
Continuing Professional Development through mobile messaging apps





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Executive summary

This study investigates the characteristics of effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) using mobile messenger apps for teachers in remote contexts, and the extent to which the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas, Mexico, currently aligns with these best practice characteristics. Relevant literature was reviewed, and the resulting insights were compared with the design and delivery of the Chiapas programme so far, drawing on evidence from existing documentation as well as from a new survey of 148 course participants.

The overall conclusions of this study are that:

- In general, the use of mobile messaging and the establishment of Communities of Practice have good potential for the provision of CPD for teachers in remote/rural contexts, who otherwise tend to have very little access to professional development opportunities. There are risks and challenges, but these largely can be overcome.
- In Chiapas, the programme is proving engaging and effective for participants’ development as teachers. It is well conceived, well designed and well received, and should continue mostly as it is. Nonetheless, it is worth now reviewing and potentially slightly revising some aspects of the course.
- The Chiapas “Low-tech CPD” programme could also be useful to teachers in other similar contexts, provided it is adapted appropriately for their local circumstances.

General insights and recommendations for low-tech remote CPD:

1. CPD should improve students’ learning and should be long-term, not one-off.
2. CPD should be teacher-centred, reflective and critical.
3. CPD should be context-relevant and should involve a range of key stakeholders.

4. It helps to use existing tech/infrastructure, and to train teachers to use it.

5. Structure, guidelines/ground rules and adequate time for response and reflection are all essential to effective remote CPD. Initial face-to-face workshops can help establish these systems and expectations.

Opportunities/potential benefits of low-tech remote CPD:

6. Remote CPD can remove barriers by enabling teachers to participate who are unable to travel to in-person sessions and by harnessing the familiarity and relative ease of common mobile messaging apps like WhatsApp or Telegram.

7. Remote CPD can facilitate greater interactivity and engagement through collaborative tools such as quizzes or polls, and through the use of multimedia to share practical examples, e.g. videos, demos, teaching materials, etc.

8. Communities of practice (CoPs) can enable peer learning and support in a relatively safe environment, where teachers can share knowledge and experience as well as potentially providing a model for others of tech-enabled professional learning. Remote CoPs can also facilitate a sense of belonging and purpose that are harder to achieve in contexts where teachers are geographically dispersed.

9. Through remote CPD, teachers can develop skills beyond language learning methodology – they may also improve their own English language skills and their awareness of how social media can be used for learning purposes.

Chiapas insight:

The Chiapas “Low-tech CPD” programme currently fulfils many of these potential opportunities. Future/ similar programmes might also consider including more offline in-person collaboration between teachers who are geographically close, and the possibility of recruiting leaders, facilitators or mentors from among the community itself.

Risks/challenges of low-tech remote CPD

10. A clear approach and solid foundation are key. It's generally advisable to avoid traditional top-down, “knowledge transmission” style CPD in favour of more empowering, democratic and contextualised learning approaches.
11. Low-resource contexts are unique and learnings/ insights from other contexts might not always be applicable or welcome. More research on this is needed.
12. Technology, including physical devices such as mobile phones and software such as messaging apps, is not 100% reliable, available, affordable or accessible. Adequate funding, equipment, support and time are needed to ensure effective and sustainable participation in tech-enabled, potentially large-scale, CPD programmes.
13. Effective remote tech-enabled CPD does have some time, cost and social implications which should not be underestimated or compromised. These factors can impact the scale and sustainability of such programmes.

14. CPD programmes are not immune to the influence of existing social roles, systems and patterns of (in)equity. Especially in remote and/or low-resource contexts, factors such as the use of particular language(s) or teachers' own experience of marginalisation and disadvantage can affect their participation.

Chiapas insight:

Most of the risks and challenges over which the British Council arguably has some control or responsibility appear to have been well considered, avoided and/or mitigated in the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas. Areas for further consideration include (1) syllabus development involving participants themselves, (2) ongoing provision of mobile devices and data, (3) allowing adequate time for learning, training, building rapport etc., (4) the use of languages other than English, and (5) better sharing of key insights from similar projects across the British Council's offices worldwide.

A list of specific recommendations for the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas is given at the end of this report.



Introduction

Background and context

For the past several years, the British Council has been exploring low-tech continuing professional development (CPD) possibilities for English teachers. While this approach to teacher development was already of interest to training providers globally, the widespread lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic undoubtedly inspired many, including the British Council, to investigate effective alternatives to face-to-face learning opportunities with increasing urgency.

As of early 2023, the British Council had already found apparent success with distance CPD initiatives for teachers in Cuba and Venezuela. It was therefore decided to adapt the “Low-tech CPD” programme and resources for teachers in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, a predominantly rural context in which many teachers have very limited opportunities to participate in CPD. Once the first module¹ had been piloted, there was a clear opportunity to investigate how it was working in practice, whether it should be continued and how it might be improved.

This study therefore takes a two-part approach: (1) a literature review on online, distance and low-tech CPD to discover what constitutes and enables best practice in such approaches; and (2) comparison of the British Council’s “Low-tech CPD” programme so far with the insights from this review. This second part is based on existing reports from the first (pilot) module and a further survey of participants about to begin the second module. The overarching objective of this study is to understand better the potential for this type of CPD model; the programme in Chiapas provides a useful case study of the British Council’s efforts so far.

Research questions (RQs)

This report summarises the findings arising from three broad research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) using mobile messenger apps for teachers in remote contexts?
2. To what extent does the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas currently align with best practice characteristics?
3. Is anything else happening in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas which seems to be particularly effective for the participating teachers’ development?

Note: this study does not consider specific programme contents, i.e. to what extent the focus or syllabus of a given module in the Chiapas programme is appropriate for English language teacher training. Rather, the focus is on the general suitability and effectiveness of mobile messaging for teachers’ CPD in remote and low-resource contexts, and the extent to which the current British Council initiative in Chiapas fulfils its potential in this regard.

¹ At the time of writing, a second module is underway, which is focused on class management. The first (pilot) module was focused on lesson planning.

Literature summary: Low-tech Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers

The review of existing literature and research for this project centred on low-tech CPD for teachers globally, especially those which are similar in context, approach, design and/or focus to the British Council's "Low-tech CPD" course in Chiapas. This directly addresses RQ1:

Research Question 1

What are the characteristics of effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) using mobile messenger apps for teachers in remote contexts?

The literature that was reviewed fell into three broad categories:

1. Meta-analyses and overview/umbrella studies of low-tech and/or mobile-first CPD for teachers in low-resource and remote/rural contexts.
2. Original research studies of similar CPD initiatives in similar contexts to Chiapas.
3. Some country-relevant data for wider background/context.

A full list of references is available at the end of this report. Appendix 1 contains a summary table of initiatives similar to the British Council's programme in Chiapas.

Overall, the evidence from this review suggests that the use of mobile messaging and the establishment of Communities of Practice (including a combination of the two) have good potential for the provision of CPD for teachers in remote/rural contexts, who otherwise tend to have very little access to professional development opportunities. There are risks and challenges, but existing projects have also found ways to overcome many of these. Key insights are summarised below, grouped under:

- General insights and recommendations
- Opportunities/potential benefits
- Risks/challenges

Some of the reviewed literature provided particularly relevant and direct guidance on how to make the most of tech-enabled CPD initiatives in low-resource contexts. These references are summarised at the end of this report ([Annotated references: Specific best practice guidance](#)).

General insights and recommendations

The aims and nature of CPD

- It's important to remember that the ultimate goal of developing teachers' skills is to improve their students' learning.
- CPD should be long-term, ongoing, iterative and followed up (one-offs don't work).

Teacher-centred

- Community is key, i.e. **human connection and genuine collaboration** (not just co-presence), working on a shared challenge, with a shared aim or towards a shared goal.
- CPD has to recognise and involve **teachers' own expertise and experience** (i.e. be truly co-creative and participatory, not top-down and transmissive in nature). It should also meet them "where they're at", which might also mean first acknowledging and addressing entrenched mindsets, habits, fears or resistance.
- CPD has to be **reflective** – don't just give/show teachers something, send them off to try it out and then leave it there. Follow up, provide support and guidance, encourage peer discussion that is **critical** in nature.

Context

- **Context** is key. Every teaching and learning context is unique and what appeared to work in one study is not necessarily directly transferable to other contexts, though it is possible to draw some general conclusions about best practices.
- CPD forms part of an **ecosystem**. Effective CPD isn't just about the teacher participants in a programme. Other stakeholder involvement and support (e.g. headteachers, parents/carers) is often critical to success and sustainability.

Tech availability/literacy

- Use of tech in low-resource contexts works well when it harnesses **existing infrastructure and tech the teachers are already familiar with** (e.g. WhatsApp).
- That said, **we can't assume teachers know how to use specific tech**, and in particular we can't assume they can use it for professional purposes. There's a reason such tools are referred to as "social media". Teachers almost always need some **training**.

Programme design and logistics

- CPD needs **structure and guidelines/ground rules**, especially remote synchronous sessions. This can also help keep discussions collaborative, critical and professionally-focused.
- It's essential to allow enough **time** for teachers to engage, reflect, respond and learn.
- When setting up a community of practice, an **initial face-to-face training workshop** is arguably the best way to build the foundations of the group.



Opportunities/potential benefits

Removal of barriers

- Using remote tech and social media for CPD **removes the need for teachers to be physically present**. This can lighten common administrative, bureaucratic and geographical complications that can lead to poor participation and resilience.
- That said, online and offline collaboration may overlap and usefully interact – **there's no reason things must be digital-only if teachers are physically close to each other**.
- Common social media apps like WhatsApp or Telegram are **relatively quick and easy to use** – no need to log on each time.

Interactivity and engagement

- The **multimodal features of social media** such as WhatsApp or Telegram make it relatively easy to use text, pictures, audio files and video, plus holding synchronous calls, allowing for greater variety and potential engagement with CPD resources.
- **Interactive content and opportunities to collaborate** are very important for boosting engagement – provided they're easy to access. This could be as simple as regular short surveys. One overview paper reports on the use of online quizzes and polls in some cases.
- Teachers respond extremely well to **examples** in their CPD discussions and materials. This could be in the form of short videos (recorded in contexts similar to teachers' own), demonstration lessons, case studies, narratives, learner feedback, peer observation, transcripts, real teaching materials and so on.

Peer learning and support

- **A sense of group membership and of professional purpose**. In particular, the use of social media can allow connection between geographically dispersed individuals who can't realistically meet in person and form a community any other way.
- Communities of practice allow teachers to **share knowledge and experience** relatively quickly and easily, and (at least in theory) in a relatively safe environment.

- CoPs also facilitate **peer support**, not only for sharing challenges (and receiving support and/or guidance in response) but also for sharing positive moments, experiences of achievement or success. This can help to counter the risk of feeling left out or isolated that many teachers in remote/rural contexts can experience.
- Leaders, facilitators or mentors can be recruited from among the community itself and act as sort of 'peer ambassadors', **modelling what professional learning looks like** (especially tech-enabled CPD) for other teachers in their community.

Developing additional skills

- For English teachers, regular interaction and collaboration with peers also allows them to **practise and develop their own English language skills**.
- The very process of **using social media for CPD** helps teachers learn how to use it for this purpose. It may also open their eyes to its uses and benefits for their own learners.

Risks/challenges

A clear approach and solid foundation are key

- A CPD programme has to be well-designed in itself, or no edtech will save it. One author notes succinctly: “Despite the many useful affordances and features that technology offers, it is not a silver bullet which will solve problems inherent within an existing teacher education system.” (Lightfoot, 2019, p. 55)
- Research in this area generally recommends against **common traditional top-down, transmissive models of CPD** which mean that teachers’ own expertise, experience and creativity doesn’t feed into their CPD. Such undemocratic, unempowering, decontextualised approaches can lead to demotivation.

Low-resource contexts

- It’s important to recognise **the uniqueness of lower-income contexts** and not assume that approaches which have proven effective in better-resourced, higher-income contexts can simply be transferred and prove equally effective.
- **More progressive and participatory or constructivist approaches may not be familiar or welcome** in some contexts (at least at first). Borg et al. (2020) note that “evidence of ‘what works’ in teacher professional development is not typically derived from the kinds of under-researched low-resource contexts the British Council works in. This does not mean such global evidence is irrelevant to such contexts, but its applicability does need to be critically considered.”
- Many authors report the **paucity of research into the effectiveness of tech-supported CPD** (compared with CPD delivered without technology) **in low-resource contexts**. We simply don’t have a large body of evidence (yet) as to what works.

Availability and use of tech

- Phones and data/connectivity may not be available to all teachers. A number of studies report (and recommend) **providing teachers with the equipment and funding** to actually participate in remote/mobile-first CPD.
- **Connectivity and cost are related to sustainability** – if a programme provides equipment and data to teachers but later removes this provision, their continued participation is at risk.

- Even if provided, **phones may be lost**, stolen or broken and (if not backed up) teachers might not be able to retrieve previous WhatsApp history.
- WhatsApp (or similar tech) is potentially more sustainable than other means of CPD, e.g. due to ease of scale, but also **potentially very time-consuming**, which can affect its long-term sustainability. Administering, facilitating and mentoring in particular can all take significant time.
- Teachers may not know **how to use social media** for professional, i.e. not only social, purposes.
- The **‘robustness’ of the tech chosen for CPD** is not controlled by the teachers or facilitators when the tech being used is a third-party app that exists in its own right (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram) and when its function is dependent on other infrastructure.

Use of time and resources

- A commonly-cited risk is **not allowing enough time** for participation, co-creation, learning, tech training, building rapport and also for practical things like poor connectivity which can cause delays in asynchronous interactions.
- “Establishing an online group is simple. Getting the people within the group to **use it frequently and purposefully** is more challenging. A plan of how to engage and encourage teachers to participate is vital.” (Padwad & Parnham, 2019, p. 566)
- **Underestimating the cost**. One report notes that “It is more expensive in [lower-resourced settings] (as compared to higher-income countries with more extensive infrastructure and resource banks) to provide even the most basic support, such as printed handouts for offline workshops or Wi-Fi access through modems or data bundles.” (Abu-Amsha et al, 2020, p. 38)
- **Lack of consistent or sustainable design** – many CPD programmes are set up for short periods and piloted/trialled but not carried forward. Similarly, some models are popular when they begin but seem to fade away as initial enthusiasm and external support (e.g. financial or structural) also fades away.



Social roles and (in)equity

- **English-only approaches.** Some studies report the use of translanguaging and multilingual approaches, including CPD materials available in multiple and/or local languages, to ensure greater access and equity among teacher participants.
- Critical reflective practice is important but there's also a risk of **existing social roles being reproduced in teachers' groups** and perhaps not lending themselves to the sort of peer-led, democratic, collaborative dialogue that supports critical reflective practice.
- **Teachers' own marginalisation and disadvantage.** In remote and rural contexts, teachers themselves may face similar challenges to their students in terms of isolation, poverty and inequity, which can be demotivating and demoralising.
- It's not uncommon in WhatsApp groups and similar online communities for **only a small proportion of the participants to contribute/post actively** and for the other members to take a more passive or observative role. This may not be detrimental to participation (observing and reflecting independently is still valuable!) but it makes it hard for researchers to "see" and analyse all teachers' engagement. (Connectivity issues may also play a role in teachers' willingness or ability to participate actively.)

- **Off-topic and/or social interactions happening within professional space/time.** CPD providers/facilitators need to decide what to do when this inevitably occurs. Some study authors said they just let it go because forming social bonds was deemed so important when creating a culture where teachers could be genuine, supportive and critical in their interactions. Other authors report providing ground rules and structure more explicitly to keep interactions focused and on-topic.

Applying learnings (or not) from other studies

- Large organisations and/or at local, national and even global levels are at risk of **siloed approaches**. There are a great many initiatives being set up, monitored and evaluated locally, without any oversight to "connect the dots" and learn from each other.
- It's important to remember that **much research literature is itself biased**. Authors themselves were often directly involved in designing and delivering the new initiatives they're reporting on, and as in most fields of research, there are far more accounts published of successes than of failures.

