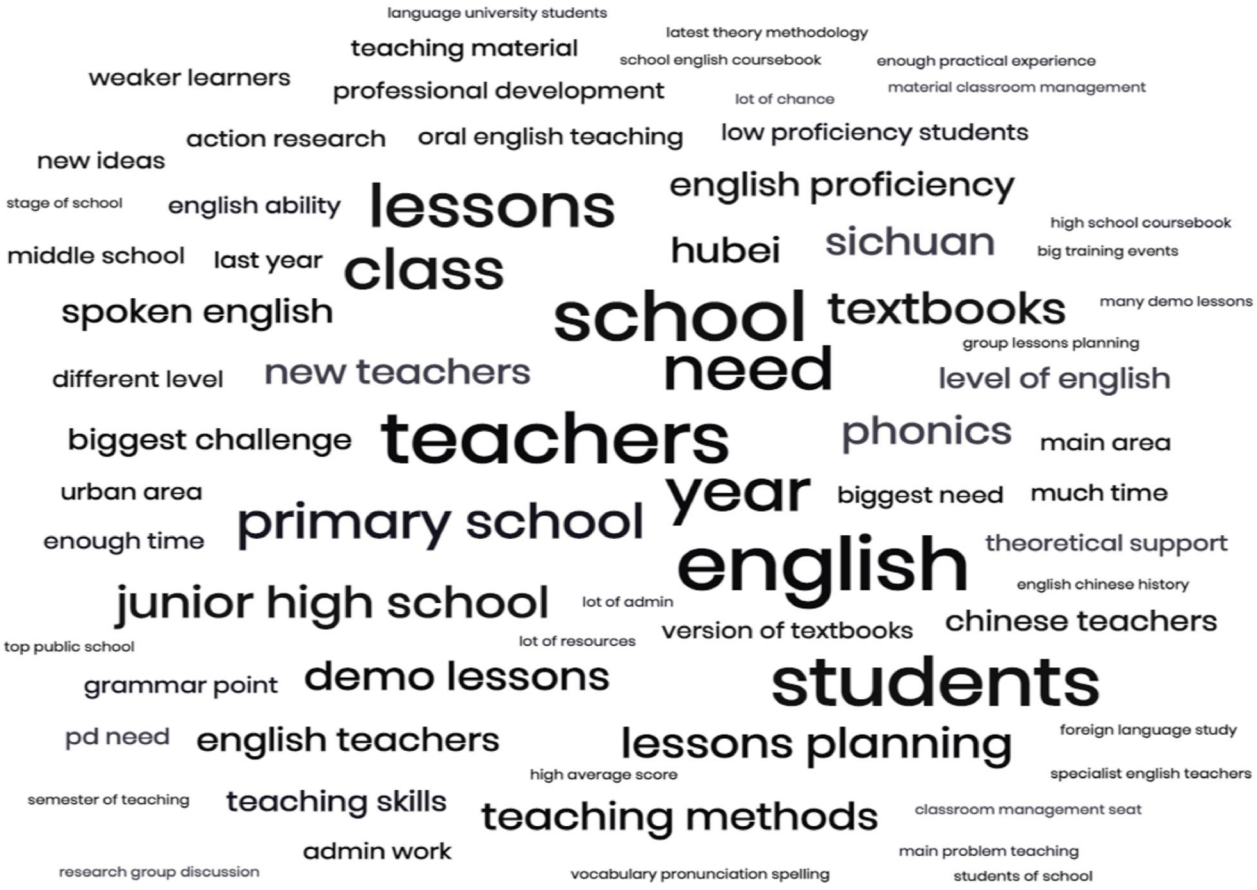
Bottom-up teacher development

Four teachers made reference to bottom-up approaches to teacher development, including teacher research groups and action research, with somewhat mixed evaluations, including two indications that these weren't very productive:

> *I really want to discuss my ideas with other teachers. We have meetings in our school with all the teachers together, but we never talk about teaching! (senior high, urban; Yunnan)*

Only four of the 75 interviewees felt that they did not have any pressing professional development needs.

While Word Clouds cannot convey respondent narratives and neglect themes that are conveyed through a number of synonyms, the following Word Cloud, sensitive to collocations, provides a pictorial impression of many of the key topics interviewees discussed:



5.3.2 Feelings about online professional development

From this point onwards, all interviews focused on online professional development. Interviewees were first asked an open question to elicit how they felt about doing professional development online and responses varied. The largest group (43 per cent) indicated a positive opinion towards online professional development, although there was rarely strong enthusiasm for it. Many of these teachers emphasised its convenience, while smaller numbers stressed its flexibility and the fact that it was often free:

> *I think it's fine. You can share more online. You can learn more online, lower costs, less time (no travel) and you can meet great teachers you wouldn't meet otherwise. (senior high, urban; Anhui)*

> *I think this has advantages, you can study and work at the same time. (junior high, rural; Sichuan)*

Twenty percent of interviewees indicated either that they preferred face-to-face or expressed a generally negative opinion of online professional development. The most common reason for preferring face-to-face professional development among this group was the opportunity it provided for interaction with colleagues and trainers/experts; one teacher also observed that training was likely to be contextualised to local conditions when delivered face-to-face. Smaller numbers cited the challenge of self-discipline relating to online professional development, particularly in the face of distractions:

> *I prefer face-to-face. It's very obvious. On the internet, there are many interesting things to look at. It's easy to get distracted. There's an atmosphere face-to-face, when you're sitting together with colleagues, that atmosphere is irreplaceable. Online I can't share with the trainer in a detailed way. There's just less interaction online. (senior high, urban; Sichuan)*

Sixteen interviewees (21 per cent) offered more detailed comments on the relative advantages of face-to-face and online professional development. Several of these indicated that while online professional development may be convenient, there is also the challenge of being distracted by other things at home, or lacking self-discipline or free time. Several mentioned simply that it had been necessitated by the pandemic, and two felt that webinars particularly needed to be watched live, otherwise they never got round to viewing them. Two interviewees indicated that it depends, either on the individual or the activity type.

Nine interviewees (12 per cent) indicated no clear preference for either online or face-to-face professional development, and only three recognised that the combination of both might be the most useful:

> *I think [online professional development] has to exist, but isn't the only way. It's good to have both online and offline. Discussion and research is more convenient offline. Sometimes speaking online is more convenient. Online professional development can't replace offline professional development. It has to exist as an extra. (senior high, rural; Zhejiang)*

5.3.3 Authorities' attitudes to online professional development

The final item addressed to all four groups of interviewees investigated their impressions of the attitudes of education authorities towards the online professional development of teachers. The majority (64 per cent) felt that their local or school authorities were supportive of online professional development. Several noticed that they had become increasingly so during the COVID pandemic, mainly due to necessity, and four respondents indicated that they also tried to balance this with face-to-face professional development. Thirteen respondents provided concrete recent examples, including online videos of lessons or lectures and specific websites for online professional development[4]. Two detailed examples offer a flavour of some of the activities involved:

> *Because of COVID and we've got too many teachers to fit into one room, one time we watched a class together online – this was broadcast live. Afterwards we talked about it together in groups, then heard the opinions of some experienced teachers. The most useful parts were watching the class and listening to the experienced teachers. They noticed some things that we didn't notice. (junior high, urban; Hubei)*

> *I think they support it, because they put on events. They get us to do competitions to make us reflect, think and create an environment of professional development. However, these don't happen very frequently. The online competition is at the national level. We had to prepare lessons, upload these to an online platform, then get feedback from others. This used to be offline, but now it's online. (senior high, rural; Zhejiang)*

A relatively small number (9), mainly from those respondents who themselves indicated low engagement in online professional development, felt that the authorities were doing little or no online professional development. A small number indicated concern with the efficacy of online professional development offered by the authorities, two specifically mentioning that teachers tend to just "put the video on" to prove they've watched it, then do something else:

> *I feel that the time of the training sessions are too long and only pay attention to courses that I'm interested in, if not I just leave the videos on. (primary, rural; Zhejiang)*

[4] e.g., http://www.bcvet.cn

5.3.4 Recent online professional development activities and preferences

Of those teachers who had indicated in their survey responses that they had participated in online professional development of some type, a sample were interviewed (n = 57) to elicit further details. The most striking finding that emerges from this data is that the majority of online professional development seems to have involved only two activity types. The first of these were 'lectures' (讲座), also translatable as 'webinars'; mentioned by 27), usually delivered live by 'experts' or 'professors' to large numbers of teachers, and sometimes involving a degree of interactivity (e.g. through subsequent smaller discussion groups, chat modalities). The second involved remote lesson observation, nearly always 'open door' observations (公开课 ; mentioned by 18) in which either an expert teacher provided a model lesson (sometimes rehearsed, making it less realistic), or (less often) a lesson that is subsequently analysed by an expert; several respondents indicated that these professional development sessions were sometimes collaborative, with a small group discussion after the lesson. This contrasts somewhat with the impression offered by Figure 13 from the survey data, where the two most frequently selected responses were 'Online courses, seminars or workshops' and 'Watching online videos about teaching'. In reality, it seems, the former are more likely to have been more one-way lectures/webinars than 'courses' or 'seminars', and the latter to have been videos of lessons (although the latter was also offered, as 'Peer observation through video', ranking fifth). Much less frequently mentioned were research group activities, online discussion groups, or opportunities for teachers to record, share and discuss their own lessons (each mentioned by three or four teachers only).

The most commonly mentioned professional development provider by far was either the local education authority or a related government body (n = 22); smaller numbers of respondents indicated universities, national publishers (particularly the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press; FLTRP[5]), international publishers, or self-initiated attempts to find materials or content online. Five respondents mentioned specific independent companies that provided training for the educational authorities (e.g. Aopeng Edk, Elite Teachers International Education). Consistent with survey data, the vast majority indicated that the professional development in question had been free for them (n = 21) rather than paid for (n = 4), with local authorities typically funding activities. A number of hosting/conferencing platforms for professional development were mentioned frequently, including Ding Ding and Tencent Meeting; bespoke platforms of training organisations were also mentioned by several.

The most frequently mentioned topics for online professional development were aspects of methodology (7) or skills and systems foci (7). Lesson planning/preparation was also common (6), as were lectures that focused on using either a current or new textbook (often delivered by FLTRP; 6). Both subject-specific (i.e., English) and non-subject-specific topics seem to be fairly common. Less common topics mentioned included core competencies, using picture books, training in EdTech, designing homework and motivating learners.

Evaluations of online professional development varied quite widely. While the most commonly voiced evaluation was that an activity was 'useful' or 'very useful' (n = 14), many felt that it depended on the activity type and content. There were also critical voices, with six respondents indicating that they were only sometimes interesting or useful, and four that they generally were not useful. Respondents were more likely to

[5]https://www.fltrp.com/en/

evaluate them as useful if they were specifically targeted at challenges, content and activities that the teachers dealt with on a daily basis, illustrated in the following two contrastive quotes:

> *The first winter holiday … they held live webinars on how to design homework. I learned their way of designing homework for this winter holiday and it was effective. (primary, rural; Zhejiang)*

> *I didn't find it very useful as I don't teach textbooks by Oxford University Press, so I still don't know how to teach textbooks by FLTRP. (primary, rural; Hubei)*

Several of those who were more critical mentioned the issue of idealised or overly theoretical content that did not really relate to real classrooms or their contexts. Five interviewees specifically mentioned that subject-specific activities were more useful than non-subject-specific ones.

Finally, and unsurprisingly, a large number (n = 17) indicated that the online professional development interventions that they had experienced were either forced online due to COVID pandemic restrictions, or the choice to provide them online had been influenced by this.

5.3.5 Preferred forms of online professional development

Interviewees were asked about their preferences for online professional development. Unsurprisingly, the same two activity types dominated this discussion. Observing videos of lessons was popular (11 mentions), including observation before group discussion, lessons taught by 'foreigners', and videos self-accessed according to need, although the resourcefulness of the following teacher was generally rare among interviewees:

> *I prefer videos on YouTube to watch what I want. I look for classes, for example, I'll search for the topic I'm going to teach, like, the first class of the year or a question I have, like how to write a teaching plan. (junior high, urban; Beijing)*

One teacher was happy to pay to observe competition-winning lessons on Taobao, where she was also able to download the materials to use for her own lessons.

Also popular were online webinars/lectures. Many interviewees specifically mentioned that they wanted them to be live and interactive, so that they could ask questions, prepare in advance or respond to 'expert' suggestions in some way:

> *I think webinars are much better. But we need to prepare for the webinar, do some pre-tasks. In the webinar it should be more interactive. They need to do something (active). The problem with webinars is the participants are usually passive. (senior high, urban; Anhui)*

Despite many mentioning that they enjoyed such live events, eight interviewees also indicated that having access to the webinars afterwards was useful for follow-up viewing, and that downloadable materials were also useful. Several indicated that they were often busy when live events took place.

The only other responses that were fairly common were requests for useful apps (n = 6), relevant WeChat posts (n = 5) and websites (n = 4). Details on these three were sparse, although several mentioned that particularly websites need to be well designed and easily navigable. Once more, three themes were detectable in more evaluative comments (apart from the need for interactive webinars): the professional development should be relevant, convenient and practical.

5.3.6 Post-pandemic interest in online professional development

Finally, those 57 interviewees who had engaged in online professional development were asked if they were still interested in doing online professional development post-COVID, and if so, what types. The majority (n = 37) indicated clearly that they were. Only a minority (n = 4) felt that face-to-face professional development is better, and eight indicated that both are potentially important or useful, being able to identify pros and cons, depending on the situation or topic:

> *Online is more convenient. You can study and learn anywhere. If you have to sit and pay attention and learn, that's okay too. But offline, you have to pay attention. But online you might get distracted more easily. The value really depends on the specifics. (senior high, rural; Zhejiang)*

A number of respondents indicated that, to maintain their interest, online professional development had to be practical or collaborative, providing opportunities to interact with others. But most importantly, interviewees stressed that it was the content that was most important, and this had to be useful; a wide range of topics was mentioned in passing, similar to those previously discussed (e.g. methodology, planning, core competencies, developing oral English, written skills), however, one addition was that of material from high school teachers to help them prepare learners for assessment, particularly for Gaokao exams.

Once more, convenience was mentioned as the biggest advantage of online professional development, with smaller numbers also mentioning that it was time-saving and flexible. Only one respondent mentioned connection issues as a prohibitive factor to her engaging in online professional development.

5.3.7 Low engagement in online professional development

From the few teachers who indicated in their survey responses that they had experienced no online professional development in the previous 12 months (n = 231; 3.4 per cent), 18 were interviewed to understand both the reasons for this lack of engagement and what factors would increase their engagement further[6]. During the interviews, six respondents indicated that they actually had participated in some kind of online professional development, often self-initiated after (reporting that) their authorities had provided no professional development for them. Some of these interviewees did not perceive that their own attempts to access resources that help them to do their job more effectively constituted professional development, as the Open Language app anecdote (below) illustrates.

◆ Reasons for not engaging in online professional development

Five of the 18 respondents indicated that there was no, or almost no, professional development of any type in their school. Most of these respondents said simply that the management do not organise it, with several mentioning apathy among school leaders, and one that the authorities preferred face-to-face professional development. Three respondents specifically indicated that professional development was rare in rural areas:

> *Teacher development is rare in the countryside. I've been teaching here for three years. I've only been to training twice. Once I observed teachers teaching in another school. Nothing else. (primary, rural; Hubei)*

[6]Note that 13 of these 18 were primary teachers, partly reflecting the higher proportion of primary teachers overall in this group. While stratified sample sizes were small, teachers in rural areas (who were more likely to be primary) in mid- and low-income provinces were much more likely to report no online professional development (5.9%) compared to other, less disadvantaged groups (2.6%).

Several respondents indicated that while professional development opportunities do exist, these are fewer for English language teaching, which has become less important recently, with two specifically mentioning 'double reduction policy' (双减) as an influence in this change[7]. For those respondents who teach multiple subjects, it seems that they have a greater priority for professional development in subjects other than English.

Time was the most frequently mentioned basis for a lack of engagement in professional development, with 11 of the respondents mentioning it in different ways. Seven indicated that their current workload was prohibitive, and four mentioned that responsibilities or interests beyond school left little time for self-initiated professional development. Only two respondents indicated that cost was a prohibitive factor, and one of these indicated that she had even personally paid for an app, 'Open Language' (开言英语), out of her own pocket – anecdotal evidence that if resources are directly relevant to teachers' personal challenges, even those least interested in professional development will invest in tools that help them to do their job more easily. Just two respondents indicated that online professional development is not convenient for them, both perceiving that they needed to attend live online webinars, which usually took place during the day. This tendency to view online professional development primarily as live events was evident among a number of interviewees.

◆ Factors that would increase engagement with online professional development

When asked what factors would increase their engagement with online professional development, a majority of respondents indicated that they would be more enthusiastic to participate if they felt it were more useful for them, either mentioning this directly (six respondents) or through reference to their interests and/or needs (eight respondents); practical themes and student background were often mentioned in relation to these needs:

> *If it's useful for my students, I'd love to join. If the school tells us to go, all the teachers will attend. I think it also depends on the trainer and the topic and the platform. Practical topics, like how to make classes more interesting, how to make classes more effective are best. (junior high, urban; Hubei)*

The above respondent's reference to school authorities was also quite common, with several mentioning that they would participate if they received more encouragement to do so, and (for three respondents) if it were made obligatory.

Time was also mentioned, although not as frequently as in responses to the previous question; four indicated that they would participate in online professional development if they had more time, and three if the times offered were more convenient for them. Three mentioned that lower costs would encourage them to participate.

[7]Double reduction is a recent educational policy change. See Li et al. (2021) and Xue & Li (2022); also here.

5.4 Interview findings: professional development facilitators

Online interviews were also conducted with three Chinese professional development facilitators (two female and one male) from two provinces (Hubei and Sichuan). Their roles and official titles varied (such as 'teacher researcher' or 'teacher workshop leader'), but in all cases they co-ordinated and facilitated activities to support the professional development of teachers of English (one each at primary, junior middle school and junior high school level). The numbers of teachers they were responsible for also varied; in the smallest group, which had a core membership of eight teachers, the facilitator noted that these were mostly young teachers

> *because the younger teachers are more interested in professional development ... and because they are more interested in the new ideas and they're open to the others, and they want to share the ideas of their own, with the others.*

The interviewees received the interview questions in advance and were able to discuss these with teachers in their groups. During the interview they often reported their teachers' views in addition to explaining their own. Key themes covered in the interviews are now summarised in turn.

5.4.1 Professional development interests

One facilitator felt that:

> *the majority of primary teachers have a strong need for professional development, they are not satisfied with the current situation of their own professional development. And they are eager to change the current situation. And they want very much to develop on themselves.*

Each respondent provided a clear explanation of their teachers' professional needs. The first facilitator stated that:

> *most of the members in my workshop want to improve their language ability first. So how to improve language proficiency is what they want to do first. That's the first one. And second, the teachers in my context are interested in everything about teaching, and that means they want to know how to plan lessons, how to motivate the learners, how to assess the learners, or something like that. Especially they want to know some practical classroom activities which can help them to help the students learn better..*

The second facilitator identified six areas for professional development for middle school teachers:

> *The first one is how to prepare students for English examinations. And then how do you involve critical thinking in English language teaching. A lot of teachers are concerned about this task. Next is how to improve students' proficiency of language ability, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. And then how to motivate students. What kind of activity and teaching content can attract and motivate their students. And the fifth one is how to do teaching research work. The teachers want to involve this kind of work, but they maybe don't know how to start. And the last one, how to find English resources online, they want to know where to find and how to use these kinds of resources.*

'Teaching research' is the activity teachers in China are encouraged to do to seek solutions to problems they face in the classroom. It involves reading journals as well as conducting small-scale classroom inquiry (such as action research).

