

‘Tanggap, tiklop, tago’ (receive, fold, keep): Perceptions of best practice in ELT INSET

Report on British Council English Language
Teaching Research Award Project, 2009:
‘Identifying Best Practice in ELT INSET’.

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ELT Research Papers 12-01

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ISBN 978-0-86355-683-8

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10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN, UK

www.britishcouncil.org

Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful to:

- the central office of the Department of Education of the Republic of the Philippines, for granting permission for the data-gathering;
- our primary contacts in each of the Department of Education Regions and Divisions where the research took place, for their excellent logistical support;
- the various categories of Department of Education employees who provided us with so much valuable data via interviews, focus group meetings and questionnaire responses;
- our research assistants, for their careful and thorough data preparation and analysis;
- colleagues at Lancaster University and participants in its Second Language Learning, Acquisition and Teaching Research Group, for very helpful advice on aspects of the research design.

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Abstract

In-service teacher training (INSET) for English language teachers is an important but often relatively ineffective aspect of large-scale English language teaching (ELT) curriculum development. Based on a synthesis of findings from the ELT and non-ELT literature on the topic, this study therefore first of all attempted to develop a 'user-friendly' theoretical model for informing 'best practice' in this area. The strength of the model was then assessed in relation to data concerning practitioner perceptions of optimal procedures in ELT INSET. The data were elicited by a variety of research methods (interviews, focus group meetings and questionnaire survey) from a cross-section of ELT trainers and teachers in a representative ELT situation (that of government schools at the basic education level in the Philippines). The findings were analysed in terms of each of the main stages involved in INSET design and delivery ('pre-', 'while-' and 'post-'), and are seen i) to confirm the validity of the theoretical model and ii) to provide a number of practical guidelines on how to maximise the potential for 'best practice' in ELT INSET.

1

Introduction

In recent years, large-scale curriculum reform has become a hallmark of national educational systems all over the world, as countries everywhere strive to keep abreast of global trends (Fullan 2005). This is especially so with respect to growth in the teaching and learning of English as an international language (Nunan 2003).

Much of this activity is aimed at improving learning by attempting to put the learner at the heart of the learning process (McGrath 2008; cf. Nunan 1999). However, the quality of student learning depends to a great extent, of course, on the quality of in-service teacher learning. This is because new teaching ideas are translated into practice primarily by serving teachers, since they form the ‘front line’ in innovation implementation. But they are only likely to master novel teaching ideas if there are effective systems of in-service teacher training (INSET) to help them do so.

It is therefore vital that we understand how INSET can be made to work as effectively as possible. Unfortunately, however, it is clear that INSET, in practice, in all subject areas, tends to fall well short of the mark (Adey 2004; Wedell 2009). The primary cause of this state of affairs appears to be a lack of awareness of and commitment to what is involved in planning for, implementing and sustaining meaningful teacher learning of this kind (Fullan 2007: Ch. 14).

This occurs despite the existence of a reasonably extensive literature concerned with why INSET frequently fails and possible remedies for the problem (see, e.g., Joyce & Showers 1980, Harland & Kinder 1997; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis 2005). However, much of this literature is academic in nature, is not readily accessible outside higher education circles, is spread across several areas of study, and is rarely located in teaching situations of the kind in which most ELT takes place. As a result, it does not seem to have made the impact that it might on INSET in general and ELT INSET in particular.

One of the purposes of the study described in this report, thus, is to attempt to provide a ‘holistic’ outline of the main features of the existing literature, by synthesising its primary elements into an overall conceptual framework. By this means, it is hoped, a straightforward, basic theoretical ‘model’ for effective INSET can be formulated, one which is relatively simple but not simplistic, as an aid to conceptualising everyday practice.

Another main aim has been to attempt to present a clear indication of what the practical implications are of adopting such a framework in terms of all the main stages – design, delivery and ‘institutionalisation’ – that INSET typically involves. It is hoped that this kind of information will also help to make the study as practitioner - and policy maker -‘friendly’ as possible.

Finally, as another way of attempting to maximise its potential for practical relevance, it was also felt important to choose a setting for the study – state sector basic education in a non-Western context – which was representative of the world of ELT. In this way too, it is hoped that the findings will resonate as widely as possible with the large number of personnel ‘on the ground’ working in similar situations around the world.

In what follows, we first explain the theoretical model of (ELT) INSET which informed our study, and then describe our research approach. The remainder of the report – the lion’s share – consists of a presentation and discussion of the main findings from the study, as well as a related set of recommendations for ELT practitioners and policy-makers.

2

Literature review

The literature of relevance can be seen as comprising a variety of main strands. For example, there are studies which label themselves as directly concerned with 'INSET', e.g., Rudduck 1981, Hopkins 1986, Veenman, van Tulder & Voeten 1994, Hayes 1997, Van den Branden 2006; those which are associated with terms such as 'continuing professional development' (CPD), 'teacher development' and so on, e.g., Eraut 1994, Bell & Gilbert 1996, Richards 1998, Hall & Hord 2001, Adey 2004; studies with a focus on 'school improvement', e.g., Fullan 1999, Hopkins 2001, Fullan 2007; those emanating from innovation studies, e.g., Havelock & Huberman 1977, Marris 1986, Kennedy 1988, Kelly 1980, Markee 1997, Wedell 2009; and still others of relevance, such as Trowler 2003 (educational policy-making), Ajzen 2005 (the psychology of behaviour in social situations), Waters 2005 (expertise studies), and so on.