Focus on low-tech CPD in Chiapas

Background to the British Council programme

To provide context for the later findings and conclusions, this section gives an overview of the “Low-tech CPD” programme and its participants so far.

Structure of the programme

	First module	Second module ²
Dates	January–March 2023 (10 weeks)	September–November 2023 (10 weeks)
Focus of training	Lesson planning	Class management
Number of teacher participants	365 (328 of whom completed the programme)	270 (189 of whom had also participated in module one)
Number of trainers	22 international trainers (remote) 7 local trainers (two face-to-face sessions: onboarding + closure)	18 international trainers (remote) 6 local trainers (two face-to-face observations, but no onboarding or closure sessions for this module)
Number of training groups	31 (between 5 and 16 teachers per group)	25 groups (with 25 teachers per group on average)
Number of hours of training ³	20 (spread across 10 workshops, 1 per week)	
Additional support and contact	A community of practice was created for the first cohort of teachers. This community was maintained afterwards and continued into the next module.	
Equipment	All teachers are provided with mobile phone equipment and adequate connectivity in order to participate.	

² At the time of writing this report Module 2 is ongoing, so some information may be incomplete or later change.

³ Combined synchronous (live contact time) and asynchronous (recommended study time), all via Telegram.

	First module	Second module ²
Pass requirements	80% (measured via learning achievement and active participation) ⁴ required for teachers to graduate and gain a certificate.	
Impact measurement	The effectiveness of the course and the needs and perceptions of participants were measured via a baseline needs analysis survey and follow-up Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) surveys at the mid-course and end-of-course points. Learning outcomes were evaluated via a post-course lesson plan template and evaluation rubrics.	Pre-intervention and post-intervention classroom observations were conducted at the start and at the end of the module.

Weekly workshop structure

Every week of a module in the British Council “Low-tech CPD” programme involves:

- **A pre-workshop:** Asynchronous self-study materials, including a task/activity to be shared via Telegram with the trainer and/or the teacher’s group of fellow participants.
- **A synchronous 1-hour workshop** (delivered remotely via Telegram).

Each week focuses on a different sub-topic within the broad focus of the module. Trainers are provided with guidance notes to help them deliver the materials.

For any participants unable to attend the synchronous workshop, the trainer may permit them to study asynchronous materials and complete a related task. Participants are only allowed to miss a maximum of two sessions during a module.

Geographical context and teacher demographics

Chiapas is one of the Mexican states with the highest concentration of rural schools. Across Mexico, there is a shortage of English language teachers (both primary and secondary) and most work only part-time. The academic year runs from late August/early September to early July, and teachers will often change job or location or sector with any given year.

Survey data gathered from teacher participants in the first and second modules of the programme revealed the following demographics:

⁴ For details of how assessments were made, see Annex 4 to the report “Final Report_Low-Tech Project Chiapas_090523 +MT+AG.docx”.

	First module (data from 369 survey responses) ⁵		Second module (data from 145 survey responses) ⁶	
Years of teaching experience			Less than 1 year	7.6%
	1 – 2 years	16%	1 – 3 years	21.4%
	3 – 5 years	27%	4 – 6 years	19.3%
	6 – 10 years	25%	7 – 9 years	19.3%
	10+ years	32%	10+ years	32.4%
Nature of teaching work/contract	No data available.		AEE ⁷	85 (58.6%)
			Class teacher ⁸	58 (40%)
			Other ⁹	2 (1.4%)
Ages of pupils taught	Pre-school	1%	0-3 years old	0.7%
	Primary	24%	4-6 years old	15.9%
	Secondary (first grade)	21%	7-9 years old	42.8%
	Secondary (second grade)	10%	10-12 years old	40%
	Secondary (third grade)	16%	13-16 years old	35.9%
	Other	28%	17+ years old	1.4%
	Teachers' own self-reported level of English proficiency	Basic	20%	CEFR A1–A2
Pre-intermediate		16%		
Intermediate		43%	CEFR B1–B2	77.2%
Advanced		22%	CEFR C1–C2	13.1%
Participants' qualifications	No data available.		Bachelor's degree related to English language teaching	57.2%
			Other bachelor's degree	25.5%
			Master's degree related to English language teaching	9%
			Other master's degree	23.4%
			TKT (Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test)	28.3%
			Teacher's training course	13.1%
			TESL/TESOL/TEFL qualification	9%
	No hay datos disponibles.		(Other location)	43.4%
			Tuxtla Gutiérrez	24.1%
Geographical location ¹⁰			San Cristóbal de las Casas	12.4%
			Tapachula	9%
			Comitán de Domínguez	6.2%
			Villaflores	4.8%

5 There were 365 teachers participating, but the PRONI coordinator and staff also followed the course with mobile phones and are counted among the 369 survey respondents.

6 The survey received 148 responses in total but 3 respondents were facilitators, so aren't included here.

7 AEE stands for Asesores Externos Especializados, or "Special Education Advisors". They are contracted on "zero hours" basis, usually short-term, with generally lower compensation and without receiving all the benefits of employed school teachers.

8 A class teacher, or "docente de aula" is employed on a more secure contract than an AEE, not necessarily defined by the number of hours taught despite often being translated to English as "full-time teacher". Class teachers have tenure, a guaranteed minimum base salary and fringe benefits, including retirement and social security.

9 Two respondents to the second survey reported that they are not currently teaching but hold senior or management positions.

10 See Appendix 3 for a full list of locations represented by all survey respondents

Methodology and data sources

The following case study addresses RQ2 and RQ3:

Research Question 2

To what extent does the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas currently align with best practice characteristics?

Research Question 3

Is anything else happening in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas which seems to be particularly effective for the participating teachers' development?

Two methods were used to address these research questions: one was the distribution of a survey to course participants (145 teachers and 3 facilitators/trainers); the other was a review of the following relevant documentation provided by the British Council:

1. A report on the National English Programme in four states of Mexico (Chiapas, Coahuila, Guanajuato and Tamaulipas), based on desk research, interviews and teacher surveys.
2. A second report focusing specifically on the Chiapas context.
3. The content and materials used in module one of the British Council's low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas.
4. The final evaluation report of module one, produced by the consultancy firm that delivered it.
5. A monitoring and evaluation of learning (MEL) summary report of module one, produced by the British Council Mexico office.
6. An article in Voices (the IATEFL journal) about using Telegram as a tool for remote CPD, authored by the consultant that designed and delivers the British Council's low-tech programme in Mexico and Venezuela.

The participant survey

The survey¹¹ was distributed in both English and Spanish to over 300 teachers and facilitators involved in the

¹¹ See Appendices 2 and 3 for the original survey contents.



British Council's "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas, whether in module one or module two (or both). This means that some of the 148 respondents to this survey may have been reporting on their experience of a whole module (module one), some may have been reporting on their experience of part of a module (module two, which was not yet finished at the time of sending the survey), and some may have been reporting on their combined experience from a complete module (one) and the start of another module (two). All 145 teacher respondents used the Spanish-language version and their responses were officially translated into English for analysis. All 3 facilitator/trainer responses were submitted in English. The survey gathered a combination of quantitative and qualitative data about participants' backgrounds, beliefs and experiences of the programme so far.

The survey was created and administered through [Google Forms](#), a platform which does not require users to sign in and which takes relatively little bandwidth or data to access, both of which were key considerations for the participants in this study. In the interest of data protection, the use of Google Forms also ensured that all data were automatically gathered and stored securely within a designated password-protected Google Drive folder, to which only the principal researcher had access.

Standard ethics protocols for research with human participants were followed in terms of providing information at the start of the survey including the freedom to decline or withdraw, followed by a button to proceed to the survey with implied consent to participate.

Findings and discussion¹²

A review of previous documentation on module one of the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas suggest that it is proving engaging and effective for participants' development as teachers. Responses from the survey conducted for this report seem to support this high level of engagement and appreciation, but note: the present study does not include any objective evaluation or measurement of teacher learning or development as a result of participation in the programme.

¹² Note that all direct quotations in this report from the (translated) survey data have been left as they are for example, without correcting any typographical or spelling mistakes), for the sake of consistently and accurately reflecting respondents' comments.

Reasons for participating in the programme

Of 148 survey respondents, the reasons identified for participating were:

Reason for participating in the Chiapas CPD programme (from a list of suggestions provided)	# of respondents who selected this reason ¹³	As a % of the total number of respondents
Learning new teaching skills and techniques	138	93,2%
Improving my students' learning	136	91,9%
Having the chance to reflect on my teaching	117	79%
Practising and improving my English language skills	112	75,7%
Better career opportunities in future	86	58,1%
Using technology to learn	83	56,1%
Meeting other teachers	37	25%
Making new friends	13	8,8%

Other reasons suggested by respondents were:

- To travel or work abroad, possibly in an English-speaking country (3 respondents)
- Being a trainer on the programme (1 respondent)
- Learning what works for other teachers and sharing what works for me (1 respondent)
- Some degree of obligation (1 respondent)

Participation in the Community of Practice (CoP)

Of 146¹⁴ survey respondents :

- **88** participated in the CoP after module one, of whom:
 - **67** found it “very useful”
 - **18** found it “somewhat useful”
 - **64** found it “very interesting”
 - **21** found it “somewhat interesting”
- **42** did not participate
- **16** didn't know or couldn't remember if they participated

Existing research literature suggests that a CoP can facilitate peer support both when challenges arise but also when celebrating experiences of achievement or success, and that for teachers who are more geographically isolated this support can help mitigate feelings of exclusion or isolation. As participants in the CoP accompanying the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas overwhelmingly find it both useful and interesting, it seems to be an element of the programme worth continuing in future.

This apparent success is particularly notable given that the authors of the final report on module one of the Chiapas programme recommended¹⁵ adding a CoP, observing that “CoP initially can be quite culturally challenging spaces for teachers and national trainers to navigate and manage.” If issues do arise in future, the review of wider literature suggests that an initial face-to-face training workshop to set up the CoP could help.

¹³ Respondents could choose as many items from the list as they liked, and could add others, so the total number will not equal 148 precisely.

¹⁴ Two responses were discounted from analysis due to the fact they didn't know or couldn't remember if they'd participated in the CoP.

¹⁵ VSee section 5, entitled “Future Impact: Future risks, barriers, and resources required / Impacto futuro: Riesgos futuros, barreras y recursos necesarios”.

Improvement of English skills

The vast majority of survey respondents felt their participation in the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas had helped improve their own English language skills, despite this not being the focus or purpose of the programme:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas has...	
...not helped me to improve my own English language skills.	13 (8,8%)
...helped me to improve my own English language skills.	135 (91.2%)

As a similar but smaller number of participants had indicated “practising and improving my English language skills” as one of their reasons for enrolling in the programme, this can be interpreted positively as a clear benefit for participants – even those who hadn’t explicitly sought it.





Feelings of safety

The vast majority of survey respondents reported feeling safe sharing their experiences with others in the programme:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
When participating in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...I feel safe sharing my experiences with others.	125 (84,5%)
...I do not feel safe sharing my experiences with others.	5 (3,4%)
...I feel safe sometimes or in some ways, but not completely.	18 (12,2%)

Several published sources highlight the need for teachers to feel safe and well in order to learn and to meet challenges (e.g. British Council, 2015; Abu-Amsha et al, 2022). Indeed, one teacher participant in a CPD project reported by Abu-Amsha et al (2022, p. 40) pointed out: “How can we create a safe learning space if we are not feeling safe ourselves and we are not sure we will be able to feed our families?” Unfortunately, of the 18 people in the survey for this study whose responses suggest that they do not always feel safe sharing their experiences with others in the programme, very few left explanatory comments. Only two provide some deeper insight:

“Sometimes I want to share experiences with the teacher but I don’t want to feel judged by my peers. Then I like it when the instructor gives time at the end to share some questions with him or her.”

“I don’t know if my colleagues understand me when I participate.”

Participants like these would appear to benefit from some one-to-one contact opportunities with course trainers, whether synchronous or asynchronous; but to be truly inclusive and to avoid the risk of trainers spending many additional hours on individual communication with participants, the programme should foster a generally supportive atmosphere in which peers encourage each other to contribute and to share constructive feedback on these contributions. Fortunately, this seems to be a strength of the current programme (see [What participants enjoyed](#) below, for evidence of appreciation of the environment/atmosphere and opportunities to collaborate with peers).

Another strength of the current programme in terms of safety is the fact that it takes place online in Telegram groups set up specifically for participants. A 2023 report by the GSMA highlights the exceptionally high levels of mobile internet usage and awareness in Mexico compared to other Latin American countries, but also notes that many people have “concerns related to information security, unwanted contact from strangers and exposure to harmful content” and that in Mexico, “safety and security was the top-reported barrier for male and female respondents” (p. 42). From this perspective, mobile messaging apps such as WhatsApp or Telegram arguably provide a “relatively safe” environment since they are closed, i.e. not open to just any participants (Parnham et al, 2018, p. 6).

Support for disadvantaged participants

Related to the notion of safety, it's important to remember the impact of teachers' own potential marginalisation and disadvantage on their own and their students' learning, motivation and morale. In remote and rural contexts, teachers themselves may face similar challenges to their students in terms of isolation, poverty and inequity, including such issues as personal financial circumstances, access to digital equipment, travel costs, etc. (Motteram et al, 2020; Padilla et al, 2021; Abu-Amsha et al, 2022).

The “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas clearly takes some positive action towards addressing these risks, by not requiring participants to travel in order to participate, by providing mobile phone equipment and data, and by avoiding conducting the programme during the rainy season when the local infrastructure for connectivity is poor.

Duration of the programme

The majority of survey respondents appear satisfied with the current duration of one module of the programme:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In my opinion, one module of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas (for example, "classroom management" or "lesson planning")...	
...lasts too long. Just a week or two is enough for one module.	11 (7,4%)
...is not long enough. One term/semester of professional development is not enough for one module.	18 (12,2%)
...takes just the right amount of time for one module. I wouldn't change anything about this.	119 (80.4%)

One participant commented that "six to seven weeks would be sufficient" but two others suggested potential opportunities to extend the time and/or contents:

"Just add one more unit to reflect on the products because we did not get feedback from the lesson planning module, i.e. we submitted our planning but did not receive feedback on it."

"I think the topics should be given a little more time because sometimes the teacher had to run to review everything in the book in an hour and there were interesting topics that perhaps needed more time."

Realistically, it seems unlikely that many courses would receive a 100% satisfaction rate on this aspect. One participant's additional comment on this survey item seems to reflect an understandable mix of feelings:

"I like the length of the course, it would be interesting to have more time, however breaks are required and personally, it has been just the right amount of time."

Perhaps a compromise for further courses would be to provide 8–10 mandatory weeks and another 1–2 optional weeks in which participants could explore certain topics in more depth, or perhaps spend some time on more open-ended discussion, reflection or ideas-sharing.

In terms of alignment with best practices in the literature on remote CPD, the current "Low-tech CPD" programme

plan takes a sensible approach: each module covers several weeks and there are multiple subsequent modules. Such a long-term, ongoing approach is well known to be more effective for CPD than one-off trainings (see, for example, the extensive research meta-analysis by Allier-Gagneur et al, 2022). However, CPD should also be iterative and followed up, i.e. ideally the modules would not stand alone but teacher participants would have regular occasional opportunities to connect what they are currently learning or trying with what they knew, learned or tried previously. One response to another survey item (about whether they had enough time to participate effectively) suggests that at least one participant was aware of this need to follow up on things they'd studied earlier in the programme:

"sometimes after the class I have questions, but for the new class it is a new topic and I feel that there is no opportunity to discuss my questions from the previous one."

Face-to-face vs. online balance

Approximately two thirds of respondents are happy with the balance of face-to-face and online time in the Chiapas programme. The remaining third of respondents are divided in opinion.