With reference to primary school teachers, the third facilitator also mentioned teaching research as well as other professional needs:

> *I think there are three kinds of things I'd like to stress and the first one is for English teachers' own English ability. The speaking ability is the number one need. And we have to do some teaching methodology and the method of doing research.*

Primary school teachers were in particular need of support to improve their English:

> *English teachers' speaking ability declines most quickly after their graduation, because they almost have no chances to practise spoken English at appropriate level. Yeah, if I teach primary English class, I only have the chance to practise primary English. You know ... and the more years, the poorer his speaking ability.*

Teachers of English in China have many opportunities to see demonstration lessons by 'excellent' teachers, but it was felt that the principles behind such lessons was often not addressed during professional development:

> *we have different kinds of demonstration classes every year and many English teachers attend these events. And they observe the demo lessons and they can copy lots of teaching techniques from these demo lessons, but they don't know why the lessons can be designed like this. So most primary school teachers in Hubei need the ability to integrate all kinds of teaching methods and to be reflective, to teach by principles, and eventually to form the teaching style with their own characteristics.*

5.4.2 Face–to–face vs online professional development

All three respondents felt that educational authorities were generally positive about online professional development and were providing teachers with various kinds of online courses. For example, one explained that "Chinese educational authority strongly support and encourage online professional, development activities' and said there were around 120 online courses for teachers (of all subjects) to choose from. These included 'lectures, and there are some videos. So some excellent teachers they present class demonstration'. However, face–to–face professional development remained the preferred approach due to concerns from the education authorities that 'the front line teachers have lots and lots of ways to just sit in front of the screen pretending to learn'.

According to the facilitators, the teachers they worked with had similarly mixed feelings about online professional development. One facilitator reported that 'nearly 60 per cent of teachers have a positive attitude towards online meetings' and gave three reasons for this: 'it's convenient without time and place requirements … it can maximize the personalized needs of teachers. And it costs less'. At the same time, the other 40 per cent preferred face–to–face professional development because 'they can get involved and have more interaction with each other so that they can express their ideas'. Another facilitator also felt that face–to–face training allowed teachers to concentrate more:

> *If they work in the same class, we have peer pressure, they have to listen to the teacher carefully … The teachers told me that when they take part in the offline training they have to sit in place just like students, to listen carefully, to take notes … that environment helps them to concentrate on the training itself. … some teachers told me that they would like to do the training face to face because in that environment they are more likely to concentrate on the training itself. And sometimes they can discuss with the colleagues or some other people, and sometimes they take notes and then they can learn more from this kind of training.*

In addition to online courses, finding teaching resources (especially through mobile phones) was one of the areas of online professional development teachers were most interested in:

> *They're more likely to be interested in resources, which related to their teaching, you know, they can download different kinds of resources from the internet … each one has a mobile phone at the moment. And it's easier for us to download the resources from the mobile phone than from the computer … they use their computer to download the download report resources. But you know that the mobile phone is more convenient.*

Platforms such as WeChat were also widely used as a source of online resources for teachers along with Chinese search engines such as Baidu. Online meetings were also commonly held using the TenCent platform.

5.4.3 Local vs international online resources

The facilitators did not feel that the teachers they worked with had strong preferences about whether online resources should be local or international in origin and advantages of both were noted:

> *Some teachers think it doesn't affect their interests, they think any resources available are valuable … Most teachers will enjoy resources presented by English [sic] because they think they are teaching English. When they are more exposed in the target language they themselves will improve faster in both their language proficiency and their professional development.*

According to another facilitator:

> *They think it has nothing to do with local organisations or international organisations but it has something to do with the resource itself. That means if the online resources are free, and suitable for their teaching, the teachers would be glad to use them, they will be glad to download them and use them in the teaching. But I also find the teachers who are not familiar with the newest methodologies prefer resources that are provided locally because these resources can be adapted by them properly and easily.*

This point about the added relevance of local materials was also made by another facilitator:

> *Generally speaking, I personally think that the Chinese English teachers we prefer online resources provided by local authorities … a large number of new concepts emerged in the literature or in China, for example, we are now having such concepts as core competences and we have incorporation of traditional Chinese culture into English classroom teaching. And we have concepts like deep learning … some of these, I think, are directly borrowed from the West, but undoubtedly they have been localized …when browsing the online resources provided by international organizations, we are sure to encounter these concepts, but the question is, are we talking exactly about the same thing? The same idea? Yeah, this is quite a problem. So, some philosophies, some methods, some techniques valued by these international organizations may not be so suitable in the Chinese context.*

5.4.4 Materials in English or Chinese

As noted above, online resources in English were sometimes preferred because they increase teachers' exposure to the language and contribute to developments in their English proficiency. No arguments were made for materials solely in Chinese but the potential of a bilingual approach was raised:

> *For the language, I think that it does matter. It definitely matters. And I think that the teachers here prefer to choose the kinds of bilingual one. What I mean is, the website has a kind of English and Chinese.*

Content in Chinese also has the advantage of appearing in local search engines such as Baidu.

5.5 China: conclusions and recommendations

This report presents the findings of a combined survey and interview study into aspects of the professional development of Chinese teachers in basic education, with a specific focus on online professional development. We collected data from 6469 teachers in the initial survey phase, although 73 per cent of respondents came from just two provinces (Sichuan and Hubei). Interviews were conducted with 75 teachers, purposively sampled from the survey respondents, to offer a range of perspectives across different income levels, degrees of rurality and school types to understand their professional development experiences and needs, and particularly their engagement with online professional development. Three Chinese professional development facilitators were also interviewed. A subset of the survey data was also analysed comparatively to offer insights into the extent to which more disadvantaged teachers (those working in rural areas in lower income provinces) differ in their responses when compared with less-disadvantaged respondents.

5.5.1 China: key findings

Overall, the report indicates that Chinese teachers working in basic education are accessing professional development opportunities, both face-to-face and online, and that internet connection challenges are not presenting serious difficulties with the latter for the vast majority of respondents, even in rural areas in low-income provinces, although high data costs limit the time many can spend online. These professional development opportunities seem to be varied and useful, and are invariably free to the teachers. While there is evidence in the survey responses of varied professional development opportunities, including participant-centred activities that are less top-down in their nature (e.g. teacher research groups, action research, peer observation) (see Figure 11), both survey and interview data revealed that online professional development currently seems to be dominated by top-down interventions and activities,[8] typically offered by education authorities, and sometimes in collaboration with universities and publishers of school textbooks. Interviewees indicated that it was dominated by two types of activity:

- Lectures and webinars delivered by 'experts' to large numbers of teachers live with comparatively little opportunity for interaction, either with the experts or each other. There is some evidence in the data that these webinars are often overly theoretical, with insufficient links to practice to be useful to teachers.
- Demonstration or model lessons, also often delivered by 'experts', with some opportunities for discussion or interaction afterwards. However, there was a feeling amongst many interviewees that these demonstration lessons were, at least in part, staged, and unreflective of the challenges in their contexts.

[8]A number of interviewees did not view their self-initiated efforts to find useful materials and ideas online as professional development activities; this may have influenced this finding somewhat.

On the whole, respondents were positive about online professional development (at times, more than face-to-face professional development) and recognised its advantages (e.g. convenience, flexibility, free resources), although interviewees also cautioned that distraction, self-motivation and false engagement (e.g. playing a video without actually watching it) may be emerging issues. Among interviewees there was some recognition that combining online and face-to-face (i.e. blended) professional development was optimal.

Probably the strongest trends in both survey and interview data were respondents' prioritisation of professional development activities that are practical, directly related to the challenges they face in their own classrooms, and offering new ideas, skills and methods. Concerning topics for professional development, survey responses were varied, topped by interests in learning more about 21st century skills, how to teach reading and speaking, and also how to motivate learners – this latter topic became the most important one for teachers working in more disadvantaged contexts. Interview respondents echoed most of these findings, although discussion of 21st century skills was much more limited and they also prioritised needs related to differentiation, lesson planning, use of textbooks and teaching resources, EdTech, and support for their own English proficiency (an issue that the professional development facilitators stressed). Interestingly, despite frequent discussion in academic literature of the negative washback of high stakes exams on classroom practices in China (e.g. Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011), there was little evidence of interest in professional development focusing on exam preparation among respondents and interviewees. There was also comparatively little interest in professional development focusing on teaching online (see Figure 10).

Differences between the survey responses of more disadvantaged respondents (those working in towns and villages in low-income provinces), when compared with less disadvantaged peers, were generally small. Aside from the difference in professional development topics mentioned above, disadvantaged respondents were more likely to indicate less disposable income, less time, fewer opportunities and possibly less motivation for professional development, as well as indicating greater likelihood of internet connection challenges, and a need for a focus on more basic professional development topics (possibly influenced by the larger number of primary teachers in the sub-sample). Overall, they consistently reported less engagement with professional development activities over the previous 12 months than their peers.

With regard to languages, survey data indicated support for activities taking place both in English and Chinese with, on balance, an expressed preference for the former[9]. Interviewees shed useful light onto how to balance the two, recommending Chinese for more complex theoretical aspects of professional development and English when it relates more to classroom practice.

Only 11 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they used international websites when looking for materials online, and while only a very small number of respondents had negative attitudes towards international organisations,[10] a large number nonetheless felt that such international organisations may not understand the needs of Chinese teachers.

[9]This expressed preference may be influenced by social-desirability bias.

[10]It should, of course, be borne in mind that those who have such negative attitudes are less likely to participate in this study.

5.5.2 China: recommendations

Considering the above findings, we make the following recommendations for meeting the PD needs of Chinese teachers of English in basic education.

1. Practical, realistic materials and activities: Chinese teachers of English working in basic education frequently express a clear preference for materials and activities that are practical in their orientation (rather than theoretical), and easy to find, download and use. These materials and activities need to recognise the current realities and challenges of teachers, where possible reflecting real classroom conditions and issues. Because challenges vary between more- and less-disadvantaged contexts, these materials may need to be differentiated by context type. Materials and professional development support should also consider the needs of primary teachers who are not subject specialists and often, as a result, have lower levels of English proficiency and less confidence in their own English.

2. Supporting understandings of theory: Despite the strong focus on the value of professional development that has practical utility, teachers also referred many times to various concepts that had been introduced to their curricula and to the need to keep up-to-date with current theoretical ideas in the field. 'Core competences' and 'deep learning' were two examples. Thus there is also scope for professional development support that focuses on such issues, helps teachers understand what they mean, and illustrates how they can be translated into classroom practice. Similarly, while a strong tradition of demonstration or model lessons exists in China, teachers may value professional development resources which allow them to go beyond mimicking such lessons and understanding the principles that underpin their design.

3. Support for current textbooks: There is repeated evidence in the data that many Chinese teachers of English in basic education need more easily accessible materials (e.g. reading texts for use in class, PowerPoint presentations) that support and supplement content in their current textbooks directly; these materials may need to be textbook-specific to be most effective, and their development is likely to be most impactful if conducted in collaboration with the textbook publishers (e.g. FLTRP, OUP), some of whom have provided such support directly to teachers in the past.

4. Diversifying online professional development activities: Because online professional development in China is still at a nascent stage, there is a danger that it may currently be too top-down and repetitive in its nature. Exploring and promoting ways to ensure that teacher research groups, dialogic peer-observation (rather than online observation of model lessons) and informal discussion opportunities (all of which seem to be happening in face-to-face professional development) can be conducted or supplemented online, which may increase the variety and usefulness of online professional development, particularly in the event of further pandemic restrictions. Even those top-down activities such as 'lectures' and observation of demonstration lessons can be made more interactive through the inclusion of

carefully-designed before and after activities that engage teachers in online collaborative discussion and reflection. There are also opportunities for more structured, self-accessed online courses that include a range of these activities and can be differentiated to participant needs.

5. Further research on recent policy changes: There is evidence from a variety of sources in the data that many teachers of English in China are experiencing novel challenges as a result of two recent policy changes ('double reduction' and the introduction of 'core competencies'[11]) that have implications for the status, role and aims of English language teaching. The impact of both of these should be investigated and assessed through further research, which itself would need to lead to specific recommendations to support Chinese teachers to meet these new demands effectively.

5.5.3 Limitations

The following two limitations to data collection and timing of the study should be noted:

Firstly, it should be noted that respondents to the survey were accessed via online modalities only, and opportunistically, using a range of modes, including British Council contacts and channels, and with only limited support from gatekeepers working within Chinese basic education. Teachers who make less use of the internet are likely to be underrepresented in the sample, as are those with lower levels of digital literacy, and these factors may correlate with other profile characteristics (e.g. age). Further, potential respondents were made aware that the survey was being conducted by the British Council and Trinity College London before deciding whether to participate. Some respondents may have declined for political and/or cultural reasons that are indicative of more negative attitudes towards such western organisations; their opinions will obviously be underrepresented in the sample. Further, because of the opportunistic sampling approach adopted, the sample should not be seen as representative of teachers in China as a whole. While interviewees were purposefully sampled to elicit experiences and opinions from a range of income levels, because of the overall limitations in the sample, the stories of opportunities and challenges that they tell are likely to only be reflective of experiences in a small number of provinces. There may be other experiences and alternative opinions from other parts of China that are not represented here.

Secondly, it should be noted that the survey was conducted towards the end of a period when the COVD-19 pandemic was exerting a clear influence on the personal, academic and professional lives of Chinese teachers and their learners, and the findings, particularly with regard to their professional development habits in the previous 12 months, are likely to reflect this.

[11]See Xue & Li (2022) and Li et al. (2021) for double reduction, and Wang & Luo (2019) for core competencies.

Chapter-6
Results Japan

6.1 Survey results

6.1.1 Response rate

A total of 518 respondents started the survey. Of these, 124 were disqualified for not being English teachers in government primary or high schools or for being assistant language teachers (ALTs). This left an eligible sample of 394 respondents. The number of teachers completing items, though, decreased progressively and individual figures are provided for each question below.

6.1.2 Respondent profile

Figure 32 shows that the sample of respondents from Japan was 58 per cent female and 40 per cent male, with 2 per cent not identifying a gender. Figure 33 shows that the full range of age brackets was represented[12], though almost 55 per cent were over 40. Of 391 respondents, 378 (96.7 per cent) reported having no disability.

Figure 32: Japan survey sample by gender (n = 391)

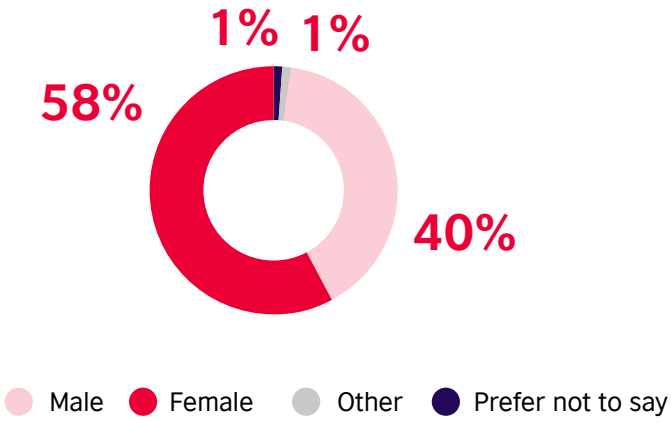
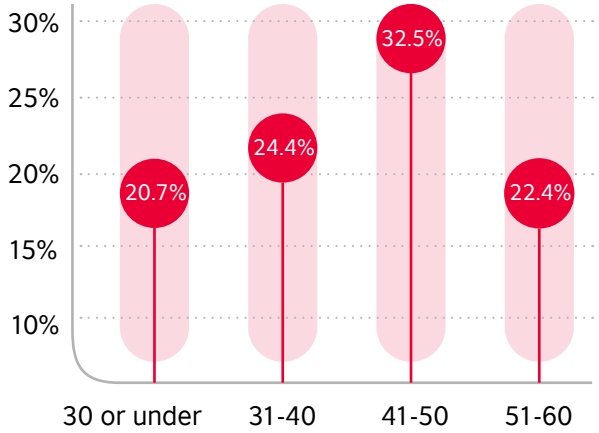


Figure 33: Japan survey sample by age (n = 397)



Over 96 per cent of respondents were full-time teachers. Their teaching experience (Figure 34) varied, though the largest group were the most experienced and accounted for almost 35 per cent of respondents.

Figure 35 shows the distribution of respondents according to the level they taught English at (just over half worked in senior high schools).

Figure 34: Japan survey sample by experience (n = 397)

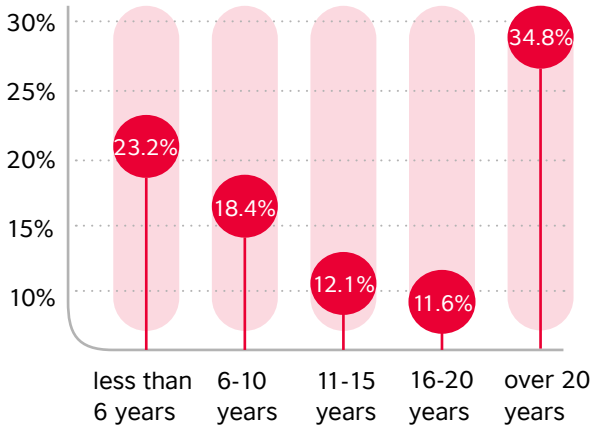
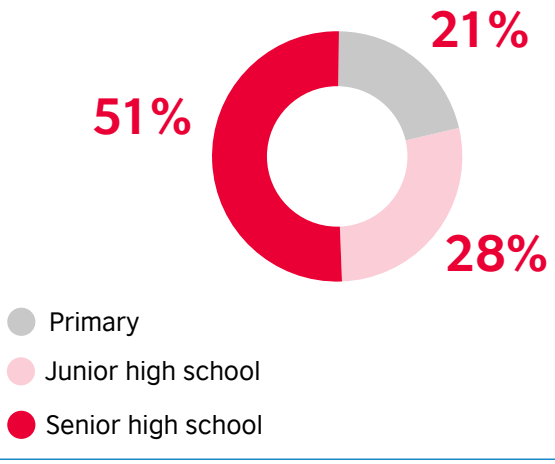


Figure 35: Japan survey sample by level of school (n = 397)



[12]Retirement age for government school teachers in Japan is 60.

Respondents were also asked about their highest qualifications and for the vast majority (78.8 per cent) this was a Bachelor's degree; 14.1 per cent said they held a Master's degree. The majority (81.6 per cent) also said they were specialist English teachers (i.e. they did not teach other subjects).

Geographically, respondents worked in nine regions, as shown in Figure 36, though, Kyushu (34.5 per cent), Kanto (18.4 per cent) and Tohoku (16.4 per cent) together accounted for almost 70 per cent of the total. School location was also biased towards cities (85.1 per cent); just under 13 per cent said their school was in a town and only 2 per cent in a village.

