

## PRELIM 2

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# Zambia: LATAZ (Language Teachers' Association of Zambia) with York Associates International

August 2022

# Project background

Partnership overview		
<b>Course overview</b>	<b>ETA partner</b>	LATAZ: Language Teachers Association of Zambia
	<b>UKI partner</b>	York Associates International
	<b>Course length</b>	10 weeks
	<b>Number of groups/cohorts</b>	3
<b>Participant profile</b>	<b>Total number of CPs</b>	161 registered
	<b>Language level(s)</b>	B2 - C1
	<b>CPs' teaching context</b>	Primary and secondary school English language teachers in rural and urban schools.
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<b>Synchronous platforms used</b>	Zoom; Whatsapp group; Facebook group; email
	<b>Synchronous session length</b>	- Webinars: 2 hours Interactive focus groups: 2 hours each
	<b>Synchronous session frequency</b>	- Webinars: weekly - Focus groups: twice weekly
	<b>Asynchronous workload</b>	- asynchronous learning platform - consolidation of key learnings from webinars and focus groups through review of recordings and slideshows - optional further language development through links to free sites that can be used by teachers or by their students
<b>Course content</b>	<b>Language development focus</b>	- To increase the language proficiency and professional confidence of teachers using English in the classroom  - To enable teachers, through a series of teacher development webinars and small group sessions to enhance their English language ability, their teaching skills and ultimately their learners' experience.
	<b>Methodology focus</b>	- To develop professional skills and competences, pedagogical knowledge, and creativity and innovation in teaching, through the presentation and study of a range of topics, concepts and models.
	<b>Technology focus</b>	- PowerPoint slideshows were used to input content for both webinars and focus groups

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participants could access materials (PDFs, videos of our webinars and links) via a Facebook group page</li> <li>- increased competency on the Zoom platform</li> </ul>
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## Description of the partners

**York Associates** is a training centre and English language school, with more than 40 years of experience, situated in the north-east of England in the historic city of York. A core staff supports a large group of associate trainers, many of whom contribute knowledge and experience in specialised areas, such as Developing Intercultural Programmes.

YA specialises in international communication, offering high quality training in cross cultural communication, leadership, business skills and personal development, along with an extensive range of teacher training courses. We also deliver a wide range of English language courses, including General English, exam preparation (eg IELTS), Business English, English for Specific Purposes and One-to-One Tuition.

York Associates operates delivering training both globally and from its UK training centre and has successfully developed virtual training as an alternative for many of its clients. <https://york-associates.co.uk/>

### **LATAZ: Language Teachers Association of Zambia**

Founded 20/08/1976, LATAZ has 530 affiliated members out of the over 2,600 prospective members. It has presence and structures in all 10 provinces and 116 districts of the country. Its objectives include to:

1. Provide platform for exchange of ideas, knowledge and materials for quality language teaching/learning
2. Promote Continuing Professional Development among language teachers in Zambia
3. Stimulate and support research in language teaching methodology and practice
4. Promote language proficiency among learners through debate, quiz, spelling and writing competitions.

## Key features of the context

Participants were primary and secondary school teachers from Zambia, who taught English as a main subject or as one of their main subjects. There were approximately 55% female and 45% male, from rural and city schools, with a range of ages and experience, including several in the early years of their career. Zambia has a centralised education system, managed by the Ministry of Education. The official national language is English with several local languages.

All described similar teaching contexts: low resources; large classes, especially as education had recently been made free for all; varying levels of attendance (particularly in rural areas); large travel distances for many; problematic broadband/internet connection or coverage; frequent use of WhatsApp and Facebook and less use of email.

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161 participants registered, of whom only 25% attended a live session, including the introductory webinar. Attendance varied, with a core of regular attendees and others who came when they could. Most took part via their mobile phones, sometimes while travelling home. Others participated asynchronously via our bespoke Facebook group.

## Outline of the course and rationale

One of the key questions in the early contextual analysis process was the balance between language development and methodology focus. A more detailed needs analysis rapidly pointed towards an interest in and a need for a teacher training approach, with a focus on language teaching methodology and practice and continued professional development. Feedback on English language was to be done sensitively. This was confirmed in our opening webinar, where we discussed expectations and areas of interest. All participants were given links to free online speaking and writing programmes, with the hope this could also be used in their classrooms. Those who completed the tests scored B2-C1. In practice, the teachers' level of English was much higher than their test results had suggested, and they had no significant language difficulties.

Key topics, concepts and models were presented and discussed each course week, with a focus on how they could be used in the teachers' context. They included: Using music in the classroom; Task-based learning; ELT Myths; Neurodiversity; Soft skills for teachers; Reimagining how we present grammar to learners; Ethics in Teaching; Creativity in teaching; Creative writing; Continuous professional development; Accelerated learning. These topics were selected in response to participants written course expectations, discussions in the opening webinars, and in subsequent sessions.

## Project findings

### Working in partnership

Early-stage face-to-face meetings via Zoom enabled the partners to establish a friendly working relationship on which to build. There was a positive approach on both sides, with collaboration on project organisation, a commitment to creating a quality programme and willingness to be flexible on programme content. There were challenges maintaining this contact at times and retrospectively a fixed, weekly meeting between partners would have been useful.