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
When participating in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...I would like more face-to-face time and less online time.	19 (12,8%)
...I would like more online time and less face-to-face time.	23 (15,5%)
...the balance of online and face-to-face time is fine.	99 (66.9%)
It depends. / I'm not sure.	7 (47,3%)

Existing literature suggests that tech-enabled distance CPD programmes like the one in Chiapas are particularly helpful for teachers based in rural or remote locations with limited opportunities for travel, especially if travel is inconveniently time-consuming; and indeed some survey respondents' comments seem to reflect this:

"For me it is fine with distance learning because it is difficult for us to travel to face-to-face classes."

"In my case, my workplace is far from the offices, there are always roadblocks and it would be difficult for me to be there in person unless they would consider putting an office or training centre nearby, and my director is very particular and does not give permission."

"I like the fact that the course is virtual, I do NOT like the face-to-face sessions because it is difficult due to the time we have available."

"It depends on time as I have a family and a job that also demands my time."

However, a minority of follow-up comments to this question indicated a preference for face-to-face contact:

"Both ways are beneficial to us. Although in person it would be much more enriching."

"Balance the way we can see each other face to face like the first time."

Similarly, 12 responses to the end-of-survey question requesting suggestions for improvements to the programme related to a desire for more face-to-face CPD opportunities, either within the current programme (e.g. “Maybe we can have face-to-face sessions as well and not only by telegram?”) or in future/different programmes (e.g. “I would welcome more face-to-face courses and invitations to courses such as the BBLT.”).

It seems that many teachers would value face-to-face training in principle, but it’s often not manageable in practice, and therefore remote training like that offered by the “Low-tech CPD” programme is more realistic and acceptable. This interpretation is supported by the

findings of the British Council (2021) that teachers tend to prefer face-to-face CPD but appreciate the flexibility of remote CPD.

Who should be involved in the programme

Item-by-item responses suggested that respondents misunderstood this question, with only 87 of 148 respondents indicating that teachers themselves should be involved in the programme. However, 4 respondents did specify other people that they felt should be involved:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In my opinion, the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas should involve... [select all that apply]	
...teachers.	87
...more senior/experienced teachers.	42
...school directors or managers.	51
...parents.	19
...government officials.	18
...other. (Who?)	4 (specifically: “students”, “experts”, “people interested in the language” and “Mexican teachers with experience in large groups”)

Several relevant comments were also made about the precise nature of others’ involvement:

“I think it’s good that only people who teach English are on the course.”

“In some [cases it’s useful] to involve whole schools, because the [English] lesson plan has been studied and is useful in all subjects.”

“I don’t think it is necessary for principals and parents to be present, as many parents do not have access to technology and resources, and principals often do not understand the work in the classroom.”

“Managers must understand that the subject of English has its own characteristics to work with, because sometimes they want it to be as mechanised as the other subjects.”

“Staff from the Ministry of Education should be invited to see the real needs and shortcomings of the schools.”

“I like the fact that the SEP¹⁶ authorities are involved in this project.”

A wealth of literature¹⁷ recommends the involvement of people at all levels in effective CPD in order to create a supportive system in which teachers can develop professionally. In particular, the implementation of a systemic approach to CPD is important for long-term sustainability of CPD initiatives. The [Sustainable Learning Framework](#) (SLF), for example, specifies that positive

¹⁶ Assumed to mean “Secretaría de Educación Pública” (Secretariat of Public Education in English).

¹⁷ e.g. Woodward et al (2014); Power et al (2017); Hayes (2019); Lightfoot (2019); Allier-Gagneur et al (2020); World Bank (2020); British Council (2021); Abu-Amsha et al (2022); Cordingley et al (2023).

impact requires solutions at all levels, involving all actors within the educational ecosystem. Allier-Gagneur et al (2022) add that leaders should be actively involved, i.e. not just supporting from a distance and preferably not from a totally different context. They should understand what teachers' daily professional lives are really like.

However, Allier-Gagneur et al (2022) also warn that there isn't much evidence available on effective leadership in low- and middle-income contexts, and that there's a risk that leaders face such high administrative burdens that they have little time or energy left for focusing on learning needs and outcomes. It may be that only a third of respondents in this survey suggested involving school directors/managers due to a sense of realism about their likely participation or commitment, rather than because they didn't feel the involvement of institutional leaders would be beneficial to their professional development.

Use of Telegram

Some survey questions focused specifically on Telegram¹⁸, as there is very little published literature on the use of social media or mobile messaging for CPD in low-resource contexts at all, and that which exists focuses almost exclusively on WhatsApp or bespoke apps/mobile resources designed for the purposes of a particular study.

Survey responses indicate that many of the participants hadn't used Telegram before participating in this programme, but that it wasn't a major issue for those who hadn't.

18 WhatsApp was initially considered for the "Low-tech CPD" programme but it was considered undesirable in some contexts to use an app with such strong geopolitical associations (i.e. to the USA), so Telegram was chosen instead. WhatsApp was also deemed unsuitable due to certain limitations with its features (e.g. not enough people permitted in a single group, inability to screen share while talking during a call, etc.). Note that, since late 2022, WhatsApp has in fact increased the maximum capacity of groups to 1024 and it is possible to share screens (on most desktop devices and also mobiles).



Survey prompt	# responses (% of total) ¹⁹
The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas uses Telegram. Which of the following is true for you?	
I had no previous experience of using Telegram at all..	61 (41.8%)
I had used Telegram before this CPD programme, but only for personal purposes.	69 (47.2%)
I had some previous experience of using Telegram for professional purposes before I joined this CPD programme.	16 (11%)
The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas uses Telegram. If you had never used Telegram before joining the programme, how did you feel about needing to use it for this programme?	
Unhappy – I didn't want to learn to use a new app.	1 (0,7%)
OK – I didn't mind learning to use a new app.	14 (9,5%)
Happy – I liked learning to use a new app.	85 (57,4%)
I already knew how to use Telegram before joining the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas.	48 (32.4%)

Several respondents made additional comments on these survey questions which revealed a positive attitude towards the use of Telegram, including respondents who had some prior experience of the app but also some for whom Telegram was completely new:

“THE MOST INNOVATIVE THING WAS PRECISELY HAVING THE CLASS LIVE VIA TELEGRAM.” (respondent with prior experience of using Telegram for professional purposes)

“I knew how to use telegram but I learned many other things.” (respondent with prior experience of using Telegram for professional purposes)

“It is a very useful platform for taking courses.” (respondent who had used Telegram before joining this CPD programme but only for personal purposes, not professional)

“The Telegram application is very practical and useful for me.” (respondent who had used Telegram before joining this CPD programme but only for personal purposes, not professional)

“I think it is a very good and useful application for this course.” (respondent with no prior experience of Telegram at all before joining this CPD programme, who also reported being “happy” to learn how to use a new app)

“I have not found it complicated to use telegram, it is an easy tool to use, plus they provided us with the slide with internet, so there are no excuses.” ((respondent with no prior experience of Telegram at all before joining this CPD programme, who also reported being “happy” to learn how to use a new app)

Some respondents reported difficulties, but gave little explanation for the difficulties:

“This application has been difficult” (respondent who had used Telegram before joining this CPD programme but only for personal purposes, not professional)

“I wish the course could be on a more practical platform.” (respondent with no prior experience of Telegram at all before joining this CPD programme, who also reported being “happy” to learn how to use a new app)

“It took me a little while to understand it” (respondent with no prior experience of Telegram at all before joining this CPD programme, who also reported being “happy” to learn how to use a new app)

“I find it difficult to watch the sessions on my mobile phone. I use my laptop to feel more comfortable” (respondent with no prior experience of Telegram at all before joining this CPD programme, who also reported being “happy” to learn how to use a new app)

¹⁹ Only 146 respondents answered these questions.

The vagueness of these comments makes it difficult to know precisely how the “Low-tech CPD” course might be improved for such participants. This might be an area worth exploring further if the British Council intends to continue offering this course via Telegram.

The relevance of context

Participants’ responses on this point indicate that the current programme is reasonably successful in aligning with the particularities of different teaching contexts:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In my opinion, the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...is too generic and doesn't suit my specific context.	7 (4,7%)
...suits my specific context in some ways.	76 (51,3%)
...suits my specific context very well.	65 (44%)

The importance of localisation and/or contextualisation in effective CPD is overwhelmingly reported in literature on the topic. The current programme in Chiapas has certainly been designed with particular attention to the needs of teachers in this context in terms of both contents and implementation. One trainer/facilitator survey respondent specifically commented:

“Great to know that the British Council is taking this part of the country into consideration.”

Survey respondents who felt the course suited their specific context only in some ways mentioned some areas for potential reconsideration. The most common comment (4 respondents) was about the size of classes:

“They should make a study of what education is like in the state, the tools, the context, etc. It is not the same to have 15-20 children as 35-45 children per classroom.”

“The course is excellent, I would like it to be adapted to the context of the size of the group.”

“Strategies for groups of more than 30 children should be considered.”

Three responses also related to indigenous language environments:

“The groups in public schools are between 35 and 45 students, in some places indigenous languages are spoken and the teacher does not speak them, or there are many social problems that make teaching difficult.”

“It does not fully adapt to indigenous environment”

And two respondents commented on the challenges of teaching pupils who had only just begin to study English:

“My school is new to the programme, the children had no contact with the language, so they should give more learning techniques for that kind of cases.”

“The context of the municipality where I work is very low, the students don't have English since primary school, their first contact is in secondary school and some of them don't even know how to read or write well, there are things that I have to

adapt and do my best to make things easier for them and above all there are times when we don't even have service"

A number of existing publications in this field recommend more “bottom-up” CPD approaches involving co-creation of course design and contents, based on the belief that teachers themselves are experts in their local educational contexts and therefore have an important role in guiding the development of useful CPD resources. For example, Abu-Amsha et al (2022, p.18) “observe that even in the lowest-resourced contexts and during the most challenging times (COVID-19 pandemic, lack of electricity, government unrest, lack of regular compensation, etc.), there are teachers who show up as lifelong learners and as leaders in their communities and across the world.” Currently the British Council’s programme in Chiapas invites teachers’ own experiences and voices, but the course contents are pre-determined. Co-creation and contribution directly by teachers themselves may be worth investigating or trialling in future modules, particularly to see if this might address the feelings of the 50+% of respondents that the course could be better suited to their particular contexts.

Collaboration among teachers

The majority of survey respondents appear to value collaboration with their peers, with over a third feeling satisfied with the opportunities the programme already provides and nearly all of the remaining respondents wanting even more such opportunities:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
I would like more opportunities to work together with other teachers.	89 (60,1%)
I have enough opportunities to work together with other teachers.	58 (39,2%)
I think we work together too much – I would prefer more independent work.	1 (0,7%)

It’s interesting that only 25% of respondents had selected “meeting other teachers” as a reason for joining the programme, yet 60.1% say here that they would like more opportunities to work together. It may be that this wasn’t initially a main motivating factor, but that now they’re participating in the programme, they feel the value of collaboration with other teachers. Among the 60.1% of survey respondents who selected “I would like more opportunities to work together with other teachers”, three added a comment that they would appreciate more face-to-face collaboration, suggesting that the amount of collaboration currently in the programme might not be unsatisfactory per se but that they simply wish it wasn’t all online/remote.

This apparent valuing of the human connection between peers and of the opportunity to contribute one’s own ideas would seem to support the emphasis in much existing literature on CPD on the importance of centring of teachers’ own experience – as opposed to more traditional “top-down” approaches, which are arguably

undemocratic, unempowering and demotivating. Respondents to this survey appear generally to feel that the balance is right between “expert” input and their own/their peers’ input on the Chiapas programme, though slightly more respondents would like to hear more from experts than from other teachers:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
I'd like to hear more from other teachers like me.	12 (8,1%)
I'd like to hear more from experts, not other teachers like me.	23 (15,5%)
I think the balance is right between ideas from experts and ideas from other teachers like me.	113 (76,4%)

Unfortunately, no respondents gave additional detail in their follow-up comments about the reasons behind the preference for more “expert” input.

While the majority of participants seem satisfied with the degree of peer input in the current Chiapas programme, a British Council (2021) review of four similar courses across the MENA region highlights one potential risk to remain aware of when designing or delivering future courses: that some synchronous sessions in these courses ended up being too trainer-centred and that more work needs to be done to find effective ways of encouraging peer-to-peer sharing.

Professional vs. personal interaction

Experts point out that off-topic and/or social interactions are likely to occur in spaces or times otherwise allocated to professional interaction, and that decisions on how to address this will vary from programme to programme according to the priorities in a given context or group. As to this aspect of the Chiapas programme, survey respondents’ feelings seem correspondingly influenced by mere personal preference, with no particularly strong patterns in the data:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In my opinion, in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...discussions between teachers should focus on professional matters.	38 (25.7%)
...it's OK to share some more personal things in our discussions, but not too much.	45 (30,4%)
...discussions between teachers should definitely include both personal and professional things.	65 (43,9%)

While personal opinion on this issue seems quite divided among respondents to this survey and no obvious action seems required at this point, it's worth bearing in mind for future programmes the potential risk of interaction in CPD delivered via social media becoming more social than developmental (Motteram et al, 2020). To mitigate this risk, Motteram and Dawson (2019) recommend involving all participants in setting expectations and objectives early, including discussion of ethics and behaviours within a professional group.

The importance of examples

In addition to peer collaboration, much literature on teacher development emphasises the value of examples when learning new teaching skills or methods. And like peer collaboration, the majority of survey respondents appear to share this sense of importance, with half of respondents feeling satisfied with what the programme already provides and nearly all of the remaining respondents wanting even more:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
I would like to see more examples of the things that we discuss.	70 (47,3%)
I think we have enough examples of the things that we discuss.	74 (50%)
I think there are too many examples of the things that we discuss.	4 (2,7%)

Numerous existing studies²⁰ support the benefit of practical examples in CPD for teachers, and it is clear that respondents to this survey overwhelmingly agree that examples are important, with one person explaining that “more examples make the lessons more meaningful, so they are not so easily forgotten.” However, of the 70 survey respondents who requested more examples, unfortunately none made further specific suggestions.

Literature commonly recommends video examples: for example, the British Council (2021) overview of four CPD programmes in low-resource contexts shows that “teachers respond positively to videos of teaching and where video examples and short clips were used there was some reflective and concrete discussion” (p. 7). Lightfoot (2019) similarly refers to the possibility of teachers sharing videos of their own teaching.

However, Allier-Gagneur et al (2020) caution against huge investment in video just yet, as there isn’t really enough solid evidence in favour of this medium. Alternatives to video include “vignettes, narratives, learner-feedback, transcripts [and] real teaching materials (Mann and Walsh, 2017)”, as well as “demonstration lessons, peer observations, or case studies of teaching (Bates and Morgan, 2018)” (all cited in the British Council study, 2021, p. 24). It’s also important that videos are short (not whole lessons) and are “paired with other learning resources, such as viewing guides or discussion with other professionals” (British Council, 2021, p. 26).

²⁰ e.g. Allier-Gagneur et al (2020); British Council (2021); Lightfoot (2019); Power et al (2017); Tegha et al (2021); Woodward et al (2014).



The importance of reflection

Just as the general literature on teacher development emphasises the importance of collaboration and examples in teacher development, so it does with the importance of reflection on practice; and again, the majority of survey respondents appear to share this view. Unlike collaboration and practice, however, fewer respondents in this survey would change the balance of practice vs. reflection that is currently provided in the Chiapas programme:

Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In my opinion, the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...has too much new content and not enough opportunity to reflect on it.	11 (7,4%)
...has the right balance of trying new things and then reflecting on them.	131 (88,5%)
...has too much reflection and not enough new content.	12 (8,1%)

Unfortunately, of the 23 participants who were not satisfied with the amount of reflection in the Chiapas programme, none gave extra detail to explain what type or amount of reflection they would prefer.