Figure 36: Japan survey sample by region (n = 397)

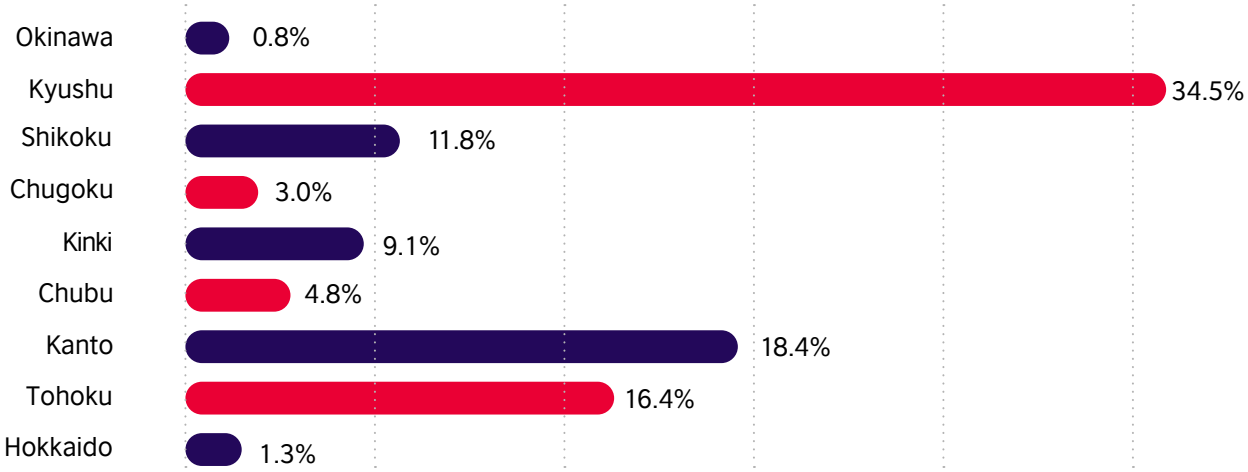
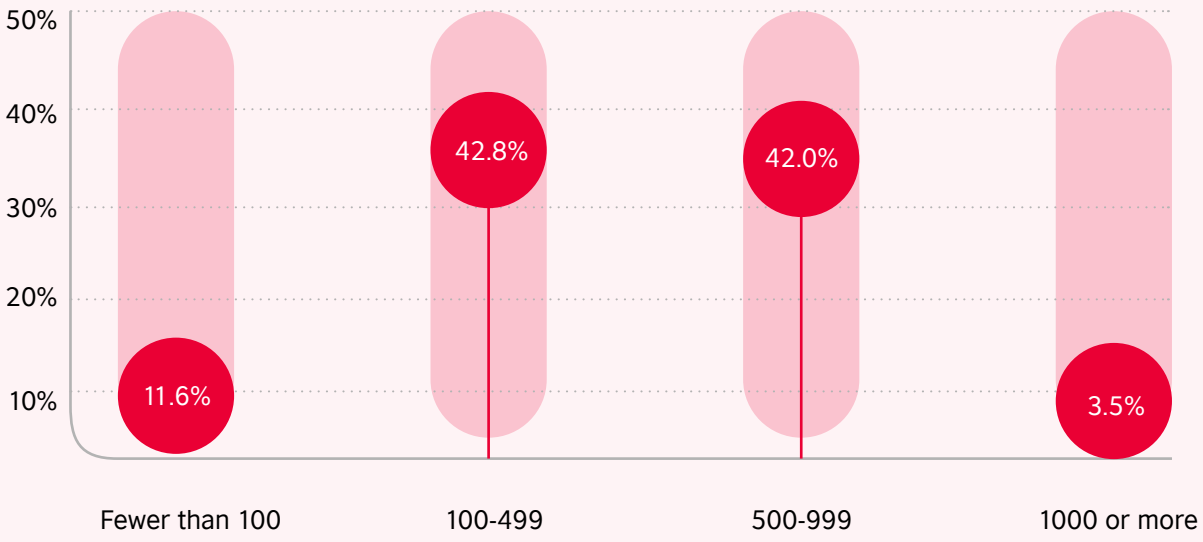


Figure 37 shows the distribution of respondents' school sizes (in terms of student numbers), which was mostly evenly split between the two middle categories.

Figure 37: Japan survey sample by school size (n = 395)



6.1.3 Providers of professional development

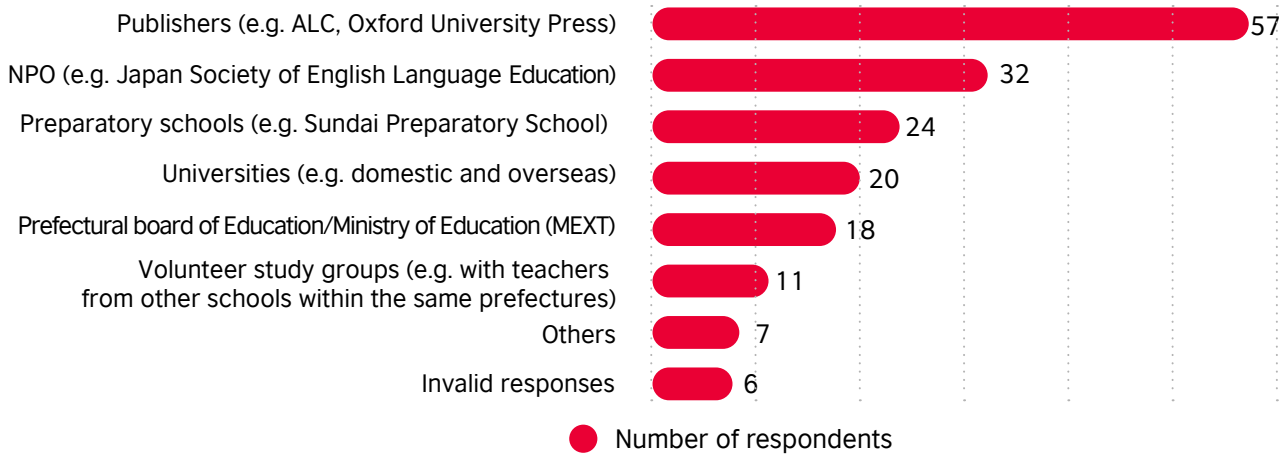
Respondents were asked about their familiarity with various providers of teacher professional development in Japan. Table 2 summarises their responses. The Board of Education is, unsurprisingly, the provider for whom levels of awareness and participation are highest (92.2 per cent). The British Council ranks second (38.2 per cent) and Eiken[13] third (28.8 per cent). Eiken also stands out, as almost 63 per cent said they knew about it but had not participated in their professional development activities (the equivalent figure for the British Council was 39 per cent). Finally, almost 63 per cent said they were not familiar with the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), followed by 55.3 per cent for the English Language Education Council (ELEC) and just under 23 per cent for the British Council.

Table 2: Awareness of providers of teacher professional development (n = 385)

	I know about them and have participated in PD they provide	I know about them but have not participated in PD they provide	I am not familiar with them
Prefecture Board of Education	**92.2**	**7.5**	**0.3**
Eiken Foundation of Japan	**28.8**	**62.6**	**8.6**
English Language Education Council (ELEC) Training Center	**8.6**	**36.1**	**55.3**
British Council	**38.2**	**29.0**	**22.9**
Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)	**10.4**	**26.8**	**62.9**

A total of 175 respondents said they had participated in professional development provided by organisations not listed in Table 2 and Figure 38 summarises their responses. These organisations (which in some cases were already covered in Table 2) can be grouped into the following six categories in order of how often they were mentioned: publishers, non-profit organisations, preparatory schools, universities (both domestic and overseas), prefectural board of education/Ministry of Education (MEXT), and study groups organised by volunteer teachers. 'Other' organisations such as foreign embassies (e.g. the US Embassy) and second language acquisition (SLA) research groups were also mentioned.

Figure 38: Other providers of CPD in Japan (n = 175)



[13]According to https://www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/en/association/, 'Eiken produces and administers English-proficiency tests with the backing of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and in cooperation with Japanese prefectural and local boards of education, public and private schools, and other leading testing bodies'.

6.1.4 Professional development needs

Respondents were asked to identify, from a list provided, up to five aspects of teaching English they were interested in learning more about. Table 3 summarises their choices, in descending order of frequency. The three most popular choices were motivating students, teaching speaking and teaching 21st century skills. How to find materials online was the lowest ranked item, chosen by only 5.9 per cent of respondents.

Table 3: Topics for teacher professional development (n = 376)

Topic	N	%
Motivating students	236	62.8
Teaching speaking	224	59.6
Teaching 21st century skills	166	44.1
English assessment	122	32.4
Teaching writing	114	30.3
Teaching listening	112	29.8
Using technology in the classroom	109	29.0
Lesson planning	106	28.2
Teaching reading	94	25.0
Designing/adapting teaching materials	93	24.7
Teaching English online	69	18.4
Teaching pronunciation	69	18.4
Teaching grammar	61	16.2
Teaching vocabulary	44	11.7
Preparing students for English examinations	42	11.2
How to find teaching materials online	22	5.9

6.1.5 Face-to-face professional development

Teachers were asked about their participation in face–to–face professional development in the previous 12 months.[14] Table 4 presents their responses. Just over 10 per cent reported doing no face–to–face professional development. Amongst the rest, peer observation, attending courses, seminars and workshops, observation visits to other schools, and reading about teaching were the four most common activities. In contrast, the bottom four were formal courses, attending conferences, classroom action research and teaching competitions.

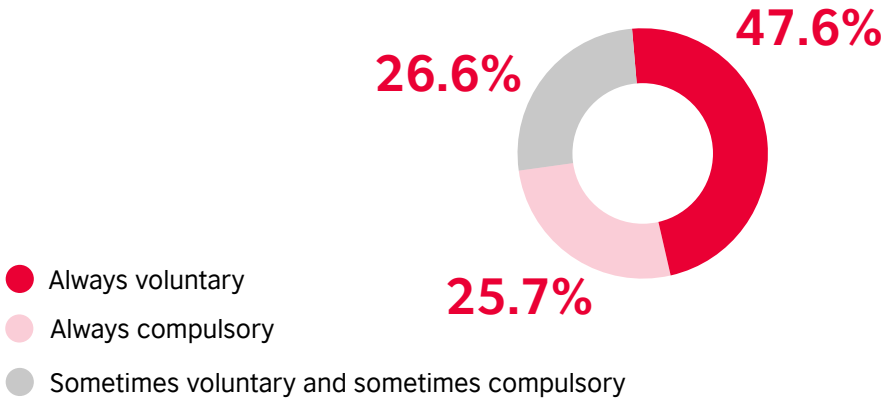
Table 4: Face–to–face professional development in Japan (n = 375)

Face–to–face professional development activity	N	%
Peer observation with colleagues in your school	225	60.0
Courses, seminars, workshops	215	57.3
Observation visits to other schools	140	37.3
Reading books and journals about teaching	140	37.3
Informal discussions about teaching with other teachers	118	31.5
Teacher professional development groups (including lesson study, planning groups)	64	17.1
Mentoring or other 1-to-1 peer-support	40	10.7
None	39	10.4
Attending lectures by guest speakers	30	8.0
Formal courses to obtain a teaching certificate	26	6.9
Conferences	23	6.1
Classroom action research	9	2.4
Teaching competitions	1	0.3

In terms of cost, over 75 per cent of teachers (n = 338) said the face–to–face professional development they did in the previous 12 months was free. Just over 14 per cent said they paid in full, while 18 per cent paid in part (teachers could choose more than one answer).

The extent to which face–to–face professional development was compulsory, according to the teachers, is shown in Figure 39. Almost half the respondents said it was always voluntary, while just over a quarter said it was always compulsory. According to the remainder, the degree of choice they were given varied.

Figure 39: Choice in face–to–face professional development in Japan (n = 338)



[14]COVID–19 will have impacted on levels of face–to–face professional development in 2020-2021.

Teachers were also asked to comment on who organised the face–to–face professional development they engaged in; Table 5 shows their responses. Local education authorities and teachers' schools were the main providers, with limited reference to international organisations.

Table 5: Providers of face–to–face professional development for English teachers in Japan (n = 332)

Provider	N	%
Official education authority	205	61.7
My school	172	51.8
Local private organisation	59	17.8
Local teacher association	53	16.0
Local university/college	29	8.7
International organization	9	2.7

Various 'other' providers of face–to–face professional development were also identified. These included various kinds of study groups (for example, 'High School Education Study Group'), and individual schools (for example, 'Sundai Preparatory School' or 'Yoyogi Preparatory School').

6.1.6 Online professional development

Table 6 summarises what teachers said about their participation in online professional development in the previous 12 months. Over 25 per cent said they had not participated in such development at all. For those who had, online courses, webinars and workshops were by far the most common choice, followed by reading online articles and peer observation via video. The least common choices were formal courses, educational podcasts and attending conferences.

Table 6: Online professional development in Japan (n = 375)

Face–to–face professional development activity	N	%
Courses, seminars or workshops	203	54.7
None	93	25.1
Reading online articles about teaching	82	22.1
Peer observation through video	74	19.9
Watching online videos about teaching	66	17.8
Finding teaching materials on local non-government websites for teachers in my country	63	17.0
Finding teaching materials on official government websites	59	15.9
Informal online professional groups (including through social media)	54	14.6
Finding teaching materials on international websites	40	10.8
Formal courses to obtain a teaching certificate	36	9.7
Listening to educational podcasts	25	6.7
Conferences	21	5.7

In terms of the cost of online professional development (n = 279), 76.3 per cent said it was free, 20.8 per cent said they paid in full while 11.5 per cent paid in part (teachers could choose more than one answer).

Once again, for the majority of the teachers (62.5 per cent), online professional development was always voluntary, with 16.6 per cent saying it was always compulsory and almost 21 per cent saying it varied.

The providers of the online professional development taken by respondents are listed in Table 7. The local educational authority is again the main provider, though local private organisations are second and teachers' schools third. International organisations remain the provider mentioned least often.

Table 7: Providers of online professional development for English teachers in Japan (n = 265)

Provider	N	%
Local education authority	157	59.2
Local private organisation	90	34.0
My school	58	21.9
Local teacher association	37	14.0
Local university/college	31	11.7
International organization	22	8.3

Respondents also identified various 'other' providers of online professional development for teachers of English. These included volunteer teacher study groups and various individual schools.

Teachers were additionally asked about the importance of various factors in their decision to take part in online professional development. Table 8 presents their responses (all figures are percentages) and the three factors most often rated as very important were helping them solve problems in their teaching, providing activities and materials they can use and keeping up to date with new ideas. Factors such as career advancement, the reputation of the provider and whether the activity was in the native language were, in contrast, very important for low percentages of teachers.

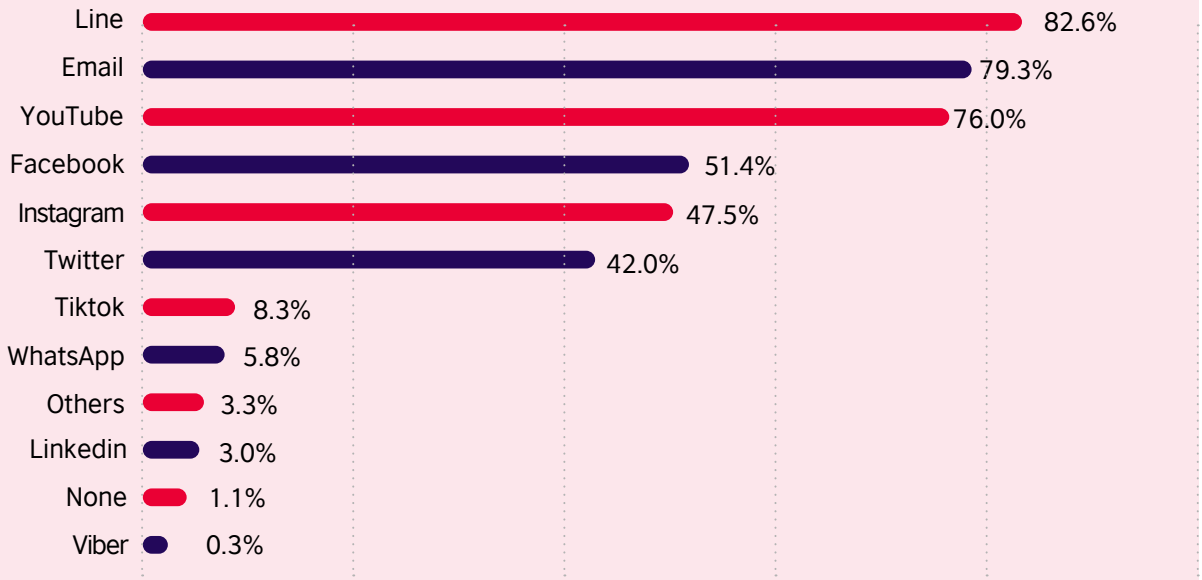
Table 8: Factors influencing decision to do online professional development: Japan (n = 363)

	Very important	Quite important	Not important
It helps me solve problems I face in my teaching	64.4	34.1	1.5
It provides activities and materials that I can use in my own classroom	54.1	41.5	4.4
It keeps me up to date with new ideas and developments	47.3	45.4	7.3
It gives me flexibility in terms of when and where to study	43.9	45.9	10.2
I do not have to pay myself to take part	43.9	41.5	14.6
It is not too time-consuming	29.8	54.6	15.6
The activity gives me the opportunity to interact with other teachers	25.9	44.9	29.3
The activity is officially recognised by my employer	23.9	31.7	44.4
The activity takes place in English	22.0	44.4	33.7
It uses familiar online tools and platforms	20.0	45.4	34.6
Taking part will help me get a salary bonus or promotion (to a higher position such as senior teacher or vice-principal)	11.7	17.6	70.7
The organisation providing the professional development is well-known	10.7	33.2	56.1
The activity takes place in my native language	8.8	29.3	62.0

6.1.7 Online activity

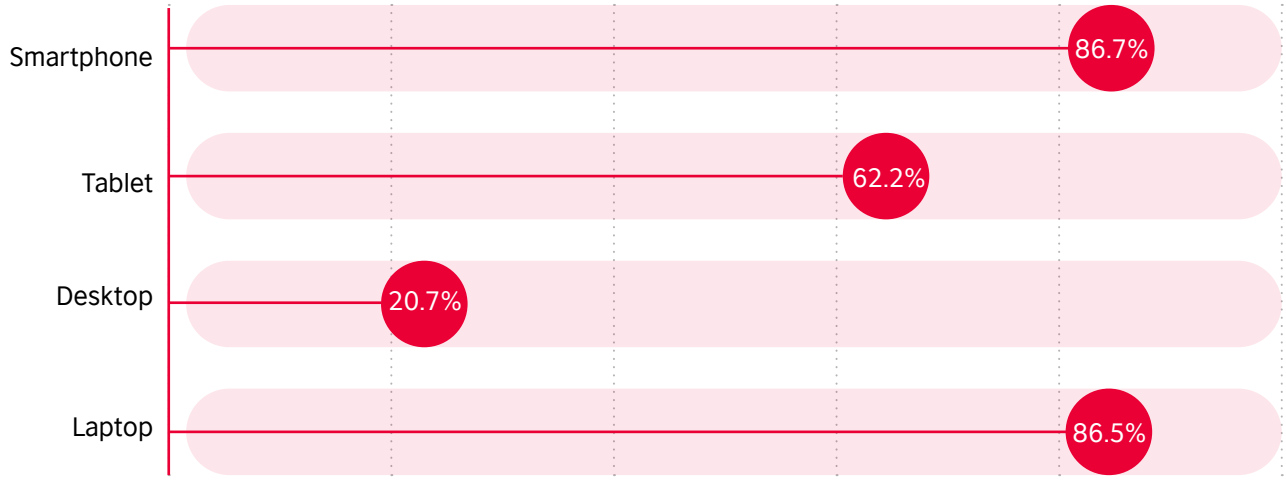
Teachers were asked three questions about their online activities more generally. The first was about the online platforms they used (for work or pleasure). As Figure 40 shows, Line, e-mail and YouTube are the three online platforms most widely used (by upwards of 75 per cent respondents in each case).