### Working with the CPs

Participants were a mixture of gender, age and experience, who showed a positive approach and interest in the topics. The atmosphere towards the trainers was friendly and welcoming. *During the course there was a notable shift towards greater participation during the sessions. This might be due to a number of reasons, including sporadic attendance for some, poor network connectivity, shyness and a shift from teacher/ student mentality to working together as colleagues in different locations.*

During the programme participants gained confidence and started to participate more fully; they commented that they especially enjoyed the discussions in break out rooms. A core of teachers emerged who attended regularly, were motivated and fully engaged and interacted very naturally with each other and the trainers.

*"I think we have made a family in education"*

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Rapport was excellent and regular feedback was that everyone genuinely appreciative the opportunity to develop professionally and loved the topics chosen. It was unfortunate that poor internet connectivity significantly affected attendance and participation despite the best efforts of the CPs involved.

*“I missed some due to network program but could catch through contact with friends and our Facebook page.” “The only challenge was network” “The time I attended the webinar, I found it (more) interesting than watching on Facebook where you don’t fully participate”*

## Designing/delivering the course

The course followed a simple design. There was a weekly webinar on Friday, on a selected topic, with 4 small, daily focus groups the following week (later reduced to 2 groups on Tuesday and Thursday). Both were delivered over Zoom, using shared PowerPoint slideshows, duration 1.45 – 2 hours. In these smaller sessions we consolidated, built on and extended the webinar topics. Participants had opportunities for questions, discussions and shared learnings. Focus was given to the design of future lessons and activities for their learners. They were also provided with copies of the training materials and encouraged to reflect between sessions on their relevance within their own school and educational context. This was provided in the Facebook group rather than via email, as attachments were difficult for some to access. We adapted our material to suit participants who were attending on mobile phones (rather than laptops) and who were frequently multitasking, travelling and dealing with network issues. *“The structure of the training was wonderful. The opportunity to watch webinars on Facebook was a great idea.”*

## Course outcomes

### For course participants:

In our final webinar we discussed what participants saw as successful outcomes from the programme.

Participant comments and trainer observations included:

- *“Weekly webinars were well researched and presented. York Associates chose technocrats of various study areas where topics were picked from. I really benefited. I’m happy to mention that I have downloaded every single recording of weekly webinars and I will keep them very safe on my Computer and Google drive so that I can always refer to them even after many years from now.”*
- *“The weekly webinars opened my eyes to the problem of not having enough research or literature concerning the teacher practices; strides teaching has made maintaining professionalism, ethics; good practices that teachers are making today in terms of CPD’s, educational advancements in educational levels eg. Masters, phd..., initiatives and sacrifices teachers have made in teaching and especially during this Covid epidemic. The topics in the webinar challenged me to consider research ideas in neurodiversity in teaching training and classroom support; teacher confidence and behavior; ethics in teaching”*
- *“I always looked forward to the webinar because the topics were always new and encouraged me to be a better teacher to my learners and colleagues.”*
- *“If such teaching methods are well implemented in our teaching and learning, we can be real subjects of change in our Learners positive academic and social performance.”*

In addition, participants expressed:

- satisfaction that the aims of the project had been more than reached

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- increased knowledge of new approaches in teaching and the relevance of topics they knew relatively little about, e.g. Soft Skills for Teachers and Ethics in Teaching
  - a noticeable increase in confidence operating in English and a willingness on the part of course participants to reflect and discuss their own practices
  - the opportunity to take part in discussions on new topics was much appreciated
  - a number of participants are extremely interested in following up with their own research projects and have asked us for guidance and support.

### **For York Associates:**

This was an extremely positive and enjoyable experience, working with genuinely charming and interesting people. Development outcomes for us were:

- learning about a culture that we were less familiar with
- developing more appreciation of the diversity of approaches and challenges some teachers face globally, i.e. very large class sizes in Zambia; as an organisation heavily involved in teacher training, this was especially valuable
- appreciating how much we were able to design the weekly contents organically, rather than having a fixed programme at the start. From each initial webinar content, we were able to 'see how things worked', refine the content and choose the most appropriate follow up. This responsive style of course design and delivery was a very positive experience that we can build on in future projects.

### **Emergent learning**

It quickly became clear that we weren't aware of the extent of the technical challenges the CPs faced, which prevented some from joining the sessions and made active participation for others often impossible. As people attended via mobile phone, this slowed down or limited the material used and the outcomes achieved in every session: it was impossible to share files during sessions, some planned activities proved impossible to run and communicative tasks needed much longer to set up. Reinforcing messages (such as reminders of the time/link) via email, the Facebook page, and later on the LATAZ Whatsapp group assisted CoPs. Facebook proved to be the best platform to share links, PDFs and videos. We adjusted the timetable to allow CoPs to attend the small group sessions on a choice of days, rather than a fixed schedule – this also allowed people to return on another day if they'd had network issues or other external factors preventing them from attending.

It's important that partners work together to identify the gaps in each other's understandings. A very useful initial needs analysis was conducted by LATAZ, which included teaching context, familiarity with online teaching platforms, social media. But still, some assumptions were made. For example, although all CoPs had an email, many were unfamiliar with email attachments. A more detailed needs analysis focusing on familiarity technology would have been beneficial. Almost all respondents had said they were familiar with Zoom (as opposed to Teams or GoogleMeet); but the interactive sessions were new for many. Facebook, along with Whatsapp, was a social media tool they had identified as comfortable with; again, following links or playing videos on Facebook was unfamiliar.

Overall, the experience on both sides can be summarised by this CoP *"The sessions I attended were very interactive, interesting and meaningful. At the end of it all new methods were learnt that could positively change my attitude as a teacher as well as improve the performance of my learners. Thanks so much."*