In terms of alignment with best practice, it does seem that reflection opportunities abound within the Chiapas programme and are generally well signposted and explicitly encouraged within the course materials, both in asynchronous pre-workshop tasks and synchronous workshop slides. For example:

Workshop outcomes

By the end of the session, you will have:


- reflected on the importance of interaction patterns.
- discussed advantages and disadvantages of teacher-student and student-student interaction.
- reflected on the content of the session using the notes from your learner journal.

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Fig. 1. Slide referring to reflection, from the Week 6 synchronous workshop material.

Reflection Task 1 – Reflection on Module 10 content

1. What is something you now know about lesson planning that you didn't before the training?
2. What is a piece of information about lesson planning that you feel every teacher should know?
3. What is one thing that surprised you about lesson planning?
4. What is one thing you learned in this module that you will try in your next class/your teaching?



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Fig. 2. Slide referring to reflection, from the Week 10 asynchronous pre-workshop material.

Cordingley et al (2023, p. 21) point out that iteration and reflection on practice is related to the sustainability of CPD approaches – it's not enough to present a teacher with a new idea, expect them to use it, then monitor whether they do; there needs to be support and even specific tools or processes to embed this learning in their daily practice and follow up what happened through collaborative enquiry. The 2021 British Council report agrees that the connection between theory and practice “needs to be visible and pragmatic” (p. 23).

It's important to remember that one key prerequisite for adequate reflection is time. The authors of a 2019 case study of the large-scale British Council Tejas project in India²¹, which used WhatsApp for developing a Community of Practice, report that time for reflection is often underestimated in such groups. Participants often end up devoting more time to talking about teaching activities/practices than reflecting on what they have learned from trying them or on planning how to use these new things in their lessons.

Time available to participate

There is no shortage of literature within the field of education highlighting the trend for teachers to have too much to do and too little time. In the case of CPD, the research suggests facilitators in particular find their role extremely time-consuming. It seems reassuring, then, that over two thirds of survey respondents reported having generally enough time to participate effectively in the Chiapas CPD programme:

²¹This British Council project has a lot in common with the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas, as summarised in the table in Appendix 1. Key findings from the project report are also summarised below in the Annotated references section. The original report is accessible at https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Effectiveness_remotely_delivered_professional_development_teachers.pdf



Survey prompt	# responses (% of total)
In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...	
...I don't have enough time to participate effectively.	12 (8,1%)
...I have enough time to participate effectively.	105 (70,9%)
...I have enough time for some things but not enough time for others. (Please give more detail below.)	31 (20,9%)

However, just under a third of respondents appear to have insufficient time. This comes up again in the part of the survey where respondents indicated what they found challenging about the course (see below, **What participants found difficult**).

Some respondents who said they had enough time also commented on what was helpful to them in terms of managing their time and schedules:

"I liked the detail of placing us in groups according to the timetable available to teachers and not affecting our other jobs."

Some respondents added explanatory comments to their selection of the option "I don't have enough time" which suggest that some people simply have too many conflicting demands on their time in general, such as existing commitments to work, family or other studies:

"At the beginning of this new cycle my schedule at work changed changed [sic] and I only hope that they will give me a final schedule so that I can establish my timetable so that I can give 100% in the course and learn a lot."

"I am studying an online degree and I have to be very organised."

Three respondents who indicated that they had enough time for some things but not for others commented specifically on the pre-task:

"Sometimes, due to work, I have less time for the pre-task"

"I would prefer the activities (pre-workshops) to take place in class and not outside of class. Due to my schedule."

"Make the prework shop tasks easier, [with fewer questions] and less time consuming, such as multiple choice questions, using forms, etc."

There will always be some people who have many demands on their time in their lives in general. Lightfoot (2019, p. 58) points out that teachers are notoriously “time-poor” and have many commitments and tasks to juggle, not only at work/school but also balancing these with home life. Existing research suggests that the most important thing to remember for the design and implementation of CPD courses is that “time” does not merely refer to the hours available to attend sessions or participate in activities, but also for the learning that takes place around those sessions and activities, including mastering the digital tools required (Abu-Amsha et al, 2022) and reflecting on what has been learned (Padwad & Parnham, 2019).

Motteram & Dawson (2019) also mention one issue of particular relevance to CPD initiatives involving mobile messaging apps: that frustration can arise if members of a digital community (e.g. on WhatsApp or Telegram) expect immediate replies to their posts. Availability and connectivity can impact others’ speed in replying and the group members should understand the need to be

patient and flexible. They also point out that while WhatsApp (or similar tech) is potentially more sustainable than other means of CPD, e.g. due to ease of scale, it is also potentially very time-consuming (especially for administrators, facilitators and mentors), which can affect its long-term sustainability.

What participants enjoyed

All 148 respondents completed the question “What do you enjoy about this programme? Try to identify three things.” Of these, 144 responses were deemed valid and subsequently coded for analysis. An *in vivo* coding approach was initially used, i.e. deriving codes from the words used by the participants²² themselves, then a second level of coding grouped the emerging 21 themes into broader categories.

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
The course trainers/instructors , including their manner, their use of English as the medium of instruction, the advice and support they provide to participants.	
The trainers themselves (often simply stated as “the teachers”, but sometimes with additional details such as their quality, manner, professionalism and the attention they paid to participants)	61
The support/advice provided	13
Exposure to English from instructors	4

²² There is an obvious methodological risk involved here, in that the analysis was done on English translations of survey responses originally provided in Spanish (apart from 3 which were submitted in English). However, as the translators were briefed on the purpose of the translation, have worked with the British Council before, and collaborated on the same dataset, their translation was deemed to be consistent and reliable enough for the analysis of this question. Moreover, the data are being used here as a resource for general insight rather than for an ethnographic study (for example), so it is less important to examine their original words verbatim.

Representative examples of respondents' comments on the course trainers include:

"excellent work and planning by the teachers"

"the openness of facilitators"

"the level of attention of the people teaching the courses"

"The kind treatment from the advisors, and the accompaniment we receive as well as all the support they give us to carry out the activities because sometimes we are loaded with work."

Similar comments also appeared elsewhere in the survey, e.g.:

"The teachers who are giving me the courses are very nice people who are prepared to teach. I am very happy and grateful to the whole team."

"Professional, respectful, and ethical teachers."

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
The content of the course , including the materials used (digital and print), the topics covered, the perceived accuracy or reliability of the information, the practical applicability of the ideas, its perceived relevance and how easy it was to understand.	
The content/materials (including printed)	55
The course/ideas are practical	17
Modern/innovative/up-to-date	12
Simplicity/ease of understanding	10
Reliable/valid/accurate info	2

Representative examples of respondents' comments on the **course contents and materials include:**

"I liked that the sessions are interesting"

"the subjects help to improve teaching practice"

"the content is very relevant"

"the course material is very good"

"[I like] that they give you the book with the slides to have them if you need them"

"It is easy to understand"

"The two courses have been excellent in handling the information and that brings me up to date, especially when I teach English, because I didn't study a degree in English teaching."

"Los dos cursos han sido excelentes en el manejo de la información y eso me pone al día, sobre todo a la hora de enseñar inglés, porque no estudié la carrera de magisterio."

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
The design of the course , including its general structure and delivery, the learning environment/atmosphere, operational elements/logistics and blended modality.	
Timetable and scheduling (with many respondents using the word "flexibility")	28
Course is well organised/structured (including enough time to do the activities)	17
The course format/methodology ²³	13
The fact that the course is done online	11
Telegram/use of digital tech	5

Representative examples of respondents' comments on the **design of the course** include

"I am pleased that the work is not too much, and not too heavy."

"I like that they give us the opportunity to choose a timetable."

"the flexibility of the programme"

"It gives timetable options that suit my schedule"

"I can rewatch the different videos"

"I also like that everything is very structured..."

"That I can take [the course] without leaving home"

"the way courses are run"

²³ Note that some respondents' comments were not entirely clear on whether they relate solely to the live sessions or to the course in general, e.g. "the way of working", "the working format", "the methodology used". As the live workshops are part of the course in general, I opted to group them into the latter (broader) category.



Theme	# Occurrences in the data
The implementation of the course , including its general structure and delivery, the learning environment/ atmosphere, operational elements/logistics and blended modality.	
Atmosphere/environment	19
The live sessions	8
Phone equipment provided	5

Representative examples of respondents' comments on the **implementation of the course** include:

"It is zero bullying"

"Dynamic, informative, and enthusiastic"

"the way in which the workshops are carried out."

"I don't feel [under] pressure, the instructors give me the freedom to participate or not, to choose whether I want

to turn my camera on or not, I think that flexibility gives me a lot of comfort to learn the way I want to learn."

"the mobile phone as a tool so that you don't have problems due to lack of equipment or internet"

"the fact that they gave us the most important tool, i.e. the telephone with internet..."

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
What participants feel they're getting out of the course , in terms of learning, community, reflection and certification.	
Learning in general, especially new teaching skills, strategies and/or methodology	39
Participating/sharing/interacting with others	27
Practising/improving their own English	11
Reflection	2
Certification	2

Representative examples of respondents' comments on the **particular benefits** they feel they are gaining from participation in the course include:

"I learn how to improve in my classes, it has given me many tools to improve my classes."

"It helps us to grow professionally and apply new strategies in the classroom."

"The different tools they provide us with to improve our practice, as well as feedback."

"1. TOOLS FOR GROUP CONTROL 2. TOOLS TO ORGANISE THE CLASS"

"I can share experiences with other colleagues. I can learn new things from other teachers. I don't feel alone as a teacher because there are teachers who have gone through similar situations to mine."

"we measure our level and capacity of understanding by interacting in another language since not all of us have had the opportunity to travel to foreign countries; and so we can get to know new cultures and feel closer to the language. That motivates us to continue learning and motivates our students to do so as well."

Overall, it is clear that the majority of survey respondents enjoy their participation in the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas, particularly regarding the topic/content of the modules and the trainers who deliver these, as well as tending to enjoy working together with other teachers. It's also clear that the British Council's efforts to accommodate different schedules and provide appropriate equipment and connectivity are having a positive impact on teachers' ability to participate in the programme.

What participants found difficult

All 148 respondents completed the question "What do you find difficult about this programme? Try to identify three things." Of these, data from 112 respondents were deemed valid and subsequently coded for analysis (34 respondents said they found nothing difficult and 2 responses were too vague or unclear to be understood and categorised). As with the "What do you enjoy...?" survey item, an *in vivo* coding approach was initially used, then a second level of coding grouped the emerging themes into broader categories.

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
Time and scheduling issues , including general comments about “time”, how the course is scheduled and paced, and the length of the course and the live sessions.	
Lack of time (e.g. due to clash with other commitments like teaching timetable), including simply “time”	37
General comment about “scheduling”, “schedule” or “timetable(s)” (originally “el horario” or “horarios”)	17
The live sessions are not long enough (to discuss/process everything in sufficient detail)	5
The length of the course	4
Difficulty “keeping up” / difficulty with the pace of work	2

Representative examples of respondents’ comments on **time and scheduling** include:

“Time and that we have a lot of extra surveys to attend to.”

“The time required to attend the class because sometimes there is a lot to do.”

“The times for activities, I prefer to do them in class.”

“Sometimes the difficult part is the schedules, sometimes we make plans to be present and do all our course activities and assignments but we also have things to do at work, to get grades, and to hand in documentation, and that takes time needed to fulfil the tasks established in the course.”

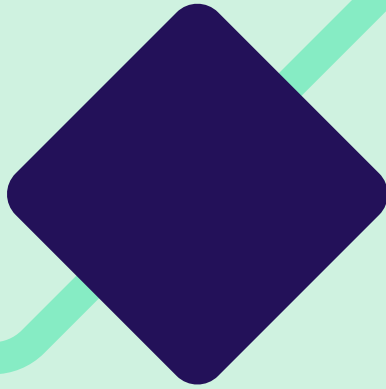
“Module 1... the dates on which it took place We had a lot of work at school and some conflicts that made me feel very stressed... That’s why I didn’t participate in the practical community... because I needed to take care of my family for a while... Because at the same time I was taking the module, I was studying another course and the truth is that ... it stressed me out... too much... I think this module started in good time... God willing, I will do better”

“Adapting and adjusting to the 60 min. format. I think that sometimes a little more time is needed to reflect on and discuss the topics.”

“It is difficult to try to understand information that the instructor does not explain due to lack of time.”

“the course is too long (10 weeks)”

“Keeping the same pace as all my classmates.”



Theme	# Occurrences in the data
Issues with technology , including connectivity, general comments about “tech” or the digital format, learning how to use Telegram, and difficulties during the live synchronous sessions.	
Internet connectivity	25
“Technology” or the digital format (unspecified)	6
Using tech (trying to multitask during live sessions)	6
Using tech (the app itself)	4
Using tech (audio/video problems)	3
Using tech (the mobile equipment)	1

Representative examples of respondents’ comments on **technology** in the Chiapas programme include:

“Sometimes the Internet in my community is not optimal”

“Connectivity due to the region where I live, which is not good and prevents optimal participation.”

“sometimes interaction via computer is not the same as face-to-face”

“The digital ways of working”

“clearly see the presentations (slides) from the mobile phone and write through the chat at the same time as watching the video.”

“I don’t write fast or I don’t see the screen”

“Type fast to reply in the chat”

“Sometimes using a new mobile app”

“Listening clearly to instructions [service] is sometimes cut off.”

“The audio because sometimes I can’t hear well.”

“Not being able to see [teachers]”

“Can only be taken on the assigned mobile phone.”

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
Difficulty with the course content , including unspecified difficulties and language features (own level of proficiency or the use of language in the course).	
Low level of my own English makes it challenging to understand/to keep up	12
The trainer's language/speech/accent	2
The general challenge of learning or not understanding	2
Assessments	1

Representative examples of respondents' comments on **the course content** include:

"The level of the classes was a bit high for my level but I tried to keep up."

"My English is poor and I find it difficult to speak. I see nothing wrong with the programme."

"Following lessons in English, poor knowledge of the language, and language proficiency"

"Practising my English."

"Academic terminology"

"Sometimes the accent"

"Connecting new ideas with familiar ones"

"clarity of content"



Theme	# Occurrences in the data
Difficulty with participation , including interaction with others and grouping of participants.	
Difficulty with other participants (including inexperienced teachers, unfamiliar teachers or interaction with others)	5
Reluctance to contribute orally in live sessions (my own reluctance or others')	3
The course groupings	3

Representative examples of respondents' comments on **participation** include:

"Sometimes the communication with the other colleagues is a little bit difficult. Not everyone wants to participate when we share our experiences"

"inexperienced colleagues"

"Sometimes the interaction, just that."

"my school colleagues are spread out on different teams."

"Number of persons per group."

Theme	# Occurrences in the data
Course design and implementation , including applying new learnings to practice and engaging with the course materials.	
Putting what I've learned into practice	8
The asynchronous course elements, e.g. homework/pre-tasks	4
No printed materials available	3

Representative examples of respondents' comments on **the course design and implementation** include:

"Carrying out some changes that I am afraid to implement in my class such as different interactions with students like working in pairs, in teams, etc."

"there is a lack of guidance to directly implement the strategies you provide."

"How to apply the classroom suggestions as I have large groups of more than 30 children."

"I think it is difficult to put it into practice, because theory is one thing, but putting it into practice is complicated. It is also difficult to know if I am understanding things correctly because there is not much feedback on the products, so I don't know if I applied things well or not."

“The final project, in module one there was no concrete explanation. The information was distorted because many people sent too much information.”

“The Pre workshop activities”

“Extensive booklet”

“the fact that the books are not provided in physical form”

“In the second module, the delivery of physical material is not available at the moment.”