Figure 40: Online platforms used by Japanese teachers of English (n = 362)



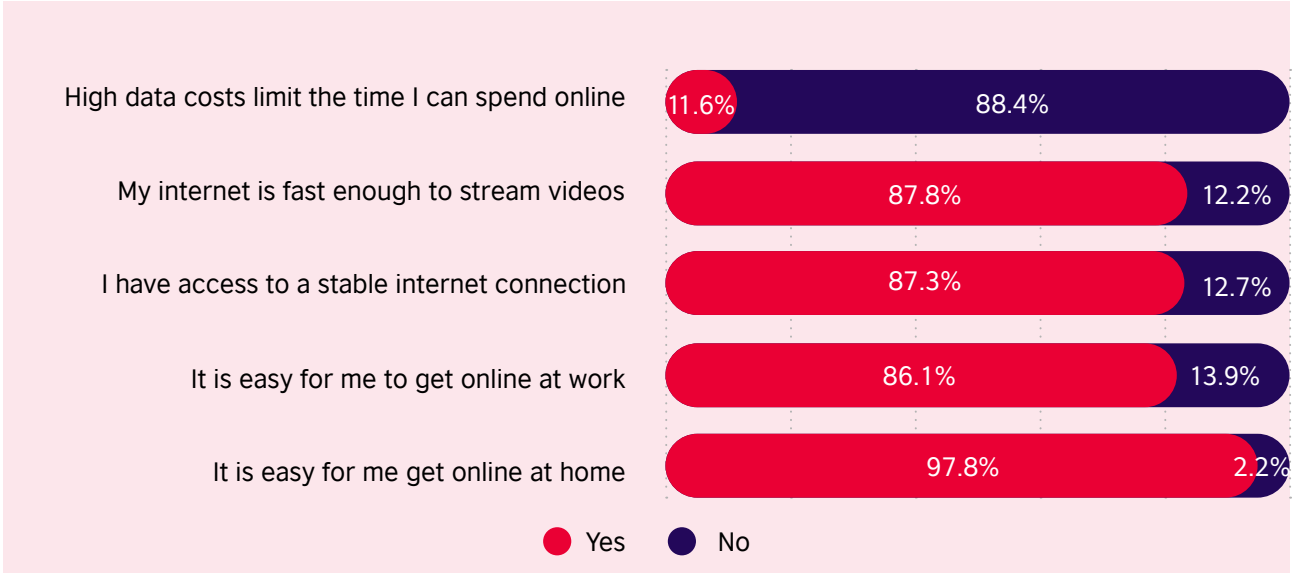
The second question in this section asked teachers about the devices they used to get online. Figure 41 summarises what they said ('other' was also an option but was not chosen by anyone). Smartphones and laptops were the options most commonly chosen here.

Figure 41: How Japanese teachers of English get online (n = 362)



Finally, teachers were asked some questions about access to the internet and their answers are summarised in Figure 42. Overall, these figures indicate that in Japan teachers have access to fast and stable internet at home and work and that data costs do not limit their time online.

Figure 42: How Japanese teachers of English get online (n = 361)



6.1.8 Views about professional development

The final major section of the questionnaire asked teachers for their views on a number of statements related to professional development. Table 9 summarises their responses (figures in percentages).

Table 9: Views about professional development: Japan (n = 360)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
It is difficult to find the time to take part in professional development activities	43.9	46.1	9.4	0.6
I am interested in free sources of online professional development for teachers of English	42.5	47.2	9.2	1.1
I prefer face–to–face professional development rather than doing it online	25.0	48.9	24.7	1.4
The UK is a source of expertise in English language teaching	19.2	42.2	36.1	2.5
I am interested in finding new ways of continuing my professional development online	16.7	70.8	12.2	0.3
I would like more professional development activities in English (not in my first language)	16.7	55.8	24.7	2.8
The educational authorities in my country provide me with high quality professional development opportunities	10.3	45	36.7	8.1
International organisations do not fully understand the needs of teachers in my country	5.0	54.4	38.6	1.9
I am satisfied with the quality of professional development that I have access to	2.8	36.4	50.8	10.0

These results indicate that:

- 90 per cent of respondents believe it is difficult to find the time to take part in professional development
- almost 90 per cent are interested in free sources of online professional development
- over 87 per cent are interested in finding new ways of continuing their professional development
- almost 74 per cent prefer face–to–face professional development rather than online
- over 72 per cent would prefer more professional development in English
- just over 64 per cent feel the UK is a source of expertise in ELT
- almost 60 per cent believe that international organisations do not understand the needs of teachers in Japan
- just over 55 per cent said the local educational authorities provide high quality professional development for teachers
- fewer than 40 per cent said they are satisfied with the quality of professional development they have access to.

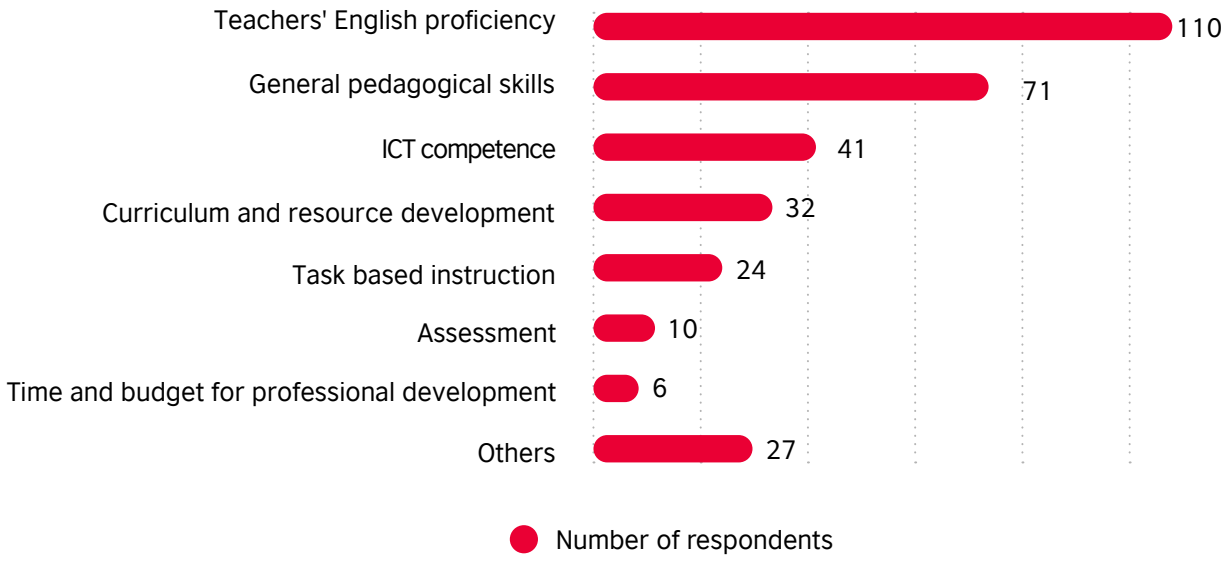
6.1.9 Further professional development

There were two optional open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The first was:

Please write one or two sentences to tell us about areas of your work as a teacher of English that you would like to receive more professional development support for.

There were 321 responses to this question and Figure 43 summarises these.

Figure 43: Further professional development support (n = 321)



Improving teachers' own English was by far the most common theme here (mentioned by 110 teachers – over 30 per cent of all respondents). Some of the examples regarding this particular theme included "an ability to conduct lessons entirely in English", "an ability to pronounce English words as accurately as a native speaker" and "opportunities to improve my own vocabulary knowledge". Many respondents saw the improvement of their English proficiency as a key area for professional development.

The second theme was "general pedagogical skills" and accounted for 22.1 per cent (71 responses) of the participants who responded to this question. Some of the recurring responses included "classroom management skills", "an ability to create cohesive group norms", "an ability to increase students' motivation to learn foreign languages" and "an ability to act as a facilitator in communication focused English lessons".

The third theme, mentioned by 41 teachers (12.8 per cent of the respondents) was "ICT competence", exemplified in responses, such as "how to use tablets effectively in classroom" and "how to conduct effective online lessons".

A total of 32 teachers (10 per cent of the respondents) gave answers related to curriculum and resource development. Their comments included "an ability to design speaking materials that promote communication focused learning" and "materials that are in line with the new national curriculum which is focused on the development of critical thinking and active learning".

Various 'other' areas for professional development were also mentioned, such as "knowledge about inclusive and diverse learning environments", "opportunities to study abroad as part of professional development" and "regular opportunities to attend academic conferences to keep updated with theoretical knowledge of SLA".

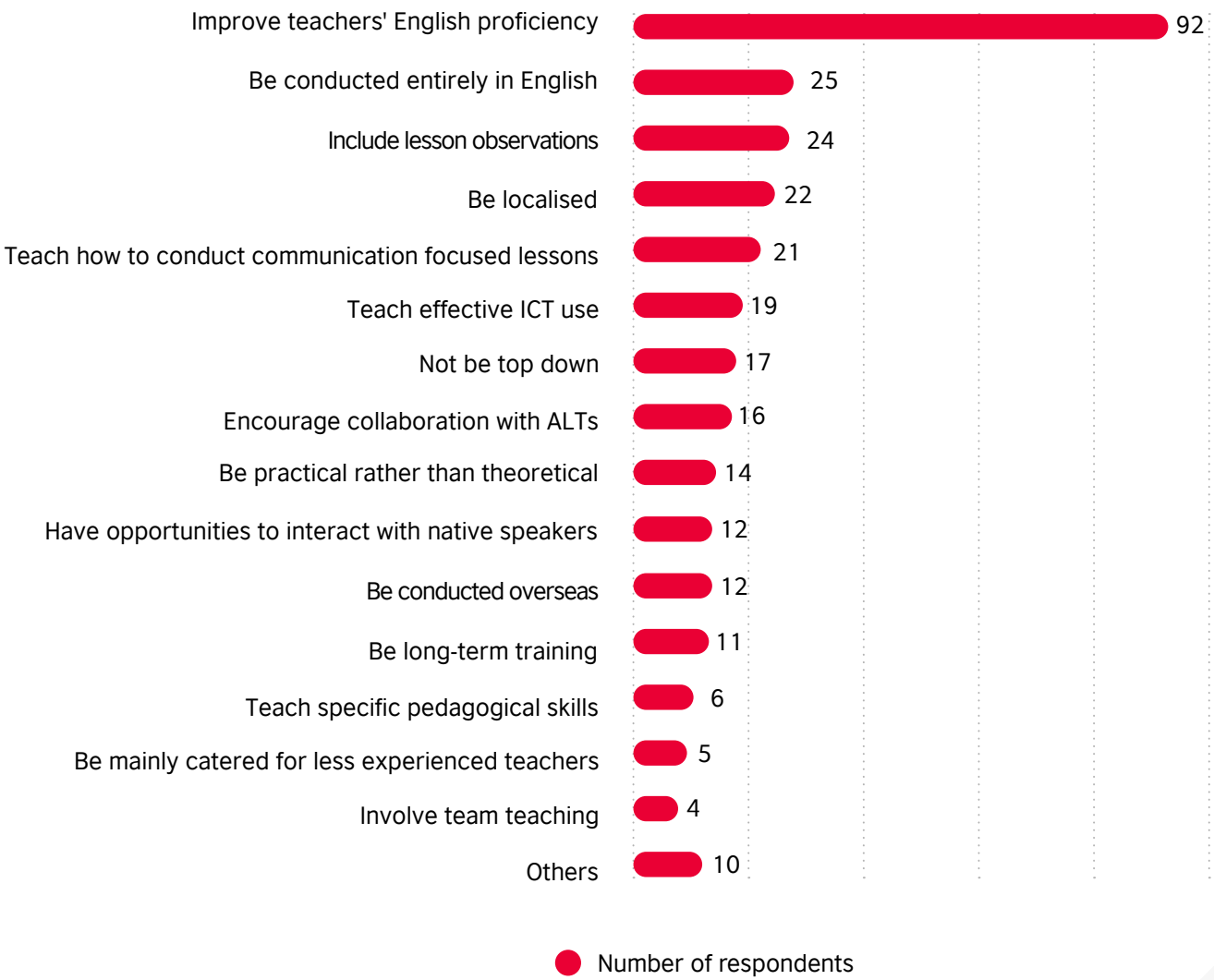
6.1.10 Effective professional development

The second optional open-ended question was:

If you would like to make any suggestions for how effective professional development can be made available to teachers of English in primary and secondary schools in Japan please use this space.

There were 310 responses to this question and Figure 44 summarises these.

Figure 44: Features of effective professional development (n = 310)



Reinforcing the point made in the first open-ended questions, the predominant category here (92 teachers) was once again teachers' own English proficiency (even though this second question was more about how professional development can be provided). Some examples related to this theme included "professional development should help teachers conduct lessons entirely in English", and "teachers should improve their own speaking skills through professional development courses".

The second most frequently cited theme was also related to English proficiency and focused on "the exclusive use of English to provide professional development". This theme accounted for 8.1 per cent (n = 25) of the participants who responded to this question. An illustrative response here was that "professional development should be offered entirely in English, so teachers can improve their communication skills in English".

The value of lesson observations as a professional development strategy was noted by 24 teachers, as shown in comments such as "professional development should include opportunities to observe other teachers' lessons" and it "should focus on interaction with other teachers for feedback".

A total of 24 teachers also suggested that professional development will be more effective when it is localised to the context. Examples included "professional development should reflect local needs" and it "should be designed based on specific textbooks and materials we use at school".

Amongst the points noted in the 'other' category was the suggestion that "professional development should be free of charge for any teachers, whether it be full-time or part-time status".

6.2 Interview results

Survey respondents from Japan were invited to volunteer for a follow-up interview and 40 teachers of English did so and provided their details. Of these, 11 responded positively to a follow-up message and were interviewed online in Japanese. Their responses are summarised below. The interviewees were English specialists (10/11), over 30 years old (10/11), female (9/11) and working in cities (11/11). They taught in primary (3), junior high (3) and senior high (5) schools and covered the full range of experience (less than six years to over 20 years).

6.2.1 Professional development needs

Responses to this question covered several aspects of their work that teachers felt they needed more support for. These included:

- designing materials
- how to teach vocabulary
- making lessons interactive
- doing peer observation
- inclusive teaching
- improving their own English proficiency
- use of ICT
- classroom management skills
- teaching grammar in a motivating way
- using communication activities
- support for the new High School curriculum
- CLIL.

Across the 11 respondents, most of these issues were mentioned only once. For example, regarding classroom management, one teacher explained that

> *I want to learn more about classroom management skills. I teach a group of up to 40 high school students. Some of them are not well disciplined. I want to take training that focuses on how to create cohesive group norms and manage students well in large class size settings.*

A few themes, though, were highlighted by more than one teacher. Improving teachers' English proficiency was a particular concern that recurred and which reflected the increasing expectation in Japan that English lessons be taught in English:

> *I want to improve my own English proficiency, especially speaking as I now have to conduct my lessons in English.*

> *Some of my colleagues can't even speak English well. They have never been abroad. They are now having to teach classes in English.*

A desire to make English lessons more interactive was also noted a few times, for example:

> *I want to learn how to make my tasks more relevant, genuine and meaningful to learners. I also want to learn how to incorporate group work and group projects. I feel like the traditional way of teaching (teacher centred approach) is not working anymore. Students need to be motivated to learn English themselves. I want to learn new teaching skills to change how I teach.*

Such concerns were also expressed with reference to the new high school curriculum that was being introduced:

> *Next year at high school a new curriculum will be introduced which changes the assessment methods (kanten-betsu) including knowledge, skills, critical thinking, active participation. I need to learn how to teach following this new system.*

Some responses here also expressed an interest in peer observation as a way of helping teachers develop professionally. One teacher stated that "I want to have opportunities where I can observe other teachers' lessons and I also want others to come and observe my own lessons for feedback", while another noted that

I also want younger teachers to observe each other's lessons more regularly and learn to give each other feedback. I like the idea of introducing micro teaching. Younger teachers might be good at English but are still not good at teaching English.

6.2.2 Teachers' attitudes to online professional development

During the interviews, teachers were asked for their views about online professional development. One respondent was very negative, explaining that "I don't like doing professional development online because the whole point of attending professional development seminars is to meet other teachers from other schools within/outside the prefecture. I miss attending in-person professional development seminars". Another, in contrast, was very positive, and felt that "during the pandemic I have been able to attend more professional development seminars than previous years because everything is available online. I want to keep this way". The majority of interviewees, though, recognised some advantages of online professional development, despite reservations, as these illustrative quotes show:

I can save time without commuting. But I also don't take online professional development seriously.

I have very positive attitudes towards online professional development but I want to return to face-to-face. I miss the interactive aspect of training. I like online because I can join and leave meetings depending on my own schedule, but I don't often engage in sessions because I often join these sessions when I do other things (eating dinner etc).

With a small group, online professional development is effective and convenient. Instructors can share digital resources easily with participants. I can attend professional development courses overseas. But I also like face-to-face where I can see facial expressions of other participants.

I prefer face-to-face because we learn not only content (knowledge) but also teaching techniques from professional development seminars. I would like to be in the actual classroom to experience different teaching techniques. That being said, online is also good because I can save money and time. I can also attend seminars outside Osaka. I can also watch seminars whenever I have time while doing something else".

I attend training sessions because I can network with other teachers so online has not been my favourite way to attend professional development courses. But I still see lots of benefits such as convenience, free of charge attendance, opportunities to speak to people abroad".

I like online professional development. I can attend anytime. But I also less value them because there's not pressure or obligation".

6.2.3 Educational authorities and online professional development

The general view expressed by interviewees was that, while the education authorities in Japan have provided access to (often mandatory) online professional development for teachers, the quality of this provision was not very high:

> *I just often have to watch a recorded video and write essays when I attend professional development courses run by the government.*

> *Their professional development is often superficial and unhelpful. The content of their professional development can be too generic and not confined to English teaching. We need more training opportunities focusing on the teaching of specific subjects.*

> *Our prefecture has mandatory training at the start, 5th year and 10th year … They now have external organisation [Eiken] to run professional development courses where teachers just watch recorded videos on the internet.*

> *There are several professional development opportunities organised by the prefectural board of education including the mandatory training for new teachers which I did three years ago when I joined my school. But these were not very useful.*

It was also noted that, while the official online training provided focuses on teaching skills, what many teachers wanted support with was the improvement of their own English proficiency.

6.2.4 Engagement in online professional development

All interviewees said they had taken part in online professional development in the previous 12 months and were asked to provide details. The various initiatives they mentioned are listed in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Online professional development by English teachers in Japan

I attended five-day online professional development courses organised by academics at the University of Hong Kong. It was about how English language teachers should conduct CLIL lessons at junior and high school level. The course was expensive but I'd be happy to pay for training opportunities like this.

Professional development course organised by Oxford University Press in Japan about online teaching and learning during the pandemic.

Two-hour session on teaching (in general) by Eiken.