Overall, the responses to this section of the survey confirm the evidence from the previous question (“What did you enjoy...?”) that the majority of survey respondents enjoy their participation in the “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas and, indeed, many respondents explicitly stated finding nothing difficult or having nothing to say in response to this survey question. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of comments relating to challenges faced by course participants were about having limited time to participate. This is certainly borne out by existing research in this area and it’s clear that the British Council have attempted to mitigate this risk in the course implementation by offering different times for live synchronous sessions. The second most frequently mentioned difficulty was about internet connectivity, and again the British Council seem to be doing what they can to address this by providing equipment and avoiding scheduling modules during the rainy season in Mexico, when general connectivity is very poor.

Three aspects of the Chiapas programme that the British Council might want to consider developing or updating are:

1. How participants can understand and demonstrate application of the ideas in the course to their own classroom practice, particularly when they teach large classes.
2. The level of English used in the course materials and by the trainers. As the majority of participants report a CEFR level of B1–B2 and a significant minority report having a lower level of proficiency, it would be worth grading all course input to B1 level to maximise inclusivity and accessibility for all course participants.
3. Whether the pre-workshop tasks could be optional, or at least partly optional, without negatively affecting learning or motivation on the course.



Limitations of the survey

It is important to explain one particular limitation of the survey and the reason why data from one section (highlighted in grey in the table below) is **not** included in the analysis above.

The survey was divided into six sections, each with its own objective:

Survey section	Objective
1. Informed consent (<i>Consentimiento informado</i>)	To inform respondents of the nature and purpose of the study, the terms of their participation and to give them the opportunity to withdraw or ask questions.
2. About me (<i>Sobre mí</i>)	To gather basic biodata for background on the respondents to inform later segmentation and analysis.
3. What I think about Continuing Professional Development in general (<i>Lo que pienso sobre el Desarrollo Profesional Continuo en general</i>)	To gather some background on respondents' feelings about CPD in general, which could contextualise and enrich the later analysis of how these feelings and expectations compared with their experiences of the Chiapas programme (see survey section 5, below). The original basis for the 15 statements in this section ²⁴ was the list of key insights, opportunities and risks arising from the literature review . Some items from these lists were conflated for the sake of clarity and efficiency for respondents. ²⁵ Others were not addressed directly as they were deemed to be general observations or facts, rather than areas we wanted to gather participants' views on.
4. Opportunities and challenges in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas (<i>Oportunidades y retos en el curso DPC de baja tecnología, Chiapas</i>)	To gather information about what respondents have enjoyed and what they have found challenging in the Chiapas programme so far; and to discover who among them had also been in the Community of Practice and whether they are finding it useful or interesting so far. This section of the survey was deliberately placed before section 5 so that respondents could first reflect on the Chiapas programme in their own words and not be led by the ideas or phrasing coming up next in the survey.
5. How I feel about the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas (<i>¿Qué opino del curso DPC de baja tecnología en Chiapas?</i>)	To discover respondents' feelings about the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas. Like section 3, the items in this section were based on key insights from the literature to help inform Research Question 2. Unlike section 3, each item was presented separately and phrased differently, to encourage respondents to think about them carefully and to provide the chance to add examples or comments.
6. "The final questions!" (<i>¡Las preguntas finales!</i>)	To invite respondents to make any specific suggestions for improvement to the Chiapas programme and to give them the chance to add any final thoughts or questions on any topic before finally submitting their survey response.

²⁴ See [Appendix 2](#) for the full survey (in English), including this list of 15 statements, completed by the majority of survey respondents (n=145).

²⁵ For example, opportunity/benefit 6 "Teachers respond extremely well to examples in their CPD discussions and materials..." and general insight "Teachers' learning and practice benefit from examples (especially videos)..." were addressed jointly in the survey item where participants were asked to what extent they agree with the statement "When I learn about teaching methods or activities, I like to see examples of new things (like classroom videos, lesson plans, students' work, etc.) before I try them with my students."

Unfortunately, when all 148 survey responses were submitted and analysis of survey section 3 was underway, it became clear that this section of the dataset was not clear enough to be reliable. Ultimately, all responses in this section had to be excluded from the analysis for the following reasons.

Polarised responses

For each of the 15 statements in section 3, respondents had to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed. A 4-point scale was provided:

- I strongly disagree. (*Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo.*)
- I disagree. (*Estoy en desacuerdo.*)
- I agree. (*Estoy de acuerdo.*)
- I strongly agree. (*Estoy totalmente de acuerdo.*)

When reviewing the data, it emerged that the responses were **very polarised** for some items in particular. Closer analysis revealed an almost even split (53 vs. 58) among the majority of respondents between general agreement and general disagreement. For this 15-item question, individual survey respondents were categorised as follows:



How an individual responded to this part of the survey	# of people falling into this category	
A range of agreement/disagreement responses indicated across all 15 items	37	
Same response x 15 ("strongly agree")	5	= 58 respondents who agreed with all/most items
All "agree" or "strongly agree"	20	
Mostly agreed (only 1 or 2 "disagree" or "strongly disagree" responses from all 15 items)	33	
Mostly disagreed (only 1 or 2 "agree" or "strongly agree" responses from all 15 items)	5	= 53 respondents who disagreed with all/most items
All "disagree" or "strongly disagree"	39	
Same response x 15 ("strongly disagree")	9	
Total responses	148	

This split is surprising when we remember that most of the 15 items in this part of the survey were essentially good practice characteristics for low-tech and/or remote CPD according to existing research, reframed in terms of personal beliefs or experiences for the purpose of the survey. Given that over two thirds of the respondents (103 out of 148, or 70%) are quite experienced professionals (four or more years), we might expect more of them to agree with what existing research in this field has found to be best practice.

At first, the patterns in individual respondents' selections on this survey section could be interpreted as legitimate. For example, of the five respondents who **disagreed with most** (i.e. 13 or 14) of the 15 statements, the items with which some agreed were:

1. My main reason for participating in teacher development is to improve my students' learning. (1 respondent)
2. When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer to use technology which I already know or feel comfortable using. (1 respondent)
3. I need support to use digital/online tools for professional purposes. (3 respondents)
4. When I participate in teacher development, I like to share my own skills and experiences, not just listen to other "experts". (1 respondent)
5. When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer to spend some time face-to-face with the other teachers (not all online). (1 respondent)

The first, fourth and fifth of these points relate to personal preference and therefore might reflect genuine individual variation, despite otherwise broad similarity in feeling about the other statements. Similarly, the second and third points might simply reflect the fact that some teachers are less confident with technology than others.

This extreme polarisation in itself was not enough to justify disregarding this part of the survey, but closer scrutiny of the different categories of agree/disagree responses made me doubt whether the views reported in these very polarised responses were genuine.

Contradictions

Closer analysis of all responses to section 3 of the survey (the 15 statements) revealed numerous contradictions and potential confusion that threw into question the validity of this section of the dataset. For example, of the 48 respondents who **disagreed with all** of the 15 statements:

- 31 have a bachelor's degree related to English Language Teaching.
- 27 had previously participated in online events such as webinars or live Facebook chats.
- 27 participated in the Community of Practice after module one of the Chiapas course, 26 of whom found it useful.
- 19 had previously participated in CPD courses such as Cambridge CELTA or TKT.

- 16 made specific suggestions for improving the Chiapas “Low-tech CPD” programme.

Given the apparently high level of education and experience among these teachers, it surprised me that so many of them, representing approximately a third of all survey respondents, disagreed with things widely supported in the literature to be good practice, such as the concept that teacher development be long-term and ongoing (not just short courses or individual workshops) or that reflection on practice is important when learning new skills.

It was also confusing that 6 of the 16 respondents in this subcategory who made specific suggestions for improving the programme in Chiapas requested more face-to-face sessions – and yet they had all **disagreed** with every statement in section 3 of the survey, *including* the statement “When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer to spend some time face-to-face with the other teachers (not all online).”

Similar direct contradictions in this sub-population of respondents included:

- A respondent who **strongly disagreed** that they “usually have enough time to think about, discuss and try things” in CPD courses, but who later commented:

“Sometimes the difficult part is the schedules, sometimes we make plans to be present and do all our course activities and assignments but we also have things to do at work, to get grades, and to hand in documentation, and that takes time needed to fulfil the tasks established in the course.”

- A respondent who **strongly disagreed** with the statement “When I learn about teaching methods or activities, I like to see examples of new things...” and indicated in a later survey item that “[In the Chiapas course,] I think we have enough examples of the things that we discuss” but when asked how the Chiapas course could be improved, requested “A little more depth and examples on the topics”.
- Two respondents who **strongly disagreed** that “teacher development programmes should be adapted for different contexts” but later indicated that the Chiapas CPD programme “suits [their] specific context in some ways” and when asked how the course could be improved, suggested it be better adapted for different teachers’ contexts.

There were numerous instances of such ambiguity and even direct contradiction, forcing me to conclude that some respondents had misunderstood, misread or not carefully answered the 15-statement question, disguising the true extent of their agreement or disagreement with these statements.



Interpretation and learnings for survey design

It seems highly unlikely that so many respondents would knowingly directly contradict their own views – in qualitative research with human subjects, it's not unusual for some respondents to present self-contradictory data, but the scale within this section of this survey was very unusual and surprising. Looking at the survey tool itself (Google Forms) and the way it was presented to respondents, I suspect that a poorly designed user interface and consequently poor human-tech interaction was ultimately to blame. Specifically:

- The vast majority of respondents completed the survey in Spanish. The 4-point scale was therefore presented to them in Spanish as follows – note that, unlike in the English version, there is only a single character (i.e. letter or space) difference in Spanish between opposing meanings (highlighted in bold here, but appearing in standard font in the original survey):
 - Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo. (*I strongly disagree.*)
 - Estoy en desacuerdo. (*I disagree.*)
 - Estoy de acuerdo. (*I agree.*)
 - Estoy totalmente de acuerdo. (*I strongly agree.*)

It is conceivable that a busy person, reading quickly through a long survey, could simply misread the options and accidentally choose an exact opposite instead, particularly if they first read all 15 statements and then decided they agreed (or disagreed) with all of them, so simply selected the same button for each statement without double-checking at the top of the screen whether this button was at the correct end of the scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to represent their choice.

- When we look at how Google Forms presents the survey on a computer screen (see screenshots below), we can see that the range of options on the 4-point scale is only visible if you scroll to the top – by the time you're reading the fourth, fifth and so on statement on the list, you can no longer see which end of the scale is “strongly agree” and which is “strongly disagree”. Again, this is not particularly clear or user-friendly for the survey respondent.

¿Qué tan de acuerdo estás con las siguientes oraciones? *

	Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo.	Estoy en desacuerdo.	Estoy de acuerdo.	Estoy totalmente de acuerdo.
Mi principal motivo para participar en la formación de profesores es mejorar el aprendizaje de mis alumnos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creo que el desarrollo del profesorado no es sólo cosa de los profesores, sino que debe implicar a todos (por ejemplo, directores, padres, administradores).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creo que los programas de desarrollo de profesores deben	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig. 3. Survey section 3 as viewed on a laptop (first 2–3 statements and 4-point scale visible).

ejemplo, directores, padres, administradores).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creo que los programas de desarrollo de profesores deben adaptarse a los distintos contextos (por ejemplo, distintos países, estados, escuelas o aulas).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cuando participo en programas de desarrollo digitales y/o en Internet para profesores, prefiero utilizar tecnología que ya conozco o con la que me siento cómoda.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Necesito ayuda para utilizar herramientas digitales y/o en	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig. 4. Survey section 3 as viewed on a laptop (later statements, with 4-point scale labels no longer visible at the top).

- The user experience is even worse if taking the survey on a mobile device: not only is the 4-point scale not pinned to the top of the screen as you read through the statements, but you also have to scroll back and forth from left to right to read the full 4-point scale, making responding to this survey section quite cumbersome.

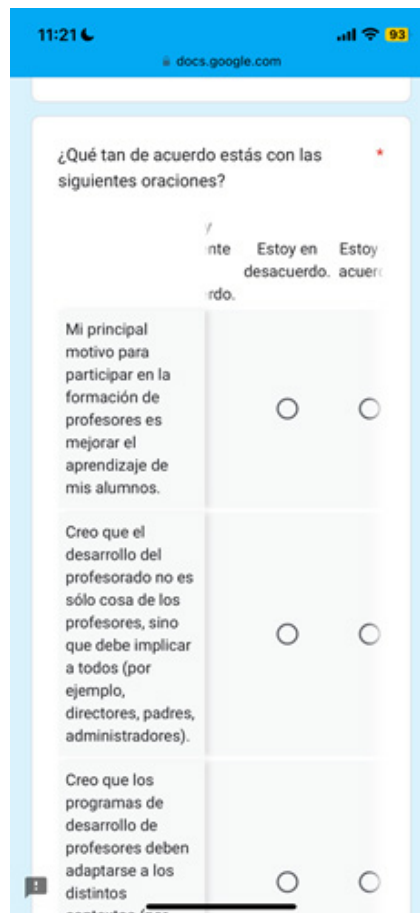


Fig. 5. Survey section 3 as viewed on a mobile (first 2–3 statements and part of 4-point scale visible).

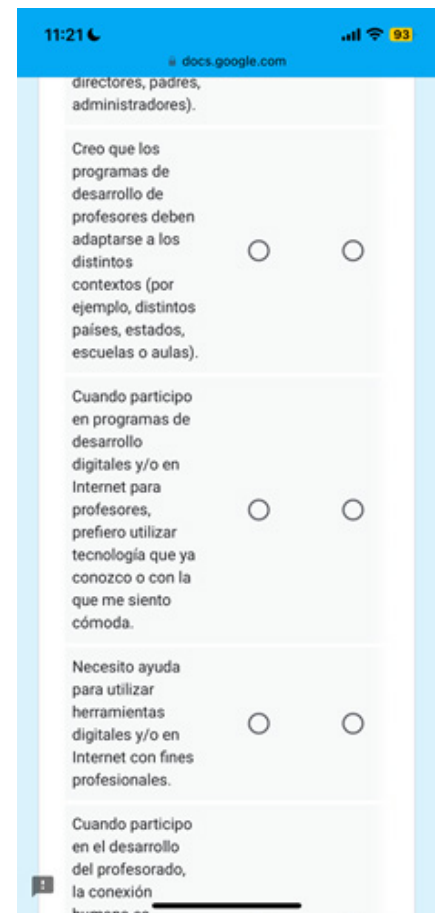


Fig. 6. Survey section 3 as viewed on a mobile (later statements, with 4-point scale labels no longer visible at the top and only two of four scale points visible).

As section 3 was a mandatory survey section, respondents would not have been able to progress without first selecting a response to every item in this section. It is therefore not at all surprising if some people gave up trying to answer this section honestly and simply selected anything in order to progress to the next section of the survey. This was an unfortunate and unforeseen consequence of using this particular question format within Google Forms and should be borne in mind for future similar research surveys.

Outstanding questions

Some areas of potential interest for future development of the “Low-tech” CPD programme in Chiapas are not well documented in existing literature and were not captured within the present study, specifically:

- 1. How big is the ideal group on WhatsApp or Telegram for a Community of Practice (CoP)?** Examples in the literature range from approx. 10 to over 200 participants within a group, but with little commentary or critical reflection on the difference this might make. Similarly, respondents to the participant survey for this report sometimes commented on the size of groups but without useful detail on what was perceived as particularly helpful or challenging.
- 2. Is there any correlation between length of a teacher’s experience or extent of their existing training and the benefits they gain from remote CPD and/or CoPs?** The literature review for this study did not find any insights on this question and no meaningful patterns were observable in the survey data either.
- 3. Do any low-tech or remote CPD programmes differentiate between equity and equality in resource provision for under-resourced teachers?** ‘Equal’ in this context means giving all teacher participants the same mobile equipment or data allowance, whereas an ‘equitable’ approach would mean inviting teachers to identify what they each individually need in order to achieve comparable access so that everyone can participate fully. Some teachers might not need to be given a device but others might, for example. The literature review for this study could find no evidence of programmes that took a flexible approach like this, but survey responses from participants in the Chiapas programme suggest that some might need this support more than others.
- 4. What about Telegram?** There currently exists very little literature on social media for CPD in low-resource contexts at all, and that which exists almost exclusively focuses on WhatsApp or bespoke apps/mobile resources designed for the purposes of a particular study. Time may tell if more projects adopt Telegram as a tool for remote CPD but currently it has been almost impossible to find other projects that use it, let alone solid research evidence for its effective use(s) or impact.

Interestingly, WhatsApp use is not counted when paying for data in Mexico (i.e. it is free when using a mobile phone line). While this doesn’t affect the British Council’s current “Low-tech CPD” project because participants are supplied with adequate data, it could be interesting to learn whether this has any impact on the overall popularity of WhatsApp vs. Telegram among Mexican teachers and whether participation in British Council CPD programmes might be higher if WhatsApp were used instead of Telegram.

Conclusions and recommendations

While this report is not exclusively about the work being done in Chiapas, this does provide a useful case study of the British Council's efforts to design and deliver effective and engaging CPD for teachers in remote/rural and low-resource contexts. My final conclusion at the end of this study is that the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas is well conceived, well designed and well received, and should continue mostly as it is, but that this is also a very good moment to review and potentially slightly revise some aspects of the course (per the recommendations below). I also conclude that a similar programme could be useful to teachers in other similar contexts, adapted of course to suit their local circumstances.

Opportunities and risks

Of the 12 opportunities/potential benefits of such approaches that were identified in the literature review, 10 are well addressed by the current design and implementation of the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas. The only two areas which might be considered for future programmes, though do not currently seem to be problematic, are (1) the possibility of offline in-person collaboration between any teachers who are geographically close to each other and interested in such opportunities, and (2) the possibility of recruiting leaders, facilitators or mentors from among the community itself to act as sort of 'peer ambassadors', modelling what professional learning looks like (especially tech-enabled CPD) for other teachers in their community.

Of the 22 risks/challenges identified in the literature review, many are outside the British Council's direct control or responsibility (e.g. the robustness of mobile internet infrastructure in any given country), but most of the others appear to have been well considered, avoided and/or mitigated in the "Low-tech CPD" programme in Chiapas. Possible exceptions are:

- **Content and syllabus that are shaped more by ELT experts than by participants themselves.** While there is clear value in this approach and in the current programme syllabus, participants in such specific, low-resource, remote/rural contexts might benefit from more chances to contribute their own expertise, experience and creativity, especially in terms of applying programme theory and learnings in their own schools.
- **Sustainability in terms of connectivity and cost.** To the best of my knowledge, the current provision of mobile devices and data is due to end in November 2023. If further modules are planned but without this provision for connectivity, continued participation of some teachers is at risk.
- **Not enough time** for participation, co-creation, learning, tech training, building rapport and also for practical things like poor connectivity which can cause delays in asynchronous interactions. This need for ample time is commonly underestimated in perhaps all learning programmes, and there



isn't very strong evidence from the present study that the British Council's current low-tech CPD approaches fall into this trap; but some survey respondents did comment that they needed more time to process what they were learning, so its importance shouldn't be diminished in future programmes.

- **English-only approaches.** As noted in the above literature review, some studies report that the use of translanguaging and multilingual approaches, including CPD materials available in multiple and/or local languages, can ensure greater access and equity among teacher participants. In a cohort with so few advanced users of English as in the Chiapas programme, and where 145 of the 148 survey respondents opted to complete it in Spanish (when an English version was available), a multilingual approach could be helpful, not only in the programme itself but also when conducting future research into participants' experiences.

Specific recommendations for Chiapas

1. Praise the trainers and course designers!

It's quite clear that the majority of participants think their trainers are skilled, supportive and personable, and that the contents of the course are generally interesting, engaging and relevant. This is presumably the result of professional expertise, respectful consideration and diligence, so should be acknowledged.

2. Continue to offer support with connectivity.

This is obviously a requirement for participation in a remote online course but remains a frequently reported issue, and one which seems has not even been totally resolved by the provision of devices and data.

3. Keep the flexible scheduling.

Continue to offer different options for days/times to attend the programme. This flexibility is very much appreciated by participants.

4. Keep the blended approach.

Insights from existing research and from the present study suggest that many teachers value and even prefer face-to-face CPD, but appreciate the flexibility of remote CPD since face-to-face options are often not manageable in practice.

If face-to-face sessions are included, use them for the first and final sessions of the course. The first session allows everyone to set a foundation of human connection which is particularly valuable for the CoP

element of the programme; the final session would reiterate this sense of human connection, and potentially provide a sense of closure to a module and an opportunity for gathering feedback on the programme and suggestions for improvement. If this were organised and facilitated in a focus group format, it would enable richer exploration of participants' comments and avoid the lack of clarity that often arises when the only means of researching course impact – as in the present study – is an asynchronous written (and translated) survey.

5. Keep the high amount of reflection opportunities in the current programme; and keep the clear signposting of these opportunities. Also:

- Make sure enough time is allowed for these reflections, and not only asynchronous time. The amount of time required for reflection within CPD programmes is often underestimated. Consider adding optional drop-in sessions for participants who want to discuss things further, so that everybody gets a chance to reflect synchronously but there is also additional time if people need it. (These sessions don't necessarily need to be moderated by a trainer or to take place in English.)
- Consider varying the nature of pre-workshop tasks so that some are either optional or less time-consuming, while still providing a valuable opportunity for reflection.

6. Keep the Community of Practice (CoP) going.

Most CoP participants within the current programme clearly find it useful and interesting. This is particularly notable as a CoP was advised, but cautiously, in the conclusions of the previous report on the Chiapas programme (module one). If any issues do arise in future with the CoP on this programme, an initial face-to-face training workshop to set it up could be helpful.

7. Keep using Telegram.

Many of the participants in the current Chiapas programme hadn't used Telegram before joining, but it seems not to have been problematic for most of them. (Unfortunately, those who said they'd encountered difficulties with Telegram didn't give explanatory detail in their comments.) Also:

- It might be worth adding an optional Telegram "clinic" session after the first two weeks of the programme where people can drop in if they need support, so they can address any major blockers early and avoiding continuing to struggle for the entire length of a module. I

suspect that in some cases, if someone has persistent trouble with Telegram, they might also be a bit less confident with tech in general, so even having videos that show them how to use it (which they need to use tech to access) might actually be less helpful or welcome to them than guidance from a human tutor.

- Remind participants that Telegram is available on laptops as well as on mobile devices, which might make it easier for them to do multiple things at once (like type in the chat while seeing other participants as well as the slides being shared from the trainer's screen).

8. Review the course length and structure.

- Generally 10 weeks seems an acceptable length for one module, though a minority of participants reported a wish to have more time to go into depth and reflect more on each sub-topic, feeling that the general pace was quite fast.
- Perhaps a compromise for further courses would be to provide 8–10 mandatory weeks and another 1–2 optional weeks in which participants could explore certain topics in more depth, or perhaps spend some time on more open-ended discussion, reflection or ideas-sharing.
- Make sure weeks and modules connect explicitly to each other to allow participants to follow up what they've learned and carry insights forward. Teachers need regular opportunities to connect what they are currently learning or trying with what they knew, learned or tried previously.

9. Review the contextual relevance of course content.

- Clearly this programme already takes local context into consideration so may not need or benefit from major amendments. However, areas for improvement are to address the issue of class size (30+ pupils) and the involvement of indigenous communities, which the current programme seems not to address well.
- Currently the programme invites teachers' own experiences and voices, but the course contents are pre-determined. Co-creation and contribution directly by teachers themselves may be worth investigating or trialling in future modules, particularly to see if this might address the feelings of the 50+% of respondents that the course could be better suited to their particular contexts.

10. Review the use of examples in the course content/materials.

- Participants appreciate the examples already included in the course, and more examples would probably also be welcome.
- Video examples are helpful but other examples shouldn't be forgotten (e.g. short written vignettes, learner feedback, or teaching materials).
- One potentially helpful adaptation/addition for future courses is to include real examples from teachers who had participated in earlier modules or related British Council courses (and, of course, where consent has already been given by all teacher and pupil participants to share these examples). These could be especially useful where they address challenges that participants feel are lacking in the current course, i.e. large classes and indigenous contexts.
- Ensure examples are accompanied by reflective tasks so teachers don't only see an example but also think about what it means, how it demonstrates good practice and how it could compare with their own context(s).

11. Review the amount/nature of peer collaboration.

- Respondents seem generally to enjoy this on the programme and if anything would appreciate more. Research from other similar projects supports this and only warns of a risk that synchronous sessions could become too trainer-centred.
- To encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing, perhaps there could be a session midway through a module in which a more "swapshop" approach is taken, facilitated by the trainer(s) or by more experienced teachers. For example, participants might reflect on what they've studied and tried in the first half of the module and work together to brainstorm how to apply these learnings to their contexts, especially larger classes (30+ pupils) or indigenous contexts. This would also address the issues of context applicability mentioned above, as well as addressing the feeling that it's hard to apply learnings to practice, which was mentioned by several respondents in the "what I found difficult" section of the survey.
- Alternatively, teachers could be prompted to try something in their class one week, then come back and report on it the following week, and then vote on each other's experiments and nominate one peer as "teacher of the week" according to criteria they set themselves (e.g. effort or achievement or innovation etc.).

12. I12. Include more opportunities for *directly* relating and applying learnings to teachers' own practice.

Provide explicit examples of how to put theory into practice, as well as opportunities for teachers to report back on what happened when they tried and discuss these experiences with their peers on the course. Consider inviting participants to write up or video/audio record these experiences for posterity, in English or in a preferred other language, and storing these in an "experience bank" which can be accessed by future participants in the programme, or perhaps incorporated into the future programme content itself.

13. Add English-language support.

- 112 respondents reported that improving their own English proficiency was one reason for participating in the programme; 135 respondents reported that they had improved their own English proficiency as a result of participating; but 12 respondents nonetheless reported that their own low level of English sometimes made it hard to keep up.
- To be more inclusive of all participants, consider some surrounding English-language support, such as a glossary, bilingual vocabulary list, subtitles on all course videos, some discussion permitted and facilitated in Spanish (or other local/appropriate language), etc.
- As the majority of participants report a CEFR level of B1–B2 in English and a significant minority report having a lower level of proficiency, it would also be worth grading all course input (materials and trainers' own speech, as far as reasonably practicable) to B1 level in order to maximise inclusivity and accessibility for all course participants.

14. For participants to feel safe:

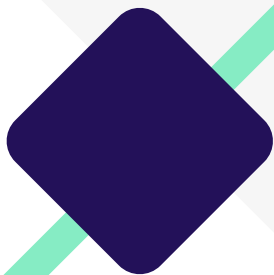
- Keep using closed groups on Telegram.
- Keep allowing participants to share individual questions at the end of live sessions.

15. To support disadvantaged participants:

- Keep providing mobile phone equipment and data (several participants explicitly mentioned this as something they'd appreciated), but consider a more equitable (as opposed to equal) approach.
- Keep avoiding conducting the programme during the rainy season when the local infrastructure for connectivity is poor.

16. Consider piloting a module that also involves school leaders.

- Literature suggests that school leadership should be involved in CPD, and *actively* involved. However, there is little evidence available on how this might work effectively in practice or whether leaders have adequate time and capacity to be truly involved or supportive.
- It could be enlightening and rewarding for the British Council to pilot one module in Chiapas in which leaders or other school departments are somehow more involved and see what comes of it. For example, this could be piloted in one school where participation in the Chiapas programme is already quite well established, so that trying this new variable wouldn't be too disruptive.



Appendix 1: Summary of key case studies in the literature

Programme and location(s)	Features of programme					
	British Council involved	Low-resource context	Focus on teachers' CPD	Involves CoPs	(Mainly) mobile-based	Used (at least partly) mobile messaging
Mobile-enabled remote CPD in Chiapas (Mexico, i.e. the focus of this research study)	X	X	X	X	X	X
CPD via WhatsApp in a refugee camp (Jordan)		X	X	(X)	X	X
ELISS (English Language Initiative for Secondary Schools) (India)	X	X	X	(X)	X	X
English in Action (Bangladesh)		X	X	(X)	X	
National Teacher Training Programme (Egypt)	X	X	X	(X)		
MENA Regional CoP Leader Support Programme (part of the Teacher Networking Initiative) (Yemen, Algeria, Palestine, Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Iraq, Jordan)	X	X	X	X		
QHL (Quality Holistic Learning) project (Lebanon, Niger, Kenya, Chad)		X	X	X	X	X
Teachers Learning Together (Kenya and Rwanda)		X	X	X		
Teaching for Success (Occupied Palestinian Territories)	X	X	X	(X)		X
Teaching for Success (Syria)	X	X	X	X		X
Tejas project (India)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Study of 3 ELT associations (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda)		X	X	X	X	X



Appendix 2: Survey questions

Low-tech teacher development in Chiapas

[Informed consent]

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey. You have been invited to participate because you are part of the **British Council's continuing professional development (CPD) programme in Chiapas, Mexico**.

The aim of this research is to investigate the use of mobile messaging apps like Telegram for continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers.

The latest date to submit your responses to the survey is **30 September 2023**.

It's important to **complete the survey in one session**. If you leave the survey before you submit your answers, your information won't be saved and you would need to repeat the whole survey.

Please read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish, before deciding if you want to participate.

- You should only respond to the survey if you want to. Choosing not to respond to this survey will not disadvantage you in any way.
- You can stop and close the survey at any time and without giving a reason.
- Once you click "submit responses" at the end of the survey, your data will be submitted and it will be too late to withdraw your data from the research.
- There are no known risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research, except spending 1 hour on the survey which you could choose to spend in some other way.
- There are no known benefits to you from participating in this research, except the possible opportunity for

professional or personal development that can come from reflecting on your experience.

- The responses that you provide will be stored in a password-protected electronic file. The data will be stored until the end of 2023 for the purpose of completing this research project, then all survey data will be deleted.
- The data that you submit will be transferred to, stored and processed at a destination outside the UK and the European Economic Area.
- Your responses to this survey are completely anonymous. You do not need to give your name, email address or contact details at any point.
- If you choose to include any identifying information like your name or email address, these will not be seen by anybody except the main researcher (Laura Patsko). All identifying information will be removed before the data are analysed so that the final report is completely anonymous.

If you have any questions or require more information about this research, please contact Laura Patsko (laura@laurapatsko.com).

If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact the British Council's Safeguarding Focal Point, Victoria Maineri (Victoria.Maineri@britishcouncil.org).

If you have read the information above and agree to participate with the understanding that the data (including any personal data) that you submit will be processed accordingly, please click "Continue" to begin the survey.

About me

I am participating in the British Council low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas as:

- A teacher
- A facilitator
- Other (_____)

The municipality I teach in is...

I teach pupils aged...

- 0-3 years old
- 4-6 years old
- 7-9 years old
- 10-years old
- 13-16 years old
- 17+ years old
- No pupils (I am not currently teaching).

I have been teaching for...

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10 more years

I currently teach:

- English only
- Another subject(s)
- English and another subject(s)
- No subjects (I am not currently teaching)

I have the following qualifications:

- TKT
- TKT jyoung learners
- Teacher's training course
- ICELT
- CELTA
- DELTA
- TESOL
- TEFL
- TESL
- Licenciatura relacionada con la enseñanza del inglés
- Otra licenciatura (especificar)
- Maestría relacionada con la enseñanza del inglés
- Otra Maestría (especificar)

I am a:

- Full time teacher (Docente de Aula)
- AEE (Asesor Externo Especializado)

My own general level of English is:

- Low (CEFR level A1–A2)
- Intermediate (CEFR level B1–B2)
- Advanced (CEFR level C1–C2)

In the past, I have participated in the following teacher development activities:

- Courses (for example, Cambridge CELTA or TKT)
- Live workshops/seminars
- Online events (for example, webinars or live Facebook chats)
- Other (_____)

What I think about Continuous Professional Development in general

Below are 15 statements about teacher development programmes in general. For each statement, you should say how much you agree or disagree with it.