A five-day course organised by a publisher called ALC in Japan. It was about E-Learning in ELT.

A two-hour seminar organised by Eiken about assessment in ELT.

A one-hour seminar organised by Rikkyo University about internationalisation and ELT.

Two-hour sessions 'general education training' by an organisation called TOSS which is a very popular course among many school teachers not only English teachers but also other subjects.

We have a professional development group called TOSS in Osaka. They organise interesting sessions where teachers can share their own teaching ideas with the rest of the group.

One was organised by Eiken about active learning and curriculum development, three sessions over a period of three weeks, each session two hours.

I attended a lot of online professional development training. One was a half day session with a professor at University of Tokyo who discussed the purpose of English education and teaching methods.

I also attend lots of online training that I find on Twitter (e.g. assessment). I also attend English classes to improve my own English skills.

6.2.5 Live vs recorded online sessions

There was a clear preference among the interviewees for live sessions on Zoom:

> *Zoom is my favourite platform because I can interact with other teachers.*

> *I prefer Zoom rather than YouTube because I don't engage if it's not interactive.*

> *I prefer live interactive sessions where I can speak to other teachers from other prefectures or even overseas.*

> *I prefer live sessions where I can interact with other participants.*

Some, though, did prefer recorded formats:

> *I like recorded sessions because I can skip irrelevant sections.*

> *I prefer YouTube or similar recorded format that I can return to and resume when I have time.*

6.2.6 The future of online professional development

Interviewees agreed that some element of online professional development would continue to be offered after the pandemic, and teachers' opinions were mixed regarding whether they would persist with online offerings or return to more face–to–face options:

> *I want to keep the online mode of delivery because it's more convenient. I'm often too busy to physically attend PD seminars.*

> *I believe that online format will remain and is useful to reach out to teachers who live outside my prefecture (Okayama) but I want to return to face-to-face format as soon as permitted.*

> *Both will remain because I can see pros and cons of both online and face-to-face training.*

> *Online professional development will remain but I personally want to return to face-to-face.*

> *It will be more face-to-face but I would like more online professional development because it's convenient. I live so far away from school, so I don't have time to attend professional development courses.*

6.3 Japan: conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions for Japan are based on responses to an online survey provided by 329 teachers[15] and online interviews with 11 teachers selected randomly from a volunteer sample of 40 survey respondents. Overall, the sample was balanced in gender, spread across the full range of age (under 30 years to 60) and experience (less than six years to over 20) and qualified at BA level. Participating teachers taught largely in junior and senior high schools (79 per cent) in urban areas of nine regions of Japan (most commonly Kyushu) and were specialist English teachers.

It needs to be acknowledged that the online nature of the study may have encouraged particular groups of teachers to participate more than others (though the age range of the respondents does not suggest any bias to younger teachers). In Japan, widespread access to and use of the internet and associated technologies also make it less likely that the respondent profile was severely skewed by the online methods used in the study. In national terms[16], though, the response rate was not high and the primary reason for this was lack of official support. Prefectural and district education did not promote the research and access to teachers was obtained through a range of personal contacts and direct requests (with varying success) to teacher associations and selected school principals. Further research into the professional development needs and practices of government school teachers of English in Japan will benefit significantly from engagement with local education authorities who control access to teachers and who can, in particular, officially invite large numbers of teachers to contribute to online surveys.

6.3.1 Japan: key findings

The following key findings have emerged from this study.

- Teachers of English in Japan have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities, online and face–to–face, provided largely by local organisations and, in particular, by education authorities and schools.
- Teachers identified a wide range of areas they wanted to focus on for professional development purposes; recurrent themes were motivating students, teaching speaking and 21st century skills; many teachers were also keen to improve their own English proficiency.
- Almost 90 per cent of respondents said they had taken part in face–to–face professional development in the previous 12 months; the equivalent figure for online professional development was just under 75 per cent.
- For both face–to–face and online professional development, the majority of respondents (around 75 per cent in both cases) indicated that their participation was free. There was, though, a considerable element of compulsory participation too, especially for face–to–face professional development (almost 48 per cent said it was always compulsory) and to a lesser extent for online development activity (almost 17 per cent).
- For face–to–face professional development, official education authorities and schools were the main providers, with peer observation (including in other

[15]This is the number who answered all questions.

[16]Figures for the number of government school teachers of English in Japan are not included in the statistics published by MEXT – see https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/002/002b/1417059_00006.htm.

schools), courses, seminars and workshops and reading about teaching being the activities most frequently cited by respondents.

- For online professional development, official education authorities were again the main provider cited, and courses, seminars and workshops were once more the predominant activity, followed by reading online articles about teaching, peer observation through video, and watching online videos about teaching.

- Overall, fewer than 40 per cent of the teachers were satisfied with the quality of professional development they have access to. In the interviews, teachers were generally critical of the quality of the official online professional development provided. It was, in particular, not seen to address the need teachers felt to improve their own English proficiency.

- The main factors that influence Japanese teachers' decisions to engage in online professional development are whether it helps them solve problems in their teaching, provides activities and materials they can use and keeps them up to date with new ideas. Flexibility of when and where to study and cost were also important factors for almost 44 per cent of respondents.

- Japanese teachers of English have good access to stable internet and the costs of data do not limit the time they spend online; smartphones and laptops are the devices most widely used by teachers to get online.

- YouTube, e-mail and Line are the online platforms most commonly used by this sample of teachers of English in Japan.

- While a majority (almost 74 per cent) of survey respondents said they prefer face–to–face professional development, most were, nonetheless, interested in finding new (especially free) ways of doing professional development online. Live interactive sessions were clearly preferred to recorded online sessions.

- Only two-thirds of respondents saw the UK as a source of expertise in ELT and almost 60 per cent also felt that international organisations do not fully understand Japanese teachers' needs. International organisations seem to contribute in a minor way to both face–to–face and online professional development for teachers in Japan.

- While the language used was not reported by teachers to be a major factor in their decisions to do online professional development, the use of English was seen to be very important by 22 per cent compared to almost 9 per cent who said the use of Japanese was a factor in their decisions. Over 72 per cent, though, did say they would like more professional development activities in English, a point also highlighted in the interviews.

- In explaining how professional development could be effectively provided for them, respondents again highlighted the importance of opportunities to improve their English proficiency. Peer observation was also seen to be effective, along with professional development content that was closely aligned with teachers' curricula and textbooks.

- According to the interviewees, online resources that appeal to Japanese teachers will be closely linked to their curricula and textbooks and easily adaptable for use.

6.3.2 Japan: recommendations

To conclude this section, we present some recommendations for the professional development of basic education for Japanese teachers of English.

1. Respondents' clear interest in developing their own English language proficiency, particularly for practical purposes, such as use in the classroom and use in PD initiatives, indicates strongly that appropriate PD support needs to focus on this, and include an element of "English for teaching" (e.g. Freeman, 2017), potentially alongside bilingual support resources, particularly for teachers with lower levels of proficiency.

2. When compared with respondents from China and South Korea, Japanese teachers were significantly more dissatisfied with current professional development provision. This indicates a clear need to investigate the sources of this dissatisfaction, and how it can be rectified. Particularly, qualitative data in this study supports the introduction of more teacher-driven activities, which contrast markedly with the current top-down, accountability-oriented provision available. Initiatives that are collaborative, exploratory and longer-term are likely to be more effective in this regard, including potentially peer observation programmes (both face-to-face and online), the promotion of professional learning communities, and support for teacher research initiatives such as action research and lesson study. However, conventional forms of professional development, such as training courses, workshops and webinars remain very widespread in Japan and new professional development offers also should seek to tap into this well-established tradition.

3. Even when compared with South Korean and Chinese teachers, who also regularly indicate that they feel overworked, Japanese teachers were even more likely to indicate excessive workload and related fatigue that are likely to be having detrimental effects on their mental health and classroom practice. As well as recommending further research into these issues, initiatives that support and promote teacher well-being and quality of life are likely to be of great use to Japanese teachers.

4. International PD providers interested in increasing their appeal and reach in Japanese basic education should take note of Japanese teachers' concerns that foreign organisations often do not understand their needs and challenges. By partnering with local organisations, international providers may be better able to understand these needs and provide for them appropriately.

5. Japanese teachers' expressed need for resources which have immediate practical relevance or utility implies that professional development resources that are easily transferrable to the classroom and/or provide concrete illustrations on what teachers can do in their own work are likely to be well received. To be most effective, such concrete illustrations should involve Japanese classrooms (e.g. videos of lessons) and curricular content.

6. The study has highlighted features of online professional development that Japanese teachers appreciate. Attempts to provide online material should take note of these, including their preference for live interactive sessions over recorded material and their interest in accompanying resources that are free and not too time-consuming to engage with.

7. While teachers' individual preference will vary (for example, depending on the grades they teach), this study highlighted key general interest among teachers in improving both specific (such as teaching speaking) and general (such as motivating students or 21st century competences) pedagogical skills. Professional development products and resources which connect with such themes are more likely to be seen as relevant by teachers of English in Japan.
8. Line and YouTube are the leading online platforms for teachers in Japan (and for the Japanese generally) and these platforms should be exploited as part of any strategy which seeks to promote new online professional development services in the country.

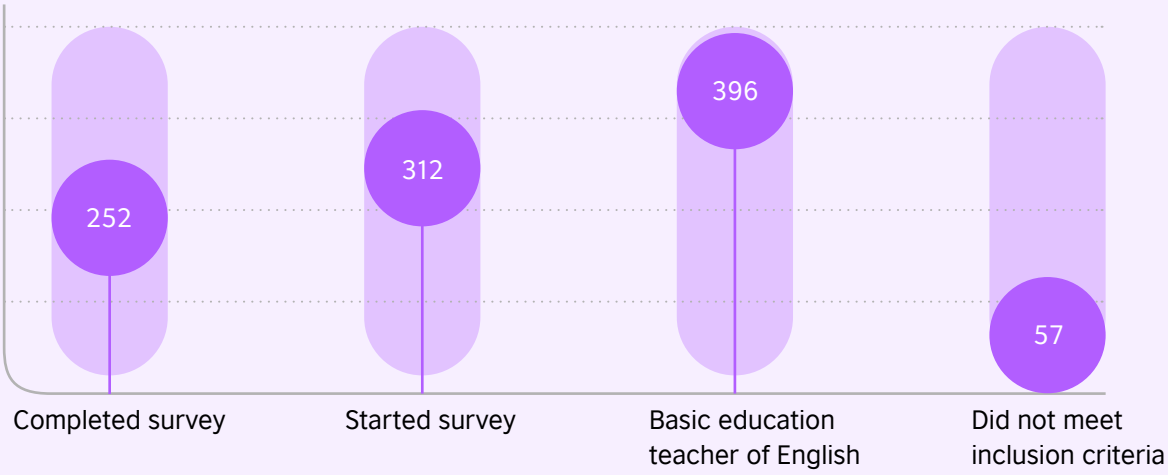
Chapter-7
Results South Korea

7.1 Survey results

7.1.1 Response rate

As Figure 45 shows, of 396 respondents who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., they were teaching English in basic education), 312 started the survey, and 252 completed it. The numbers of teachers responding to each survey item are provided for each question below.

Figure 45: Korea survey response rate



7.1.2 Respondent profile

Figures 46-49 below provide further information about the Korea sample (the response rate here was 312 throughout). The vast majority of respondents were female (80 per cent), similar to the reported national balance in basic education (77 per cent in 2014[17]), with a majority in the 31-40 (almost 42 per cent) and 41-50 (just over 31 per cent) age groups.

Figure 46: Korea respondents by age

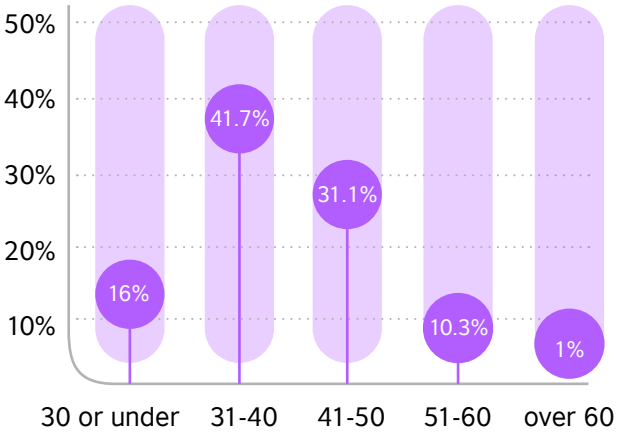
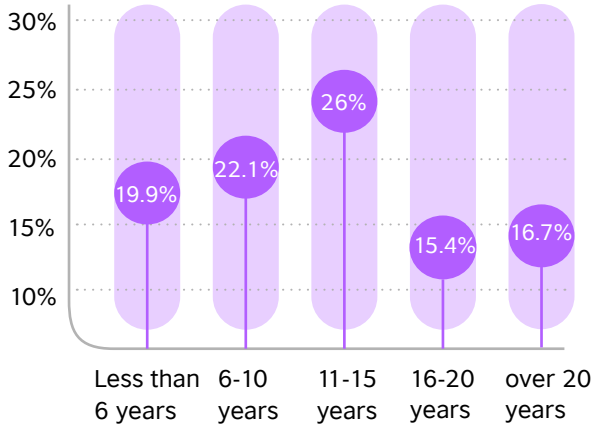


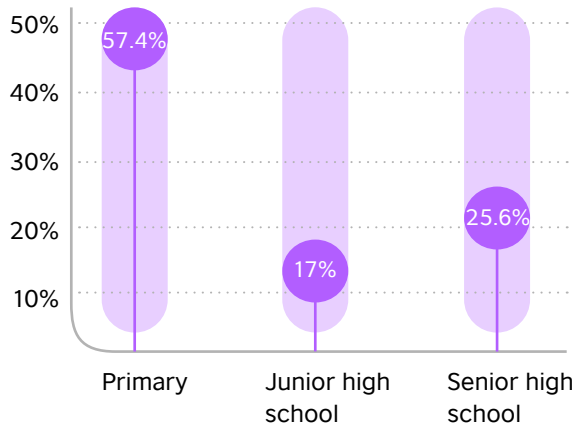
Figure 47: Korea respondents by experience



The teaching experience of respondents was well-distributed, from novice to highly experienced teachers, the vast majority of whom (89 per cent) teach full-time. Most had either a Bachelor's (54 per cent) or Master's (41 per cent) degree, although only 46 per cent indicated that they had ELT certification; slightly more considered themselves specialist English teachers (61 per cent). The sample included a good balance between primary (57.4 per cent) and secondary (42.6 per cent) teachers, although the cohort included noticeably fewer junior high school teachers than senior.

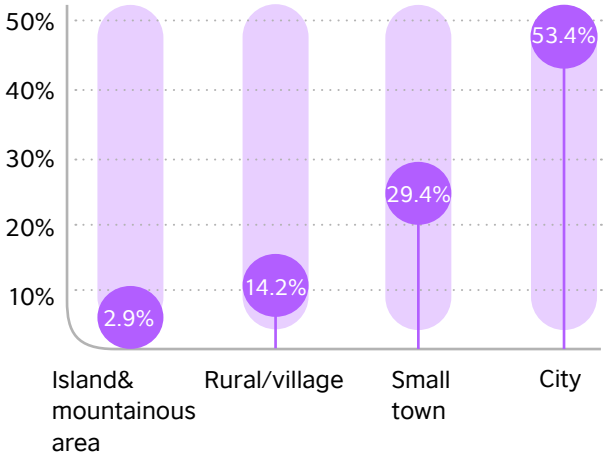
[17]http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141216000856

Figure 48: Korea respondents by level



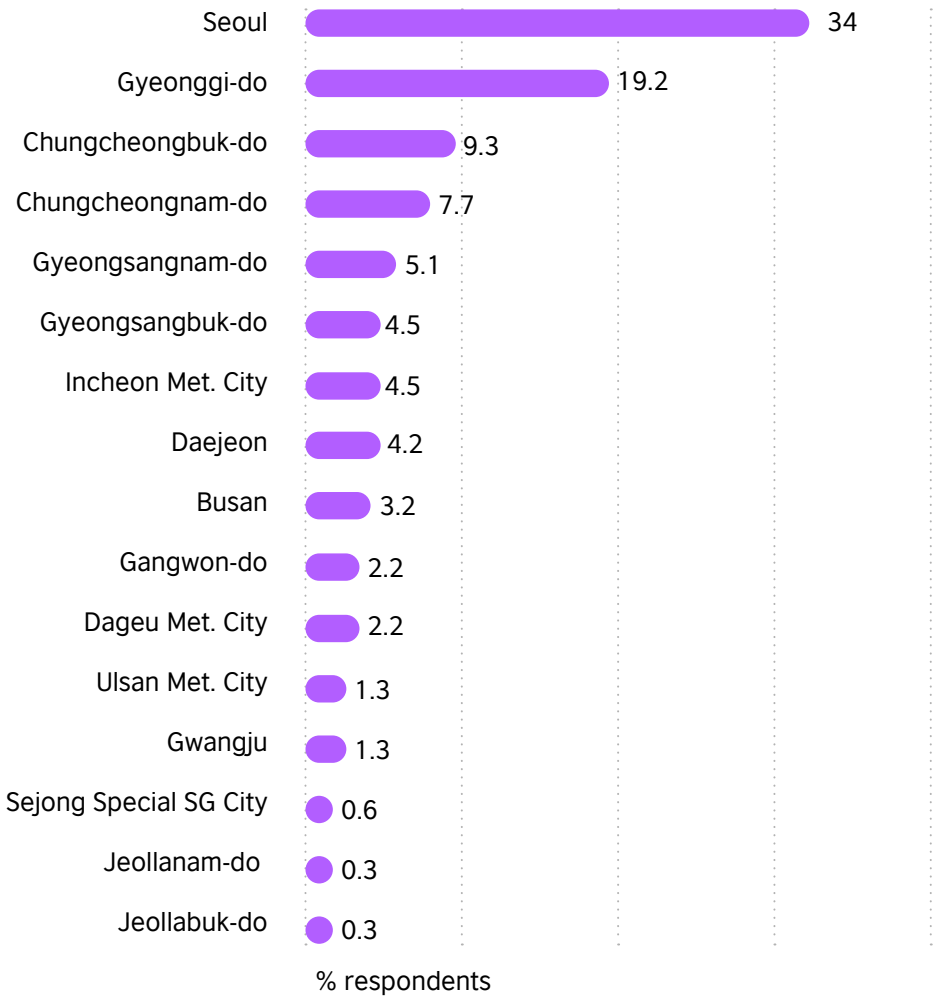
As Figure 50 shows, there was a strong bias towards the capital city, Seoul, and its surrounding province (Gyeonggi-do), with just over half of the respondents (53.2 per cent) coming from these highly populated areas.

Figure 49: Korea respondents by location



Consistent with this regional representation, the vast majority of respondents stated that they worked in cities (53.4 per cent) or small towns (29.4 per cent). School sizes ranged fairly evenly across the categories, with most having between 100-499 (37 per cent) or 500-999 (35 per cent) pupils.

Figure 50: Respondents by area

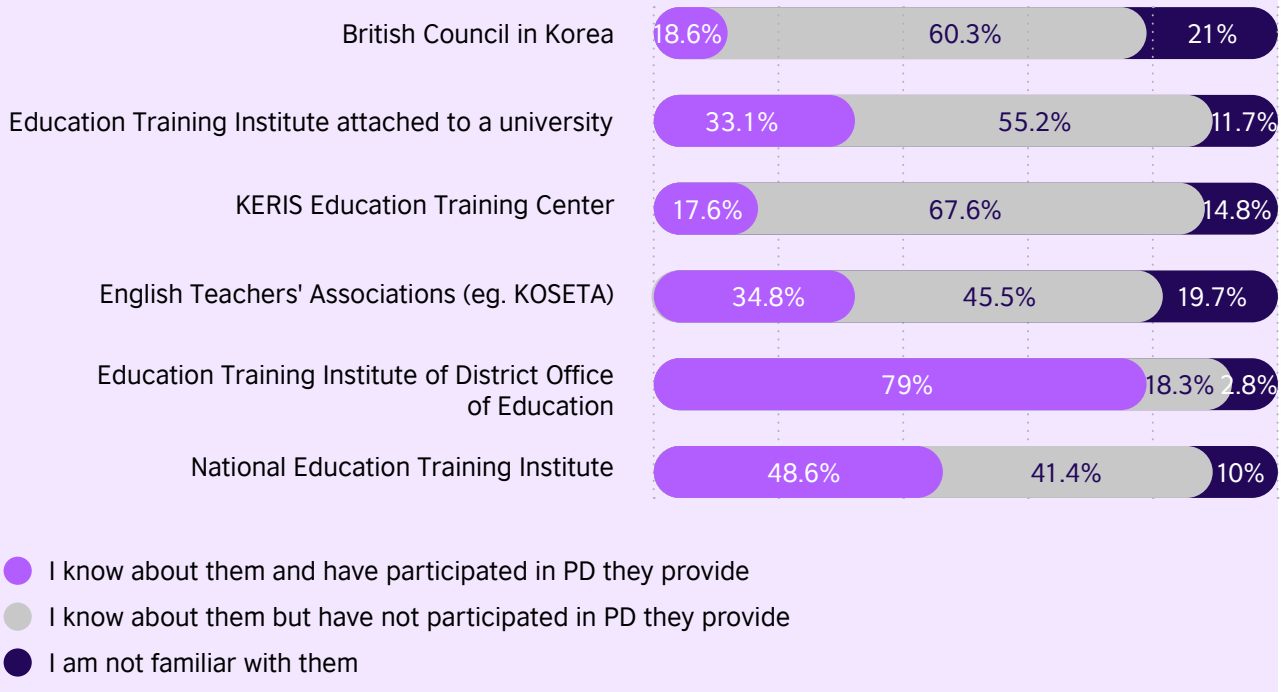


7.1.3 Providers of professional development

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of six organisations providing professional development in South Korea (see Figure 51). While the vast majority of respondents indicated awareness of all six, noticeably fewer said that they had participated in their professional development services. For example, almost 80 per cent of respondents indicated that they had heard of the British Council, but only 19 per cent stated that they had participated in British Council professional development. The most widely known and used professional development providers were the Education Training Institute of the District Office of Education (79 per cent had engaged with its professional development), followed by the National Education Training Institute (49 per cent).

One-hundred and ten teachers reported that they attended professional development programmes offered by other institutes, with 91 naming the providers. The providers mentioned most frequently were YBM (21 times) and I-Scream (16), followed by the Korean Teachers' Union (7) and the Korea Educational Broadcasting System (6). A wide range of additional institutes were also listed less frequently, including the Gyeonggi-do Institute for Language Education (4), Sookmyung Women's University (4), and Teacher Ville (3).

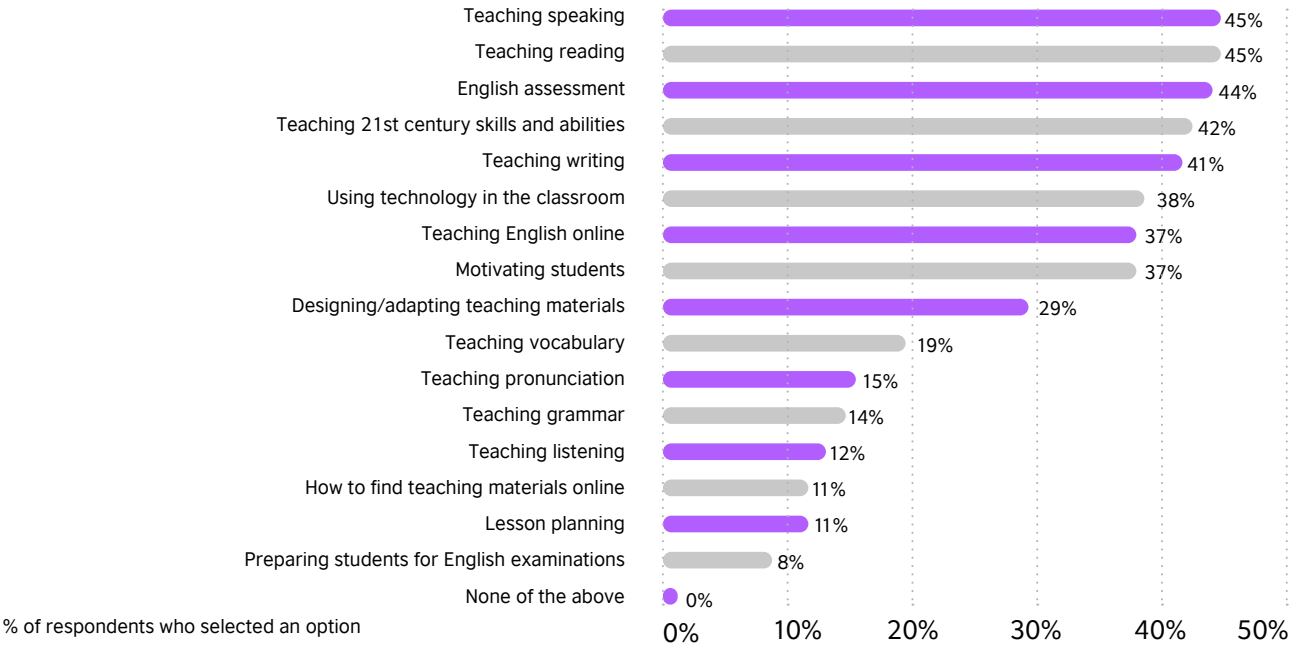
Figure 51: Awareness of selected providers of professional development (n = 290)



7.1.4 Professional development needs

Respondents were asked to self-evaluate their professional development needs by selecting up to five topics from a list of 16 provided, covering both skills (such as teaching reading and speaking) and systems (grammar, lexis and pronunciation) foci, as well as aspects of classroom management, learner support and lesson and materials preparation. Figure 52 shows the responses, with teaching reading, writing and speaking in the top five along with assessment and 21st century skills. Online teaching and use of technology also ranked highly. Systems-focused professional development came towards the bottom of the list, just above the fourth skill (listening) and aspects of lesson and exam preparation.

Figure 52: Professional development needs of Korean teachers of English (n = 273)

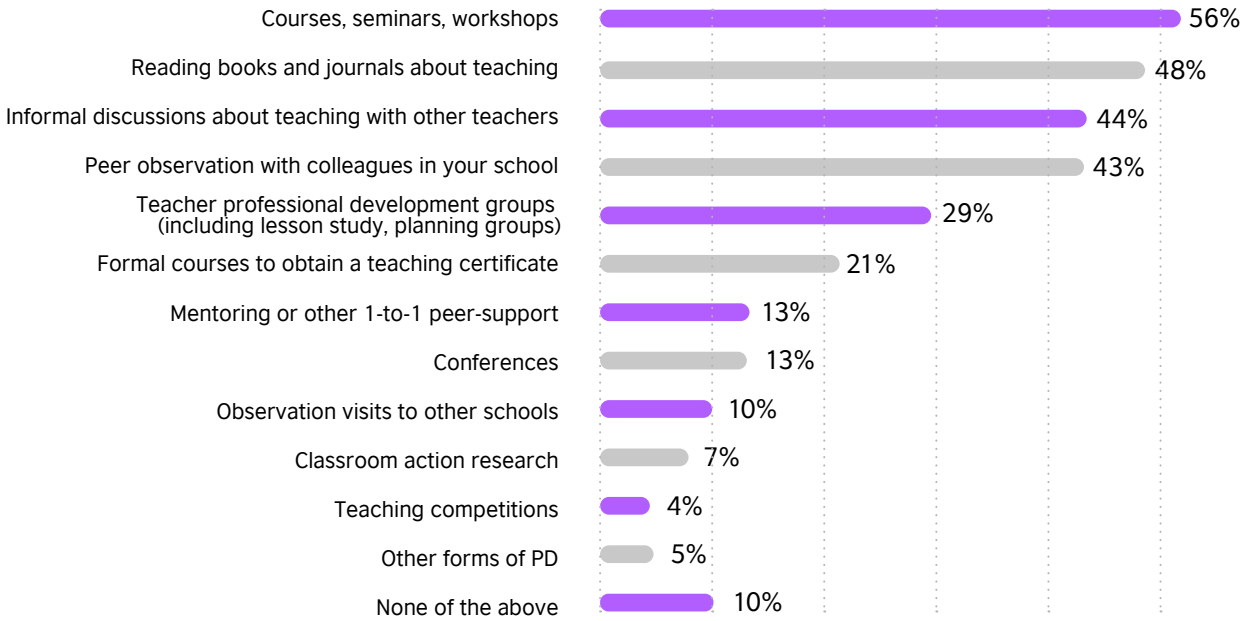


% of respondents who selected an option

7.1.5 Face-to-face professional development

Respondents were asked to indicate what face-to-face professional development activities they had participated in during the previous 12 months, with 12 relevant activities presented, and additional options to indicate other forms of professional development and 'none of the above'. As Figure 53 shows, four activities were chosen by over 40 per cent of respondents, with 'Courses, seminars or workshops' ranking highest (56 per cent). It is noticeable that two of these top four are informal activities (reading and discussions with colleagues). Low on the list were participation in conferences (13 per cent) and classroom action research (7 per cent). Five per cent indicated other forms of professional development and 10 per cent indicated they had not done any face-to-face professional development activities. The impact of COVID–19 on teachers' responses here must be acknowledged (for example, conferences would have been much less available).

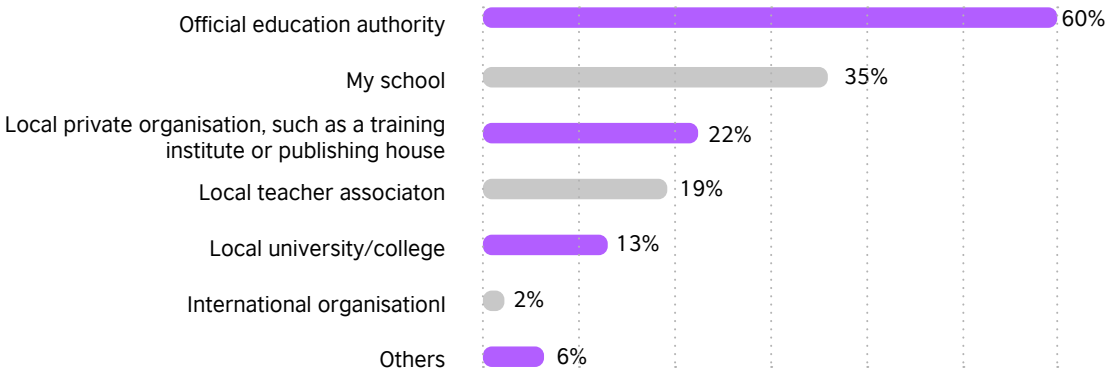
Figure 53: Face–to–face professional development in previous 12 months (n = 272)[18]



[18]'None of the above' here means no face–to–face professional development in the last 12 months.

Respondents were also asked (see Figure 54) to indicate both who paid for these face-to-face professional development activities and whether they were voluntary; the vast majority indicated that these activities were free of charge (79 per cent) and always voluntary (80 per cent). They were also asked to indicate the provider of these activities; official education authorities (60 per cent) and the teacher's school (35 per cent) were the two most commonly selected providers. It is notable that, according to these responses, international organisations only provided 2 per cent of the face-to-face professional development referred to here.

Figure 54: Providers of face–to–face professional development (n = 240)

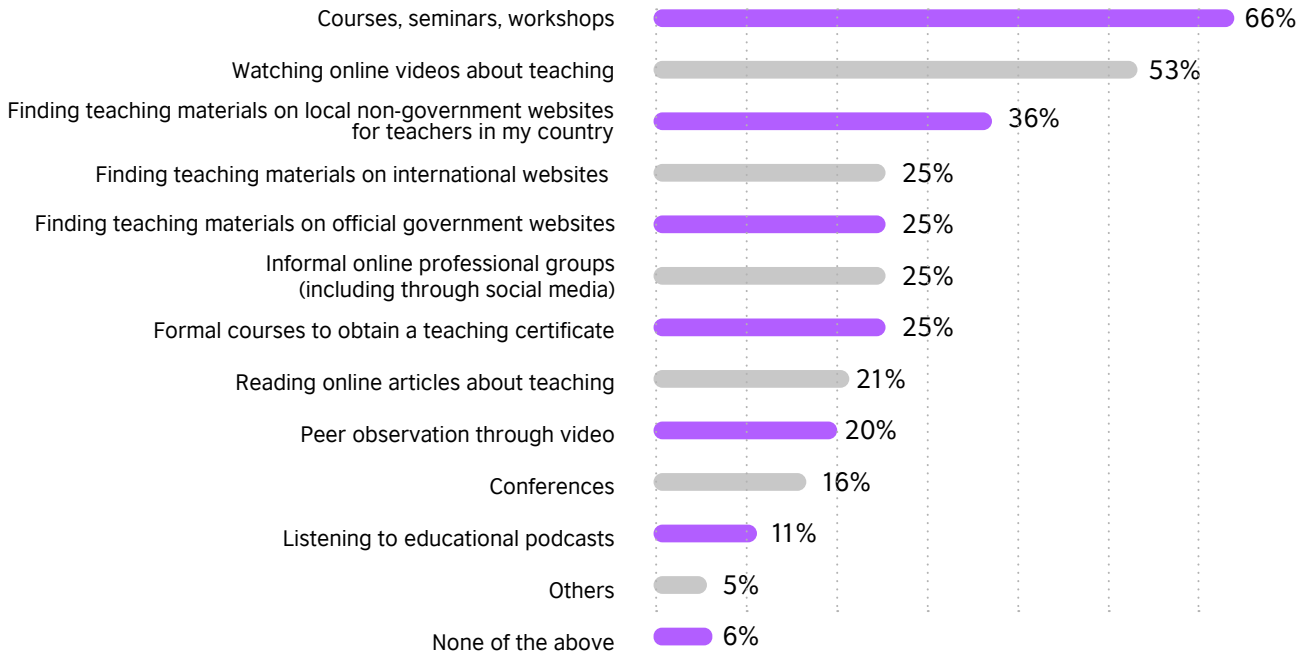


% of respondents who indicated a provider (tick any option)

7.1.6 Online professional development

Respondents' online professional development activities over the previous 12 months were also investigated, with 11 options provided, some of which corresponded to equivalent face-to-face options. Figure 55 summarises the responses.

Figure 55: Online professional development in previous 12 months (n = 263)[19]

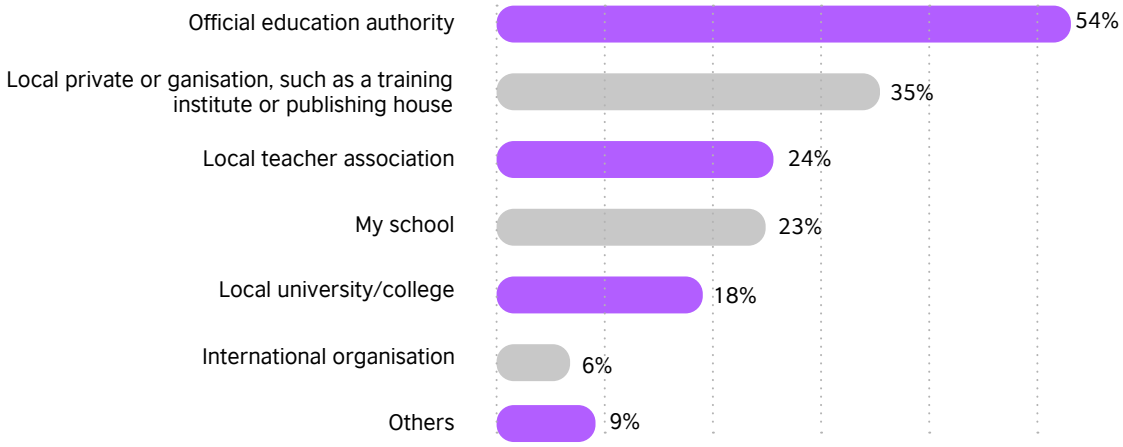


[19]'None of the above' here means no online professional development in the last 12 months.

Participation in courses, seminars and workshops again topped the list (66 per cent). The only other high ranking response was watching online videos about teaching (53 per cent). Among the 11 options offered, three related to where teachers find teaching materials; local, non-government websites ranked noticeably higher (36 per cent) than the other two (international websites and official government websites; both 25 per cent). It is notable that online reading seems to be significantly less popular than reading printed materials (see face-to-face responses above), and that, while participation in online conferences might have been expected to increase during the Covid-19 pandemic, only 16 per cent indicated that they had done this in the previous 12 months.

Concerning sources of funding and whether participation was voluntary, responses concerning online professional development were almost identical to those for face-to-face professional development. However, differences were notable with regard to providers of online professional development (Figure 56); while official education authorities were once again dominant (54 per cent), local organisations (e.g. training institutions, publishing houses, etc.) and teacher associations both ranked higher than the teacher's own school. Also, as might be expected, the share of international organisations providing online professional development is slightly higher than for face-to-face, at 6 per cent.