Let's go!

	I strongly disagree..	I disagree.	I agree.	I strongly agree.
My main reason for participating in teacher development is to improve my students' learning.				
I believe teacher development is not just about teachers – it should involve everyone (for example, directors/ principals, parents, managers).				
I believe teacher development programmes should be adapted for different contexts (for example, different countries, states, schools or classrooms).				
When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer to use technology which I already know or feel comfortable using.				
I need support to use digital/online tools for professional purposes.				
When I participate in teacher development, human connection is important – I want to work together and learn from other teachers.				
I believe teacher development should be long-term and ongoing, not just short courses or individual workshops.				
When I participate in teacher development, I like to share my own skills and experiences, not just listen to other “experts”.				
When I learn about teaching methods or activities, I like to see examples of new things (like classroom videos, lesson plans, students' work, etc.) before I try them with my students.				



	I strongly disagree..	I disagree.	I agree.	I strongly agree.
When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer discussions to stay focused on professional matters.				
When I participate in teacher development, reflection is important – I want to think about and discuss the new things that I'm learning or trying.				
When I participate in teacher development, I usually have enough time to think about, discuss and try things.				
When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, I prefer to spend some time face-to-face with the other teachers (not all online).				
When I participate in digital/online teacher development programmes, safety is important – I want to share my experiences confidentially and not to feel judged by others.				
As an English teacher, professional development programmes also help me to develop my own English language skills.				

Opportunities and challenges in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas

Think about your participation in the British Council's low-tech continuous professional development programme in Chiapas.

What do you enjoy about this programme? Try to identify three things.

What do you find difficult about this programme? Try to identify three things.

Did you participate in the Community of Practice after Module 1?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know / I don't remember

If you participated in the Community of Practice after Module 1, how useful did you find it?

1	Not useful at all
2	Somewhat useful
3	Very useful
4	I don't know / I don't remember

If you participated in the Community of Practice after Module 1, how interesting did you find it?

1	Not interesting at all
2	Somewhat interesting
3	Very interesting
4	I don't know / I don't remember

How I feel about the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas

You will now answer 15 short questions specifically about **the low-tech Chiapas CPD programme**.

For each question, select all the answers that apply. You will also have the opportunity to add your own comments for each question.

Let's go!

P1. My reasons for participating in **the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas** include... [Select all that apply]

- Improving my students' learning.
- Learning new teaching skills and techniques.
- Having the chance to reflect on my teaching.
- Meeting other teachers.
- Making new friends.
- Better career opportunities in future.
- Using technology to learn.
- Practising and improving my English language skills.
- Other (What? _____)

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P2. In my opinion, the **low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas** should involve... [select all that apply].

- ...teachers.
- ...more senior/experienced teachers.
- ...school directors or managers.
- ...parents.
- ...government officials.
- ...other. (Who?)

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P3. In my opinion, the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...is too generic and doesn't suit my specific context.
- ...suits my specific context in some ways.
- ...suits my specific context very well.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P4. The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas uses Telegram. Which of the following is true for you?

- I had no previous experience of using Telegram at all.
- I had used Telegram before this CPD programme, but only for personal purposes.
- I had some previous experience of using Telegram for professional purposes before.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P5. The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas uses Telegram. If you had never used Telegram before joining the programme, how did you feel about needing to use it for this programme?

- Unhappy – I didn't want to learn to use a new app.
- OK - I didn't mind learning to use a new app.
- Happy – I liked learning to use a new app.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P6. In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- I would like more opportunities to work together with other teachers.
- I have enough opportunities to work together with other teachers.
- I think we work together too much – I would prefer more independent work.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P7. In my opinion, one module of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas (for example, “classroom management” or “lesson planning”)...

- ...lasts too long. Just a week or two is enough for one module.
- ...is not long enough. One term/semester of professional development is not enough for one module.
- ...takes just the right amount of time for one module. I wouldn't change anything about this.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P8. In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- I'd like to hear more from other teachers like me.
- I'd like to hear more from experts, not other teachers like me.
- I think the balance is right between ideas from experts and ideas from other teachers like me.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P9. In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- I would like to see more examples of the things that we discuss.
- I think we have enough examples of the things that we discuss.
- I think there are too many examples of the things that we discuss.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P10. In my opinion, in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...discussions between teachers should focus on professional matters.
- ...it's OK to share some more personal things in our discussions, but not too much.
- ...discussions between teachers should definitely include both personal and professional things.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P11. In my opinion, the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...has too much new content and not enough opportunity to reflect on it.
- ...has the right balance of trying new things and then reflecting on them.
- ...has too much reflection and not enough new content

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P12. In the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...I don't have enough time to participate effectively.
- ...I have enough time to participate effectively.
- ...I have enough time for some things but not enough time for others. (Please give more detail below.)

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P13. When participating in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...I would like more face-to-face time and less online time.
- ...I would like more online time and less face-to-face time.
- ...the balance of online and face-to-face time is fine.
- It depends. / I'm not sure. (Please give more detail below.)

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P14. When participating in the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas...

- ...I feel safe sharing my experiences with others.
- ...I do not feel safe sharing my experiences with others.
- ...I feel safe sometimes or in some ways, but not completely. (Please give more detail below.).

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

P15. The low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas has...

- ...not helped me to improve my own English language skills.
- ...helped me to improve my own English language skills.

Do you have any other comments on this aspect of the low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas? Please note them here if so.

The final questions!

Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the British Council's low-tech CPD programme in Chiapas, or in similar contexts, in future?

[free text response]

Is there anything else you would like to add?

[free text response]

Thanks again for your time!

Remember to click "Submit" below to complete this survey.

Appendix 3: Full list of survey respondents' locations

Responses to the participant survey were received from the following locations across Chiapas state:

- Acacoyagua
- Arriaga
- Bella Vista
- Benemérito de las Américas
- Catazajá
- Chamula
- Chilón
- Cintalapa
- Comitán de Domínguez
- Frontera Comalapa
- Huehuetán
- Huixtla
- Jiquipilas
- Jitotol
- La Independencia
- Larrainzar
- Las Margaritas
- Maravilla Tenejapa
- Mazatán
- Mezcalapa
- Ocosingo
- Palenque
- Pijijiapan
- Rayón
- Salto de Agua
- San Cristóbal de las Casas
- San Juan Cancuc
- Siltepec
- Sitalá
- Socoltenango
- Soyaló
- Suchiapa
- Tapachula
- Tenejapa
- Teopisca
- Tila
- Tonalá
- Tumbalá
- Tuxtla Chico
- Tuxtla Gutiérrez
- Tuzantán
- Venustiano Carranza
- Villa Corzo
- Villaflores
- Yajalón
- Zinacantán

Annotated references: Specific best practice guidance

Allier-Gagneur, Z., McBurnie, C., Chuang, R., and Haßler, B. (2020). *Characteristics of Effective Teacher Education in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. What Are They and What Role Can EdTech Play?*²⁶

In this meta-analysis of the findings from 10 existing research reviews, the authors note a paucity of quality research into the effectiveness of such CPD programmes, not only for teachers' skill development but also the impact of CPD interventions on their students' learning. Limitations include:

- Lack of “control vs. intervention group” evidence to compare directly what impact a CPD programme has had.
- Evidence gathered about teachers but not about the impact of teachers' actions on their students' learning (i.e. the ostensible end goal of CPD interventions).
- Over-reliance on self-reporting.
- Lack of acknowledgement of the observer effect, i.e. “the likelihood that teachers make an extra effort to use new methods when under [classroom] observation” (p. 6).
- Limited consideration of the cost-effectiveness of CPD interventions.
- Analysing the *whole* of an intervention, rather than identifying and separating out different parts and their relative impacts (the authors note that “This practice is problematic as programme designers need to understand characteristics that drive impact, rather than a list of programmes that work (International: Hill, et al., 2013).”)

The authors aim in their meta-analysis to aggregate characteristics that drive impact from learnings across multiple studies, rather than simply listing separate programmes that seem to work in themselves. They point out that it's not ideal to construct a set of principles for effective CPD intervention design on the basis of such inadequate research evidence, because this evidence “does not allow researchers to distinguish the ‘active ingredients’ of teacher education programmes from causally redundant features” (p. 7).

To provide guidance that is as useful as possible in such circumstances, the authors cite Scutt & Baeyer's (2019, p. 66) position, i.e.:

*"We have a plausibly helpful set of design principles expressed across a number of reviews about professional development. **While no individual feature would seem to offer any guarantee of success, it seems like a good bet to stay focused on carefully designed programmes that align broadly with all of them** until such time as a developing evidence base can offer us more granular and specific recommendations."*

The review identifies **12 characteristics of effective tech-enabled teacher education**, many of which it appears the British Council are already addressing in the Chiapas CPD programme:

1. **Encourage teachers to focus on their pupils' learning** because this is ultimately why CPD exists: to help these teachers' students learn better.
2. **Share effective practices with teachers using modelling (especially via video, but also via any other models such as sample lesson plans or materials)**. As there isn't enough really solid evidence that video is the best approach, CPD providers should be careful before making huge investments. There also isn't widespread consensus on precisely what makes a given practice or approach effective for students' learning, but that whatever these are determined to be, an effective CPD programme should show teachers how to do them. Teachers need to see and experience the methods they're being trained on, and this is **especially useful if the model provided is similar to their own real contexts**.
3. **Acknowledge and build on teachers' existing knowledge, views, and experiences**. Recognise that novices and more experienced teachers may need different approaches, and also that teachers who have already been teaching for some time before participating in a particular CPD intervention will have developed habits and opinions during this time that may warrant addressing carefully during the CPD programme.
4. **Focus on developing practical subject pedagogy rather than theoretical generic pedagogy**. Context is very important, not only in a geographical/institutional sense but in a subject sense. For example, groupwork is a useful teaching strategy but this is too generic to mean much unless examples are given of its use in the specific subject area of the teachers participating in the CPD programme.
5. **Empower teachers to become reflective practitioners** and structure teacher education around practice-based cycles of trial and refinement – this relates not only to the likelihood that teachers really will develop new teaching habits and change their practice (hopefully for the better) but also relates to the **sustainability** of teachers' learning. The implication is that teachers who actively reflect on their experiments not only learn new teaching practices, but learn how to learn new teaching practices.
6. **Incorporate peer support (including virtual communities of practice and social media)**. This is especially helpful where teachers are unable to meet face-to-face. The authors also stress the importance of collaboration and co-learning, not mere "collegiality". They note (p. 14) that "teachers need to have a shared commitment to improving pupil learning outcomes, establishing common goals and developing approaches to achieve them. If these conditions are in place, communities of practice can enable teachers to build their understanding of effective teaching and challenge problematic beliefs as they analyse the impact of teaching on pupil learning."
7. **Ensure teacher education programmes motivate teachers**. This can raise teachers' confidence as well as improving the effectiveness of their practices. The authors note that teachers want to know that the CPD they engage in is actually going to make them more effective, but also vice versa, i.e. teachers will probably be more effective if they are motivated to engage in CPD. Local and cultural considerations may also have an impact in teachers' motivation to participate (e.g. the authors mention one study where female teachers actually *decreased* in confidence because their programme forced them to participate in male-dominated groups in a context where this often means the women would not share their own opinions).
8. **Prioritise school-based teacher education** (including using mobile phones and tablets for virtual coaching) – in other words, regular peer-to-peer learning opportunities among teachers based at the same school, who therefore have access to similar CPD opportunities and a similar environment in which to try out and reflect on new things. This could also include support from an external "coach", potentially delivered virtually if the circumstances require this.

9. **Schedule regular, ongoing teacher education** – one-off interventions do not work.
10. **Provide supporting teaching and pupil learning materials** (including Open Educational Resources, community servers, audio-based teaching and learning materials and mobile phones) – in other words, along with training insights, give teachers quality learning materials too that they can use when trying new things. They should be “aligned with the local curriculum and should relate to the day-to-day experiences of teachers”, as well as being provided in a familiar language (not a foreign or official language that might be less accessible to the teachers).
11. **Ensure support from school leaders** (including the use of mobile phones for communication and accountability) – and leaders should be actively involved, not just supporting from a distance and preferably not from a totally different context. Leaders should understand what teachers’ daily professional lives are really like. But the authors also note (p. 24) that while “communities of practice (CoPs) need appropriate leadership to thrive”, “CoPs needs change over time. As teachers’ capacity is built, they become more autonomous and leaders need to adjust their leadership style.” They warn that there isn’t much evidence on effective leadership in low- and middle-income contexts, and that there’s a risk that leaders face such high administrative burdens that they have little time or energy left for focusing on learning needs and outcomes.
12. **Create a coherent policy environment.** “Teacher education programmes need to be aligned with the local cultural norms, policy environment and school conditions” (p. 6). For example, teachers will find it hard to implement new practices if these are not also believed in or supported by parents.



British Council (2021). Understanding the effectiveness of professional development opportunities for teachers delivered remotely. [British Council publication]

This umbrella study looked at literature on remote CPD for teachers, plus 4 case studies of different approaches in low- and middle-income contexts across the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa): “the MENA-wide CoP Leader Support Programme, the Egyptian National Teacher Training Programme (second year), TfS [Teaching for Success] Syria, and TfS Palestine.” (p. 5)

The authors’ overall conclusion is that:

“teachers can learn effectively through remote PD providing there is **adequate induction, clear explanation, and ongoing support**. Synchronous sessions are particularly valuable in fostering peer interaction and dialogue and discussions focussed on ways to motivate pupils and improve outcomes. The data presented in all four case studies shows that **teachers prefer F2F to remote PD**. However, the data also shows that teachers **appreciate and value learning online with other teachers** and levels of satisfaction are consistently high across the four case studies.” (p. 5)

From the literature and case study reviews, they identified 12 factors (p. 5) that contributed to the effectiveness of remote CPD for teachers:

1. “Providing a **regular structure in synchronous sessions** (e.g. review, warmers, input, open dialogue, demonstrations, video, tasks, breakout discussions).
2. Giving teachers the opportunity to **experience digital tools in synchronous sessions** [provide a model/demo, show them how it works] and then encouraging them to **try them in their own classrooms**.
3. Using a **flipped model** with at least some tasks being done before synchronous sessions.
4. Having a **well-organised asynchronous platform** to support work in conjunction with synchronous sessions.
5. Getting to know the **teachers’ needs** and taking them into account.
6. Giving teachers **specific roles within the group**.
7. Creating opportunities in both synchronous and asynchronous environments for **peer-to-peer sharing**.
8. Integrating **video** into synchronous sessions to make explicit connections to the classroom and for **modelling**.
9. Integrating **quizzes and polls** (e.g. Kahoot, Mentimeter, Wordwall, Nearpod and Flipgrid) which has a positive effect on engagement and interaction.
10. Employing **WhatsApp**. This app plays a particularly important role in fostering interpersonal interactions, enabling **flipped learning**, and for **organisational purposes** (e.g. information, reminders and resources).

11. Providing **specific ideas and tasks** for teachers to try out in classrooms (either F2F or online).

12. Providing **basic digital induction and training.**"

[emphasis added]

Other opportunities and advice included:

- Teachers tend to **prefer face-to-face CPD** but appreciate the **flexibility of remote CPD**.
- But **remote CPD is nonetheless useful** and “should not be seen just as a poor, expedient or less effective substitute for face-to-face PD.” (p. 7)
- **Support for video examples:** “Observation of TAG and CoP sessions shows that teachers respond positively to videos of teaching and where video examples and short clips were used there was some reflective and concrete discussion.” (p. 7)
- But: “Video viewing is unlikely to be impactful in isolation and **should instead be paired with other learning resources**, such as viewing guides or discussion with other professionals. In this sense, the TAG format is ideal if video can be integrated gradually.” (p. 26)
- **Support for other types of example too:** “Inclusion of vignettes, narratives, learner-feedback, transcripts, videos and real teaching materials create stronger CPD (Mann and Walsh, 2017). This can be through video, demonstration lessons, peer observations, or case studies of teaching (Bates and Morgan, 2018) but short videos have higher positive evaluations from teachers than whole lessons (see Mann et al., 2019).” (p. 24)
- **Multilingualism/translanguaging should be considered** as a useful approach when delivering CPD, especially for teachers whose subject is not English – but don’t just assume/impose this; discuss, negotiate and decide on the best linguistic approach with the teachers involved. (p. 8)
- **Incorporating existing British Council materials** can enhance CPD programmes: *Teaching for Success* content and the *Teaching English* website were considered valuable by TAG (Teacher Activity Group) participants in the case studies reviewed for this paper.