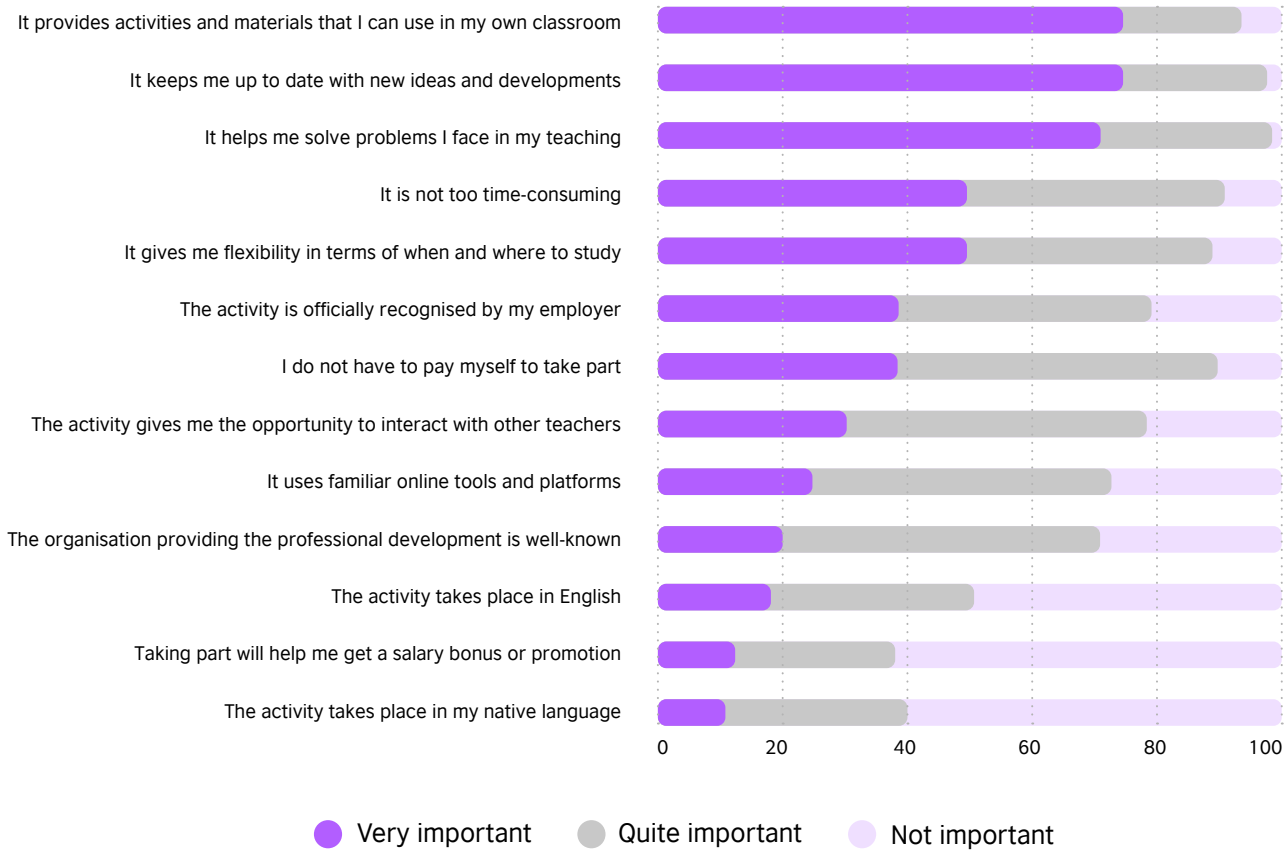
Figure 56: Providers of online professional development (n = 245)



Respondents were asked to rank the importance of 13 potential factors that might influence their decision to participate in online professional development. As Figure 57 shows, the three most highly ranked factors related specifically to their practical utility in the classroom (including activities and materials they can use, how they can solve problems they face, and updates on new developments in the field). Most other factors were deemed either very or quite important, including factors relating to aspects of convenience (time, cost, flexibility), and interaction with other teachers. Interestingly, language choice does not seem to be an influential factor either way, although a slight preference for activities in English over native languages is notable. Consistent with their primary interest in practical issues, also low ranking was what might be called instrumental motivation to participate in professional development (e.g., for salary bonus or promotion).[20]

[20]This, of course, may reflect promotion policies in Korea – i.e. these may not be linked to teachers' engagement in professional development.

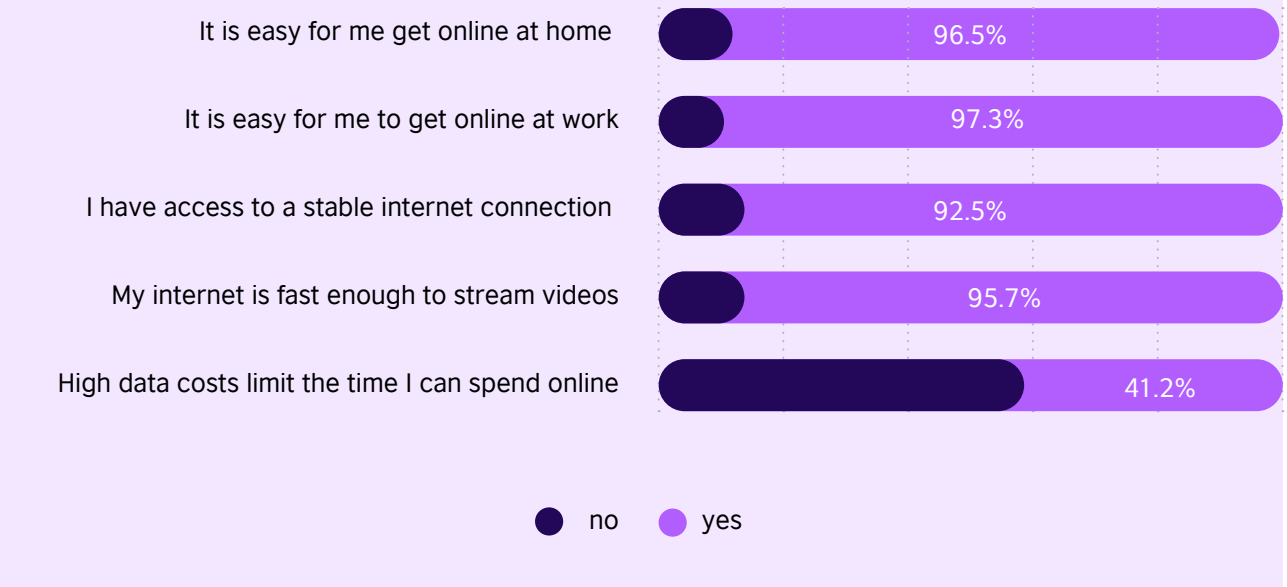
Figure 57: Factors influencing decisions to do online professional development (n = 257)



7.1.7 Online activity

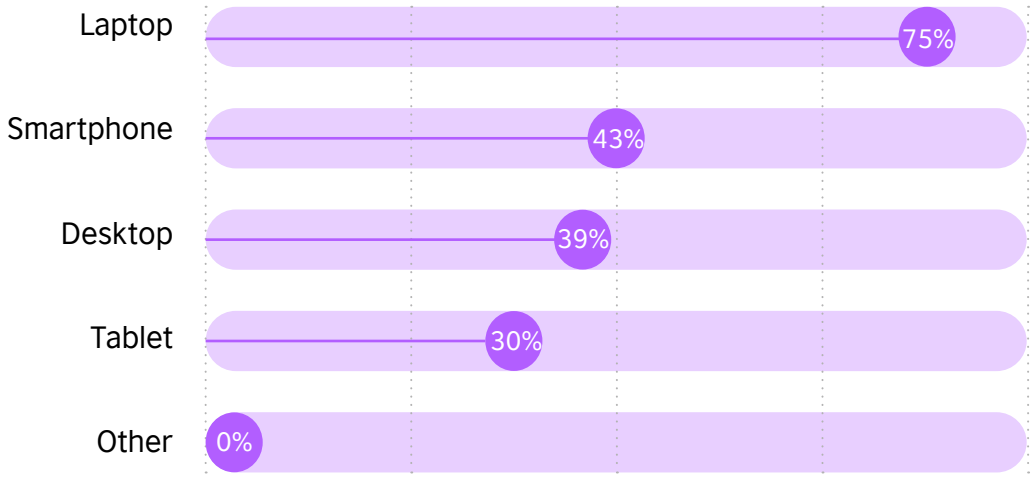
Figure 58 shows the results of five questions Korean teachers were asked about getting and being online. As might be expected for a world leading country with regard to technology, few difficulties getting online were reported by respondents, although the one inhibiting factor of note, interestingly, was high data costs, found to limit just over 41 per cent of respondents' time online.

Figure 58: Internet access for teachers of English in Korea (n = 255)



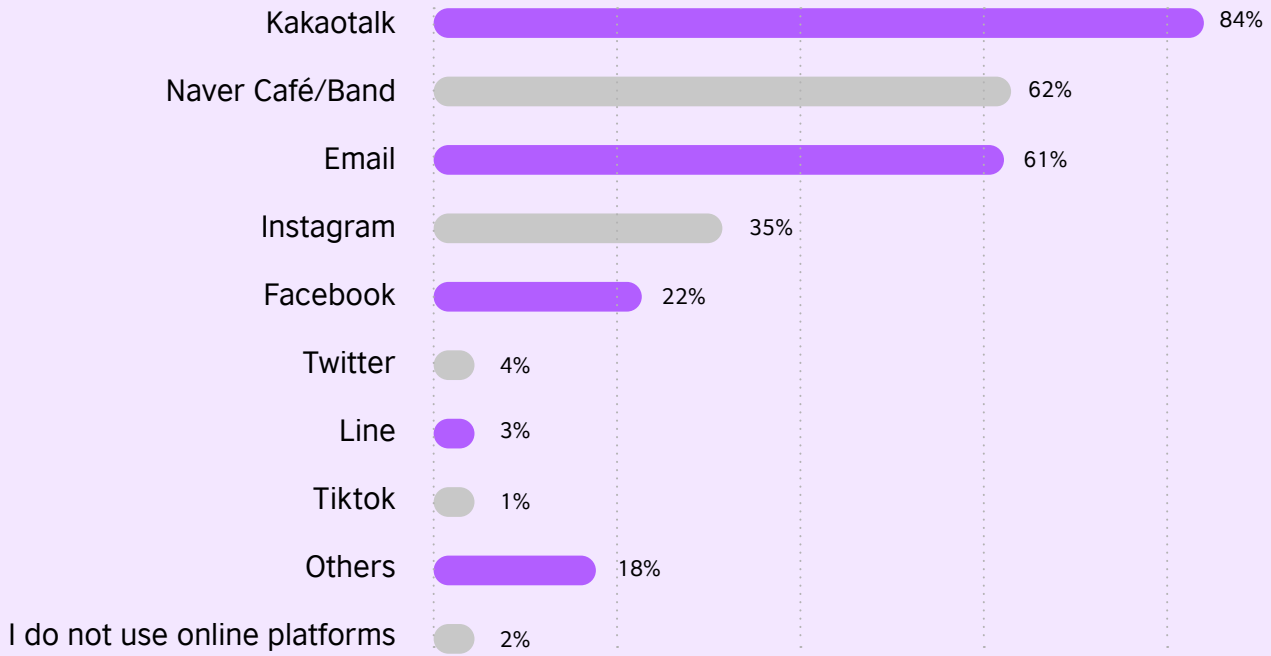
The majority of respondents made use of laptops (75%) to get online, while smart phones, desktop computers and tablets were also fairly commonly used (Figure 59).

Figure 59: How Korean teachers get online (n = 255)



With regard to online platforms (Figure 60), it is notable that, alongside email, South Korean teachers make frequent use (for leisure and/or work) of several national platforms such as the KakaoTalk messaging app, the Naver Café search portal and Band, a social media platform. International platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are noticeably less popular.

Figure 60: Online platforms used by Korean teachers (n = 255)



7.1.8 Views about professional development

The final quantitative survey items (Figure 61) elicited respondents' views on a number of issues relating to professional development, both online and face-to-face. Although 61 per cent expressed a preference for face–to–face professional development, respondents were, on the whole, positive about making use of online professional development. Thus, 95 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in finding new ways of continuing their professional development online while 98 per cent were interested in free online professional development resources. The UK was recognised by 87 per cent as a source of expertise in ELT, although 62 per cent also agreed that international organisations do not fully understand Korean teachers' needs. The vast majority (84 per cent) also indicated that they would like more professional development activities in English, rather than Korean.

Figure 61: Views about professional development (n = 252)

7.1.9 Further professional development

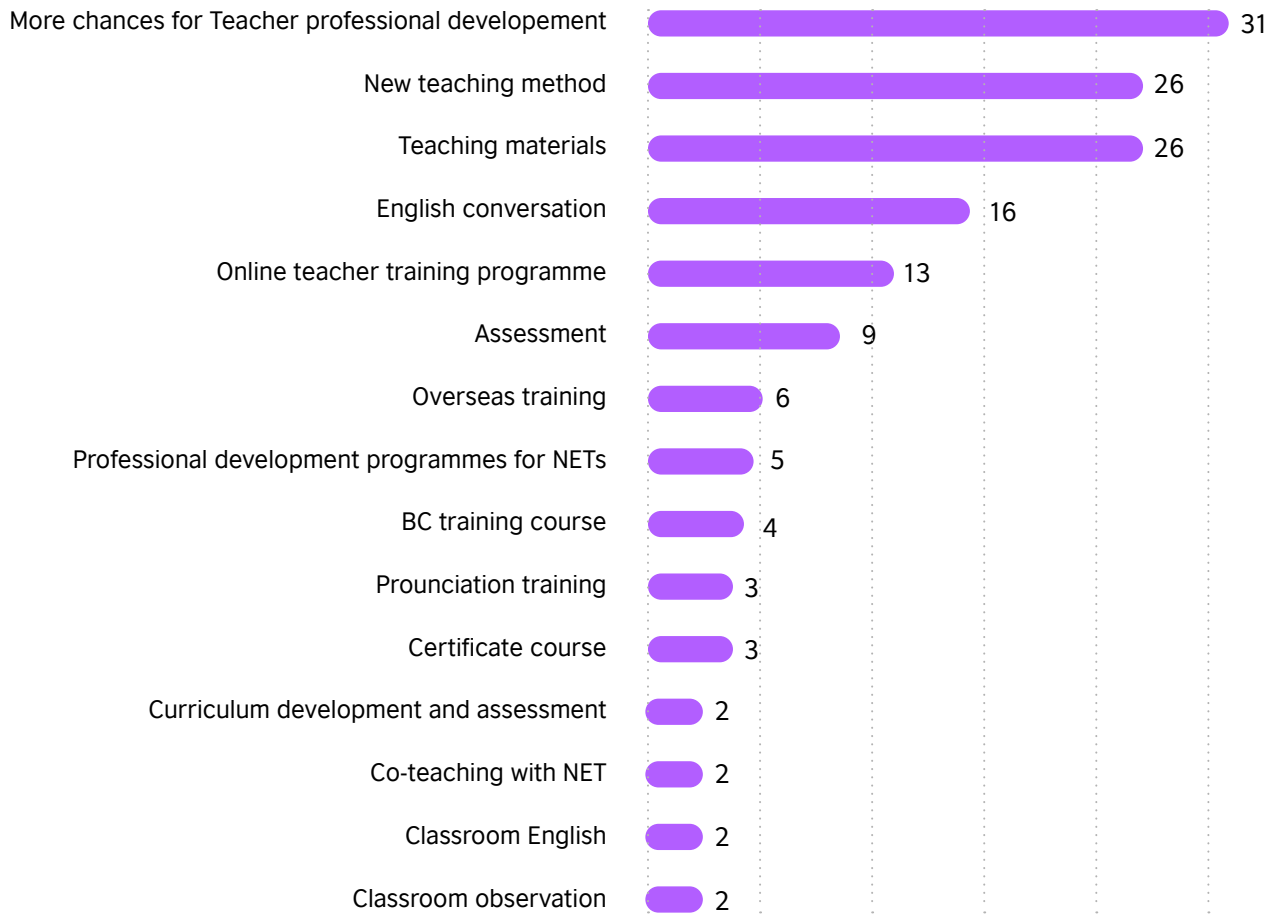
There were two optional open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The first was:

Please write one or two sentences to tell us about areas of your work as a teacher of English that you would like to receive more professional development support for.

There were 211 responses to the first question and Figure 62 summarises these. A number of teachers did not, as requested, specify topics they wanted to focus on in their professional development but rather reaffirmed the need they felt for further development opportunities, including online training courses. Similarly, responses which referred to overseas training, British Council courses or training provided by native English speakers did not specify what areas of their work teachers wanted them to focus on.

Those who did specify topics for professional development emphasised an interest in learning about teaching methods (26 mentions), teaching materials (26) and English conversation (16 – this refers to teachers' own spoken proficiency). All of the other issues listed here were mentioned fewer than 10 times. Combined references to pronunciation training, conversation and classroom English suggest an interest among teachers in improving their own English skills.

Figure 62: Areas for further professional development (n = 211)



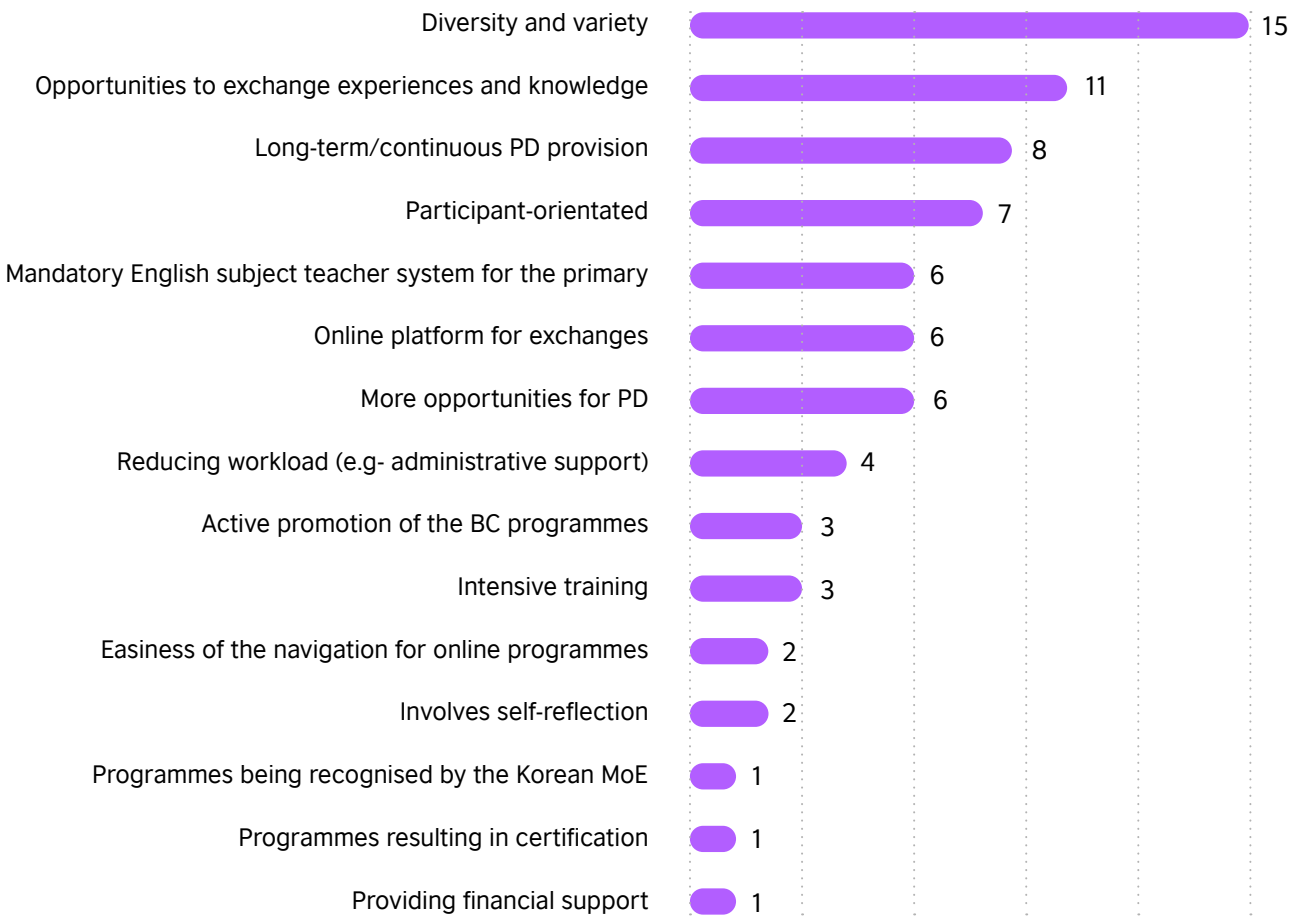
7.1.10 Effective professional development

The second optional open-ended question was:

If you would like to make any suggestions for how effective professional development can be made available to teachers of English in primary and secondary schools in Korea please use this space.

There were 76 valid responses to this question and Figure 63 summarises these. In different ways, teachers emphasised the value of diversity and variety as features of effective professional development. Other features that were mentioned several times were opportunities to exchange experiences and knowledge (including via online platforms), long-term (rather than short and intensive) professional development, and provision that was participant-focused - i.e. based on their needs. Several additional items listed in Figure 63 were listed infrequently, but combined to highlight more general concerns. For example, references to workloads, certification, recognition and financial support all point towards conditions which teachers feel would facilitate their participation in professional development.

Figure 63: Features of effective professional development (n = 76)



7.2 Interview results

There were 63 survey respondents from Korea who volunteered for a follow-up interview and provided contact details. Names were randomized and contacted in order and 20 interviews were completed. Responses are summarised here under headings that reflect the themes covered in the interviews. The interviewees worked in primary (9), junior high (6) and senior high (5) schools and came from nine different regions. The majority (16) had 15 years' experience or less and 75 per cent were also English specialists.

7.2.1 Professional development needs

Respondents highlighted several aspects of English teaching and learning they wanted more professional development on. Those mentioned by several teachers were:

- teaching reading skills
- teaching writing skills
- teaching students of different levels, especially lower levels
- improving teachers' own proficiency in English.

These points are illustrated in the quotations below:

> *In primary school English classes, while speaking and listening are emphasized, opportunities to develop reading and wiring [sic] skills are not much available … I found out that teaching reading and writing to my students is very difficult. In 5th and 6th grades, as students should learn longer sentences, the ratio of underachievers in reading and writing increases. So I think the PD should be more focused on teaching reading and writing skills.*

> *I [junior high school teacher] want to develop skills to teach students with difficulty in basic reading skills. National English curriculum assumes that secondary school students have already acquired awareness of phoneme-grapheme correspondences and how to read words, but in fact there are a considerable number of underachievers. In addition, secondary school teachers may not have been trained enough to teach for those areas.*

> *This year I was assigned to teach students of lower levels, especially students with reading difficulty. So I'm interested in teaching basic reading skills, reading picture books, and reading fluency.*

> *I am teaching English at middle school, so I am always concerned that my English skills may decrease every year. So, I want to maintain my English skills. Also I want to use English as a medium of instruction in my classes as much as possible. I don't want myself to be a bad model as an English teacher.*

> *Before pandemic era, I had taken PD programs to learn various activities for my English classes. But during COVID-19 I couldn't find opportunities for communicate in English, so I mainly took English conversation courses. Besides, since we expect similar situations like COVID-19 will take place again, I believe PD programs like English conversation courses should be more provided.*

Other topics that were mentioned less frequently (twice at most) were:

- online teaching tools
- project work
- teaching speaking
- English culture.

7.2.2 Teachers' attitudes to online professional development

The Korean interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about the value of online professional development, focusing in particular on the following advantages:

- it is efficient and you can save time
- it is easy to access anytime and anywhere
- it does not require travel
- a range of programmes are available
- it gives teachers access to different lecturers.

One teacher, for example, explained that

> *I always found various PD programs available from the official notices by educational authorities, but I couldn't take the sessions that I wanted, such as using multimedia in English classes or teaching English through drama. I missed those sessions because they were provided offline. These days it is very difficult to travel safe and not desirable, especially, for us teachers to travel long distance for PD when considering our young students. So I hope educational authorities keep providing online PD sessions rather than offline sessions.*

Another added:

> *I prefer teaching online as a teacher and taking online courses as a participant. As for online teaching and learning, we don't need to move, and it is very convenient to share data and run classroom rules. Besides I can easily watch video clips on my own computer.*

Some noted that the quality of online professional development was better when the lecturers were effective and sessions were interactive.

One respondent explained barriers she had faced to online professional development:

> *Teachers have a very limited access to international websites at school. Schools do not provide teachers enough support necessary to use many useful international websites at school. To use those websites like Kahoot and many others, teachers have to create their own personal accounts since they are not allowed to use school official accounts. We have to sign up for our personal accounts and pay with school credit cards. International websites usually run on the yearly base. If we do not cancel at the right time before the extension for another year and we transfer to other schools [public school teachers transfer regularly to other schools], it causes complex administrative problems. For this reason, schools are not willing to support us for using international websites.*

7.2.3 Educational authorities and online professional development

Interviewees provided a mixture of positive and more critical comments on the online professional development provided by education authorities in Korea. One teacher felt that

> *educational authorities provide very well-organized PD programs. They provide very practical contents which I can easily apply to my classes. They plan what teachers need in advance and continuously provide training opportunities so that teachers can take them whenever they want. So I think Korean government is doing very good job for that matter.*

In particular, various positive comments were made about professional learning communities organised by the education authorities:

> *Project learning is recommended at school now. Learning communities for project learning are organized and supported by offices of education.*

> *Offices of education arrange communities lead by head teachers. Head teachers open a community and select topics. For example, there was a community for teaching reading picture books. Each teacher there shared their teaching practices such as how to use picture books in class and recommend good books and teaching ideas to each other. I could learn a lot.*

> *I found [online] PD programs offered by the office of education very useful. Since 2020, they provided PD programs like professional learning communities where actual classroom practices were shared. For example, head teachers or lead teachers shared their teaching practices.*

Several more critical comments were also made and one that recurred was that, while online professional development opportunities are provided by the education authorities, teachers were not sufficiently informed about them. The interviewees noted that one-time official notices that teachers received were not an effective way to encourage teachers to participate. As one teacher noted, 'just sending official documents does not guarantee that all teachers are well informed of programs'. Others made similar points:

> *During COVID-19, many teachers asked for technology-based learning and using ZOOM for real time classes, and the offices of education reacted immediately and arranged PD sessions. But I think those PD programs were not enough promoted. Various practical sessions were available at e-learning centres, but many teachers were not well aware of it. Overall, PD programs have now improved a lot to a very satisfactory level. But the problem is the lack of promotion. I think other ways of promotion except routine official notice should be activated.*

> *Educational authorities notify available PD programs through official notices, so I can learn what is available and can choose what I want to take because my school well runs regular curriculum meetings, and at the meetings we can share and view those official notices. But not every teacher is well informed of available PD programs. Just sending official documents does not guarantee that all teachers are well informed of programs.*

A second observation made by several teachers was that the official online professional development available was not sufficiently practical:

> *PD programs offered by offices of education do not contribute to development. When I took those sessions, I thought the teachers as lecturers worked hard and tried efforts but they just displayed their teaching skills and showed how they themselves were doing a great job. Of course I could get some teaching materials for my classes but I didn't find the programs useful for developing my practical teaching skills.*

> *As far as I know, I think PD offered by offices of education is rather formal and perfunctory and not practical. Teachers may feel the same way, I guess. I'm afraid I may not understand the situation so well, though. I think PD programs should be classroom-based and practical.*

In addition to these two recurrent criticisms, teachers also highlighted other less positive views about the Ministry of Education online professional development they had access to: it was 'unsystematic', with overlap between different courses; there was insufficient focus on the development of teachers' educational technology skills; the quality of trainers varied (they are often teachers); and the feedback participants provided does not seem to be used to improve subsequent training programmes:

> *Despite benefits of online PD and educational authorities' efforts and support, some courses overlapped in contents because the pool of lecturers is limited. Since usually they use the professors or teachers in the local areas as lecturers, it happens that the same lecturers frequently teach similar sessions. … Besides, I found out that very basic contents that teachers already know were taught in some courses, so I think contents need to be screened in advance. … I know educational authorities' efforts, but they just arrange PD programs and provide opportunities, but that's it. I do not know what they do after running the programs. That is what I am sorry about.*

7.2.4 Engagement in online professional development

All 20 interviewees said they had engaged in online professional development in the previous 12 months and they were asked to provide details of this. Box 2 below highlights the range of activities they mentioned.

Box 2: Korean Interviewees; online professional development

- online professional development by Office of Education, via Zoom
- online courses at several private professional development websites such as Teacherville, Yanadoo, I-scream media
- Zoom programmes regarding teaching basic skills provided by offices of education in cooperation with KICE (Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation)
- professional learning community activities
- informal teacher communities on social media (for example, Kakao) are a useful source of information and materials
- websites (for example, BBC) and social media sites such as Naver blogs and cafes
- online British Council course on teaching the four skills
- British Council global teaching website
- recorded News listening course at YBM websites
- EBS online courses
- online programmes provided by institutes (such as Chungbuk and Chungnam)
- online courses to improve teachers' own speaking skills
- training about mobile app called PengTalk, developed for primary school students
- mobile apps such as Clubhouse.

Overall, interviewees noted that they obtained useful ideas from these sources, but some also commented less positively on the quality of the online professional development they had taken part in. Three observations were that

- online professional development provision by commercial providers was often not suitable for teachers of English and focused more on developing basic English skills

> *Some courses from the private providers, for example I-scream, were not taught by English teachers. Because the courses were taught by those who are not teachers but just persons with good English skills, the contents were not appropriate for teaching students. I felt the target was not the teachers but anyone who wants to develop English skills.*

- provision was often not specific to English and was designed for teachers generally

> *Online English courses at private providers are not targeted just for teachers of English but for teachers of all subjects. The number of these courses is decreasing. These courses are easy for teachers of English and challenging for teachers of other subjects.*

- some online courses for teachers were lacking in interactivity among participants.

> *In online sessions, participants are less active. They are not willing to ask questions or respond. Koreans tend to be less active in classrooms and this tendency increases in online classrooms. For example, in Zoom conferences, people usually turn off the mics, so we cannot hear other participants' responses or reactions to the instructor. Eye contact is difficult and immediate response is not easy to be noticed. Instructors get passive and defensive in teaching online.*

7.2.5 Live vs recorded online sessions

Respondents were asked whether they preferred online training to be live or recorded.

A few teachers were in favour of recorded online professional development because it can be watched any time; ('I prefer recorded webinar since I can watch it anytime. On the contrary [sic], in the case of live webinar, I can miss part of it when unexpected things occur'). Also, if teachers had other matters to attend to, they could pause recorded sessions and return to them later. Most teachers, though, expressed a clear preference for live online sessions, largely because they provide opportunities for real-time interaction and communication:

> *Two-way interactive online sessions are not available right now. I prefer interactive live online sessions if available.*

> *Live webinar is effective. Interaction can occur and engagement will increase even though it depends on how the instructor runs sessions.*

> *I prefer live sessions where real-time interaction can occur. Also, I think the number of the participants is important. In small-sized sessions, we can practice teaching activities in online sessions.*

One teacher noted they did not mind whether the online professional development was live or recorded as long it was recognised by the Ministry and teachers received credit for taking part. Another felt that, while they did not mind doing recorded online professional development for the purposes of gaining credits, real-time interactive courses provided a more authentic professional development experience.

7.2.6 The future of online professional development

The Korean teachers interviewed were unanimous in the view that there would continue to be a demand for online professional development even post-COVID–19. They felt that, due to the pandemic, many teachers had now experienced the benefits (including convenience) of learning online and they would be keen to continue doing so. It was also felt that because the Ministry of Education is placing greater emphasis on online learning for students, this would also fuel teachers' interest in online professional development. Some teachers noted that a blended approach that combined face–to–face professional development and online professional development would be effective:

> *Even though the pandemic is over, I think teachers will demand online PD. As for online programs, you can take the courses at school after work or at home, anytime you want. There will be needs for online sessions where the benefits from online sessions are expected but at the same time there will also be demands for offline where close interaction is essential.*

> *Teachers faced situations where they had to use online tools during the pandemic era. They went through online teaching experiences and acquired relevant skills. So they want to make the best use of those experience and skills even after the pandemic. I think PD programs are improving and evolving in a way that can integrate benefits from online, for example, developing to a blended approach to PD.*

7.3 Korea; conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions for Korea are based on responses to an online survey provided by 252 teachers[21] and online interviews with 20 teachers selected randomly from a volunteer sample of 63 survey respondents. Overall, the sample was female, 31-50 years old, qualified at BA and (for just over 40 per cent) MA level, and teaching in both primary (57 per cent) and secondary schools (43 per cent) in cities (especially the capital) or small towns. Less than 40 per cent of primary school teachers described themselves as ELT specialist teachers (for junior and senior high schools the corresponding figures were 92.5 per cent and 88.8 per cent respectively).

It needs to be acknowledged that the online nature of the study may have encouraged particular groups of teachers to participate more than others (though the age range of the respondents does not suggest any bias to younger teachers). In Korea, widespread access to and use of the internet and associated technologies also make it less likely that the respondent profile was severely skewed by the online methods used in the study. In national terms[22], though, the response rate was not high and the primary reason for this was lack of official support. Regional education offices were not able to promote the research (they required letters of support from central educational authorities which we were not able to obtain in the timeframes for the study) and access to teachers was obtained mainly through associations for English teachers who agreed to promote the study among their members. Further research into the professional development needs and practices of government school teachers of English in Korea will benefit significantly from engagement with local education authorities who control access to teachers and who can, in particular, officially invite large numbers of teachers to contribute to online surveys.

7.3.1 Korea: key findings

The main findings to emerge from the Korea study were the following:

- Teachers of English in Korea have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities, online and face–to–face, provided by educational authorities, local education institutes, and private organisations.

- In terms of topic for professional development purposes, there was a clear interest among Korean teachers in teaching reading, writing and speaking, along with assessment and 21st century skills. Teachers' interest in improving their own English proficiency also emerged clearly during the interviews. A concern for how to teach students of different levels was also evident.

- Almost 90 per cent of respondents said they had taken part in face–to–face professional development in the previous 12 months; the equivalent figure for online professional development was just under 95 per cent.

- For both face–to–face and online professional development, the majority of respondents indicated that their participation was free of charge and voluntary.

- For face–to–face professional development, official education authorities (such as National Training Institutes) and schools were the main providers, with courses, seminars and workshops being the activity most frequently cited by respondents. Reading about teaching, informal discussions and peer observation were also common activities.

- For online professional development, official education authorities were again

[21]This is the number who answered all questions.

[22]Figures in various official reports (such as those produced by the Korea Educational Development Institute) suggest there are c. 40,000 teachers of English in Korean primary and high schools.

the main provider cited, and courses, seminars and workshops were once more the predominant activity, followed by watching online videos about teaching and finding teaching materials online.

- Although over 87 per cent were satisfied with the professional development they had access to, in the interviews, teachers expressed varying views about the quality of the official professional development that was provided in Korea; its relevance to the local context was valued but teachers also wanted to be informed more effectively about what was available; some also felt that official professional development was not sufficiently co-ordinated or practical.

- The main factor that influences Korean teachers' decisions to engage in online CPD is its practical utility; teachers were also interested in online professional development that keeps them up-to-date with new ideas and considerations of time (duration of activities) and flexibility (when and where to study) also influenced decisions about whether to participate.

- Korean teachers of English have good access to stable internet, though for over 40 per cent of respondents the costs of data limit the time they spend online; laptops are the devices most widely used by teachers to get online.

- Kakaotalk and Naver Café/Band are, along with e-mail, the online platforms most commonly used by this sample of teachers of English in Korea.

- While a majority (61 per cent) of survey respondents said they prefer face–to–face professional development, most (and the majority of interview respondents) were nonetheless positive about the value of doing professional development online. Live interactive sessions were generally preferred to recorded online sessions.

- Attitudes to the UK as a source of expertise in ELT were positive, although it was also felt by a majority that international organisations do not fully understand Korean teachers' needs. International organisations seem to contribute in a minor way to both face–to–face and online professional development for teachers in Korea.

- While the language used was not reported by teachers to be a major factor in their decisions to do online professional development, the vast majority of survey respondents (84 per cent) did indicate that they would like more professional development activities in English, rather than Korean. Insights from the interviews suggested that language preferences also depended on whether the professional development focused on language improvement (in which case English was preferred) or teaching skills (where Korean might be preferable).

- In explaining how professional development could be effectively provided for them, respondents highlighted the importance of a having access to a variety of options, including opportunities to exchange experiences with other teachers, as well as longer-term activities that addressed their needs. Professional learning communities, both formal and informal, were noted by teachers as a valuable approach to professional development.

- Workloads and the lack of certification, recognition and financial support were noted as factors that hindered Korean teachers' efforts to engage in professional development.

- According to the interviewees, online resources that appeal to Korean teachers would have a practical orientation and be available as PDFs and useable without major adaptations. Interviewees felt that social network services would be an effective way for the British Council to promote its online resources.

7.3.2 Korea: recommendations

To conclude this section, we present some recommendations for the professional development of basic education for Korean teachers of English.

1. While teachers' preferences will vary depending on the grades they teach (e.g. whether they are subject specialists or not), this study highlighted general interest among teachers in improving their ability to develop learners' language skills, particularly reading, writing and speaking (including catering for the needs of varying levels of students in skills development). Professional development offers which target these areas have the potential to appeal to a wide range of teachers.

2. Korean teachers are interested in keeping up to date with new ideas relevant to the teaching of English, but they are more likely to be attracted to resources which have immediate practical relevance or utility; this implies that professional development resources should be easily transferrable to the classroom and/or provide concrete illustrations (including through demonstration videos) on what teachers can do in their own work. Lack of focus on practical teaching skills was a common criticism of the official professional development available to respondents in this study.

3. While teachers in Korea still prefer face–to–face professional development, this study suggests that attitudes to online professional development in the country are positive (more so even than in China and Japan) and that teachers appreciate the benefits that learning online provides, indicating clear opportunities for growth in this area. Their preferences for live interactive sessions over recorded material are dominant (though the convenience of asynchronous resources was also acknowledged). A preference for downloadable PDFs rather than documents in MS Word and resources that are free and time-economical should also be noted.

4. A number of qualitative responses indicated that opportunities to participate in online PD are sometimes compromised or lost due to poor administration of initiatives, particularly notification of events and systematic planning of online opportunities. Educational organisations and authorities in Korea may benefit from developing more appropriate and effective means to communicate such activities.

5. As in Japan, international providers offering professional development support in Korea should be cognisant of local norms and constraints influencing teachers' practices and needs in basic education. Partnerships with local organisations that are experienced in providing for these needs would likely offer much more potential for success than exclusively individual efforts involving globalised materials. Through such partnerships, PD resources can be tailored to Korean contexts (e.g. use of curricular content and classroom videos) more effectively.

6. There is evidence in the data that PD approaches that are more teacher-driven, collaborative and longer-term are having a positive impact among Korean teachers, such as teacher professional communities (including online) as well as collaborative initiatives (e.g. collaborative research, instructional rounds). Innovative ways of developing such approaches using both online and hybrid modalities can be explored further.

7. Korean teachers place clear value in their own English language proficiency, in line with official policy for English to be taught through English. However, there is evidence of challenges in this area, indicating that, similarly to Japanese teachers, many need support with their English skills for classroom teaching through, for example, 'English for teaching' type courses (e.g. Freeman, 2017).

Chapter-8
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This landscape report on the digital CPD needs of teachers of English in basic education in China, Japan and South Korea is the result of comprehensive research that took place in 2021 and 2022. Using questionnaires and interviews, over 7,000 teachers working at primary and secondary levels across China, Japan and South Korea gave information about their professional development experiences and preferences for future PD. The resultant findings and recommendations contained in this report will therefore be invaluable reading for policy makers, providers of teacher education and other stakeholders involved in the professional development of state sector English teachers.

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