Some potential risks were identified:

- “Some [recorded remote PD sessions] were fairly **trainer-centred** and this can be a tendency with remote PD (see McAleavy et al. 2018). More work needs to be done to find ways to **encourage peer-to-peer discussion** in synchronous sessions.” (p. 7)
- Teacher educators should follow up and provide support beyond the synchronous sessions – one-off CPD isn’t good enough.
- “**Providing a regular structure is crucial in ensuring a secure and productive remote PD experience.** Elements like review, warmers, input, open dialogue, demonstrations, video, tasks, breakout discussions work better if there is a regular sequence or pattern.” (p. 7)
- Interactive content and opportunities to collaborate are very important – **provided they’re easy to access!** Could be as simple as regular short surveys, but in these four case studies there was also use of online quizzes and polls.

WhatsApp was the preferred platform for connection and communication in all four of the case studies reviewed for this umbrella paper. The case studies reveal/imply a number of advantages to WhatsApp (a number of which are echoed in Qazi & Mtenzi’s 2023 summary of the affordances of mobile devices in general for CPD):

- large TAGs (Teacher Activity Groups) can be accommodated more easily than in (for example) Zoom – a WhatsApp group of 30+ people doesn’t feel as overwhelming as a Zoom call with 30+ people
- Ease of sharing links to files elsewhere

- Generally usable even with low connectivity (though not always, of course)
- Familiar to range of users (teachers, parents, students)
- Scalable
- Allows multimedia
- Allows both synchronous and asynchronous communication

The British Council Teaching for Success case study in Syria concludes with a **specific recommendation about WhatsApp** (p. 91):

“It is recommended to plan and deliver a WhatsApp based PD [professional development] project that might be more scalable and able to reach a much larger number of teachers with low data videos or cartoons focussed on improving classroom methodology. This would be a significant investment for [the British Council] but might

They **strongly recommend a blended approach to CPD**, whether remote or not – the real question is not whether to take a blended approach, but what mix/balance is right:

“Further work needs to be done to explore appropriate use of flipped and hybrid models rather than thinking of choosing simply F2F [face-to-face] or remote PD [professional development]. In many ways the F2F versus remote/distance learning debate should be a debate that belongs in the past for PD. There may still be interventions that rely exclusively on F2F and those that rely exclusively on remote delivery. However, the challenge and opportunity for most programmes will be to arrive at the appropriate mix.” (p. 93)

Cordingley, P., Crisp, B., Raybould, R., Lightfoot, A. & S. Copeland (2023). *Exploring principles of effective continuing professional development in low- and middle-income countries*. [British Council publication]

These authors of this umbrella study reviewed existing research evidence to identify what high-quality CPD might look like for teachers in low- and middle-income contexts (LMICs). They note the importance of recognising the uniqueness of lower-income contexts, and not assuming that approaches which have proven effective in better-resourced, higher-income contexts can simply be transferred and prove equally effective.

The authors took into account “characteristics of effective CPD that made assumptions about or depended upon available resources, capacity or teachers’ working contexts that would likely not apply in LMICs” (p. 7) so that they could avoid the risk of recommending irrelevant or unrealistic practices.

They identified 12 principles of effective CPD and considered specifically how these relate to low-income contexts (pp. 8–9). Note that there is a high degree of overlap between these 12 principles and the 12 characteristics identified by Allier-Gagneur et al (2020) (see [above summary](#) within this annotated references section).

Specifically, “effective CPD programmes:

1. are organised around providers’ **aspirations for students’ learning** and those of participating teachers and the school/system
2. focus on **enabling teachers to develop their pedagogy, practice and understanding of content and theory** (e.g. about why things do and don’t work) in connection with each other
3. describe CPD as a process of taking **shared responsibility** (between programme providers, participants and their schools) for **excellence in student achievement and well-being**
4. help to reinforce and enhance teachers’ **professional identities and professional growth** as well as their knowledge and skills
5. ensure that in order for teachers to achieve high-quality practice, providers:
 - make explicit the value and contribution of **specialist expertise** to professional learning
 - encourage teachers to **value their own expertise** and access that of their colleagues
 - build **subject expertise** and **expertise about the community** [which] participants are serving, about how children learn and about school leadership into the CPD programmes they provide
6. ensure that combinations of **iterative, evidence-rich CPD activities include assessment for learning (AFL)** for teachers

7. encourage **school leaders to explicitly promote and model professional learning** for their colleagues
8. **focus on CPD** by building on a deep understanding of teachers':
 - professional identities, practices and motivations
 - existing knowledge, skills and beliefs – especially as they relate to knowledge of local communities, local cultural beliefs and practices, and local languages
9. provide opportunities for **peer-supported, exploratory dialogue** focused on:
 - exploring new practices
 - students' responses to changes
10. provide opportunities for participants to explore their habits, assumptions and beliefs – this is done by trying **new approaches that disrupt the status quo sufficiently to enable new ways of looking** at the curriculum.
11. provide **opportunities for sustained, iterative combinations of evidence-rich, enquiry-oriented activities** which enable participants to try out, practise and refine new approaches and then integrate them in their day-to-day teaching.
12. provide opportunities for participants to **access high-quality tools and resources** for teaching and learning. These need to be relevant to the programme content and could include curriculum or lesson-planning templates, progression frameworks or student observation and assessment software."

[emphasis added]

The [original report](#) lays out very clearly each principle on a single page, with practices to consider, potential challenges, and specific practical recommendations for overcoming each of these challenges. For example (p. 12):



Core principle 2

Effective CPD programmes focus on enabling teachers to develop their pedagogy, practice and understanding of content and theory (e.g. about why things do and don't work) in connection with each other.

Practices in LMICs to consider

EPPI reviews about CPD in sub-Saharan Africa make specific mention of the importance of developing pedagogy, practice and understanding of content and theory side by side, and this might also be inferred from the CPD model in Pakistan. In many LMICs, there is considerable linguistic diversity among the teacher population (and, often, specific geographical issues within those contexts, such as enclaves predominantly consisting of a particular ethnic and linguistic minority) and many teachers have to engage with CPD in a language which is not their mother tongue.

Potential challenge #1	Recommendation(s) to overcome this challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running long-term sustained CPD, which enables development of theory and practice in connection with each other, is very challenging when resources are constrained, for example large class-sizes or remote rural schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include CPD activities, tools and protocols for embedding new learning in day-to-day school practices and provide follow-up support, monitoring and coaching after CPD input sessions. Build into CPD design an explicit focus on how/why developing theory and practice together is useful.
Potential challenge #2	Recommendation(s) to overcome this challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of CPD delivered in teachers' first language was significantly more effective. In multilingual contexts, CPD is often offered in the official language as opposed to the language(s) the teachers are most familiar with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider language skills when recruiting CPD facilitators and the benefits of translation of tools and resources.

One final piece of key advice relevant to the British Council is that in evaluating CPD programmes, they stress the importance of “doing things well, not quickly”. They cite a double problem in creating large-scale, effective CPD: (1) the majority of evidence for effective approaches is not sourced from, or generalisable to, LMIC contexts, and (2) because each teaching and learning context is unique, each one will have its own particular circumstances and challenges that aren't captured in a large number of research studies.

Thus, rather than taking all principles aggregated from multiple sources, trying to put them all into practice in a particular context, and then evaluate the impact, the authors conclude that “funders and providers of CPD working in LMICs need to **focus on a small number of these principles and ensure they are done well, rather than trying to work at large scale immediately.**” (p. 26)

Motteram, G. & S. Dawson (2019). *Resilience and language teacher development in challenging contexts: supporting teachers through social media.* [British Council publication]

This report looks at three English language teacher associations in sub-Saharan francophone Africa (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda), two of which had already used **WhatsApp for some form of Community of Practice (CoP) and/or CPD.**

The focus was on CPD in **remote and challenging contexts**, particularly where social media is used to support ELT teachers' development via CoPs on WhatsApp and how these might "contribute to individual and collective resilience²⁷, strengthening the quality of teaching and learning in these challenging contexts".

One of the authors' key research questions (RQs) was:

***How can 'low-tech' forms of digital communication contribute to language teacher development in challenging contexts?*²⁸**

Note that while Mexico ranks better on the Fund for Peace "Fragile States Index" than the three countries in this review, they do all face some similar challenges. The three contexts in the study in this review are poorly resourced, leading to a strain on pre-service training and extremely limited in-service training, especially in remote and rural locations.

This review found that the **use of WhatsApp for remote CPD shows great potential** for:

- more equal and democratic participation;
- sustainability and scale;
- improving teachers' agency and their taking responsibility for their own CPD;
- building teachers' individual and collective resilience.

They also note that WhatsApp requires less bandwidth than Zoom (which had proven less successful in the authors' previous studies) and that "WhatsApp and similar tools, such as WeChat, Viber or Telegram, are multimodal devices able to handle text, pictures, sound files and video as well as voice calls" (p. 3).

Key additional key findings were:

1. Context remains extremely important for success, not only for the relevance of CPD topics but also for practical issues such as connectivity.
2. Self-organisation and the natural emergence of leaders within groups seem to promote commitment and trust among participants.
3. CoPs promote collegiality and collaboration to improve teaching practice and learning outcomes despite the daily challenges faced by teachers and learners.

²⁷ It's notable that the British Council appears not to have focused on teacher resilience in the Chiapas programme or evaluations so far.

²⁸ This RQ clearly aligns very closely with the interests of the British Council Argentina/Mexico, who commissioned the present report and case study of the "Low-tech CPD programme" in Chiapas.

4. CoPs work best when leaders emerge naturally within the group, rather than somebody being appointed to lead a CoP – this helped build relationships and for teachers to trust and respect the leader as a peer rather than a superior.
5. **The ideal size of a CoP** was around 20 people, rather than trying to reach and include every teacher in a region. It's not necessarily a case of "the more, the better".
6. There was a need for **basic (tech) skills training** – the authors note that we mustn't assume that all teachers can actually use WhatsApp, even if they have it on their phones and seem familiar with it.

The authors conclude with the following three recommendations (p. 18):

1. *"It is of paramount importance to find local, trusted and skilled colleagues who work in and understand the local context and the needs and mindsets of the teachers in order to build a CoP that is relevant to local needs.*
2. *A face-to-face training workshop is critical for building the foundations of the group, although we recognise that this might not always be possible and alternative ways of setting up at a distance need to be considered, as remote/ virtual ways of working become more routine.*

3. *When working in remote and rural communities where access to the internet is more sporadic, perhaps there is an argument for helping teachers, for example by purchasing some mobile data for the first few months to increase their access to the group and enable them to grasp the potential of the group for their own professional development. This might encourage continued uptake.*

And they noted the following recommendations from their local partners in sub-Saharan Africa for anyone considering similar projects in other countries (p. 18):

- "Teach the potential members of the CoP how to use social media.
- Encourage teachers to be passionate about their own CPD, because if they are passionate they will find the means to manage the group.
- Be flexible in relation to your expectations of other CoP members.
- Monitoring an online community should take a democratic rather than an autocratic leadership approach."



O'Mara (2021). How Can We Enhance Teacher Professional Development Globally? 10 Innovations Supporting Teachers.²⁹

This online article summarises insights from the “Teachers for a changing world Spotlight” campaign (collaboration between HundrED, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)), which received applications from 400 teacher development programmes across 80 countries and shortlisted the 10 most effective in using high-tech or low-tech solutions to “engage, motivate, and support teachers”.

They summarise five key insights from the 10 shortlisted innovations, several of which seem to be fulfilled by the British Council’s “Low-tech CPD” programme in Chiapas:

1. *“Design with the user in mind: If you want teachers to integrate your solution into their daily practice, you need to **understand their context, their level of connectivity, and their digital literacy.**”*
2. *“**Use existing technology**, when possible: Think about you can get your solutions to teachers in a low-cost and accessible way. Do most of your teachers have access to a smartphone? If so, then think about how your solution could utilize that technology before investing in a pricey alternative.”*
3. *“**Give users options on how to access content:** This is particularly important if your teachers are spread out across low-and-high bandwidth areas as they will require different options to access the content. Selected innovator, Global School Leaders, provided their teachers in low-bandwidth settings, modules delivered in-person, then staff followed up with principals via phone calls for further support.”*
4. *“**Train users on how to use the technology:** This one might seem obvious but can not be overstated - technology can only improve learning outcomes if teachers are trained with the necessary skills to apply it.”*
5. *“Ensure technology **enables but does not drive** teacher professional development: Start by asking yourself what outcomes you care about, then think about how technology can help you achieve them more effectively. It might not be a viable option for technology to replace in-person training or coaching, but it could be a great tool to support school communities remotely.”*

²⁹ Published online by hundrED at <https://hundred.org/en/articles/how-can-we-enhance-teacher-professional-development-globally-10-innovations-supporting-teachers>

Tegha, G., El-Serafy, Y. & B. Haßler (2021). *Five considerations when using technology for Teacher Professional Development in low resource areas.*³⁰

The authors of this online article identify “**five cross-cutting principles** [to be] taken into account when **using technology for TPD [teacher professional development] in low-resource contexts**” based on their research and reviews of other studies:

1. In order for tech to support effective TPD, the plan for TPD must in itself be effective, i.e. “pedagogy before technology”. There are many tech tools available that can do many things, but those things must first be identified as demonstrably effective, and only then can the right tech be selected to enable them. “Without the right foundations, no amount of technology use will make teacher professional development effective.” (This risk seems to have been avoided in the Chiapas programme as the programme contents are quite pedagogically sound in themselves.)
2. The tech chosen has to be suitable for the existing infrastructure, especially where access to data or devices is low or non-existent. The authors also caution against assuming everyone is constantly offline – it’s OK to require some degree of connectivity, just remember that it may be unavailable to some people in some places some of the time.
3. They advise caution when using new or innovative tech, as teachers who are not adequately incentivised to learn how to use it may simply prefer to use tech they’re already familiar with. (This risk seems to have been avoided in Chiapas by using a messaging app that most teachers were already familiar with.)

4. Edtech is better at solving specific challenges than general ones. The authors recommend “[thinking] about the specific challenge with TPD and consider whether technology offers the best option to address it. Perhaps you realise there’s a challenge with teachers forming specialist Communities of Practice (CoP) because distances are too far to travel. You could use technology to bridge the distance gap by organising specialist Communities of Practice digitally, for example, over WhatsApp.” (Again, the Chiapas programme seems already to have addressed exactly this.)
5. Remember that what is scalable in tech-enabled CPD may ultimately depend on what tech has already reached scale. (Again, the Chiapas programme seems to have addressed this by harnessing tech that teachers are already using in their daily lives.)

In the event that each teacher doesn’t have a smartphone, the authors suggest the potential of a “one tablet per school” approach: “Equipping schools with one tablet each can be much more cost-effective than equipping each teacher with a device and can lead to effective TPD outcomes. Tablets can be loaded with TPD material and used in school-based teacher learning groups to stimulate learning. [...] Moreover, the one tablet available can be used in combination with messaging to non-smartphones, covering different aspects of the intervention.”

³⁰ Published online by HundrED at <https://hundred.org/en/articles/5-considerations-when-using-technology-for-teacher-professional-development-in-low-resource-areas>

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