Space prohibits describing any of these items in detail, and, in any case, the primary goal here is to delineate the composite picture which they evince as a whole, since, as already explained, it is the absence of sufficient clarity in this respect which is seen to be the most important issue.¹ As discussed in Waters 2002 and 2006 and Waters & Vilches 2000, 2001 and 2008, this body of work is seen to indicate in overall terms, as shown in Fig. 1, that the key to effective INSET (whether ELT-specific or otherwise) is the successful integration of two main 'dimensions', viz., i) course-based vs. school-based teacher learning opportunities, and ii) educational system vs. 'school system' priorities.²

Thus, the literatures mentioned above, particularly the INSET part of them, are regarded as indicating that, while course-based INSET ('seminars', etc.) has certain important strengths – primarily the acquisition of 'propositional' ('theoretical') knowledge about a teaching idea – it is only school-based teacher learning which can provide the necessary 'hands-on' practical understanding ('procedural' knowledge) needed for implementing new teaching ideas; and that, furthermore, for the two kinds of teacher learning to successfully reinforce each other, they need to be linked closely together.

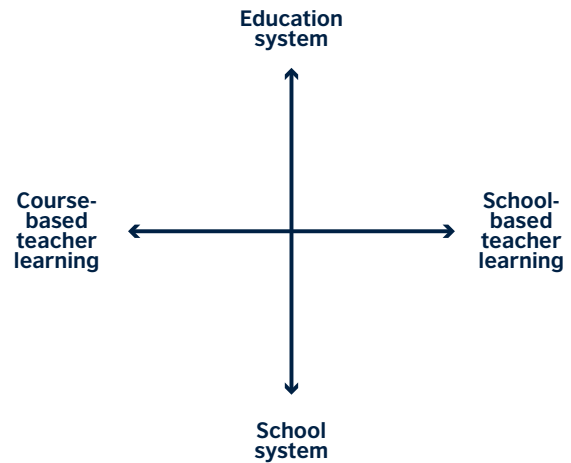


Figure 1: A 'best practice' framework for INSET

Similarly, other parts of the same literatures, especially the sections concerned with innovation studies, can be seen to argue that, while the educational management system will, in most situations, have overall responsibility for the generation and promotion of new teaching ideas, the effective uptake and implementation of such ideas depends on a sound understanding of what is practicable at the school level, and on making available to the school system the resources needed for learning about and implementing the ideas. In addition, for this kind of integration to be achieved, a balanced and interactive partnership between the educational and school system levels is seen as necessary.

Finally, as Fig. 1 is also intended to indicate, the perspectives which have just been outlined can also be seen as implying that the 'teacher learning' and 'system' dimensions in the diagram should intersect and co-ordinate meaningfully with each other as well, in order to create the potential for an organic, holistic approach to meeting in-service teacher learning needs. In other words, in such a way it can be seen as possible to maximise the potential for INSET to function effectively both in terms of its content (derived from the 'system' dimension) and its training methodology (derived from the 'teacher learning' axis).

¹ However, summaries of many of them can be found in, e.g., Waters 2002, Wall 2005 and Lee 2007.

² By the 'school system' is meant the teaching institutions under the aegis of the educational system.

In practice, however, as the ELT literature on the topic in particular indicates, in-service teacher learning is frequently primarily or only course-based, and even when school-based learning opportunities are provided, they tend to be insufficiently resourced, and the linkage between the two is often tenuous (see, e.g., Ingvarson et al. 2005, Waters & Vilches 2008).

Similarly, there is also widespread evidence that the kind of teaching ideas which a good deal of ELT (and other) INSET are required to focus on are generated without sufficient consideration of 'grass roots'

realities, and are implemented mainly in a one-way, top-down manner (see, e.g., Karavas-Doukas 1998, Goh 1999, O'Sullivan 2004).

There is therefore a considerable gap between the theoretical ideal and the typical reality in this area. The study described in the remainder of this report was devoted to addressing this issue. It was concerned, in other words, with attempting to increase understanding of how 'best practice' in (ELT) INSET can be achieved as effectively as possible 'on the ground'.

3

Research design

The overall approach chosen for undertaking such a study was to attempt to tap into the ‘collective wisdom’ of a representative selection of those involved in the ‘front end’ of ELT INSET. The main research question that the investigation focused on, therefore, was as follows:

What do those with experience of delivering and/or receiving ELT INSET feel are the ways in which it can be made to work as well as possible?

The setting chosen for attempting to generate answers to this question was the state school, basic education sector of the Philippines national education system. This type of situation was selected, as indicated earlier, because it was regarded as representative of the kind of location in which the majority of ELT is practised (cf. Holliday 1994), in terms of i) geographical location (outside the Anglophone West), ii) type of institution (government-funded) and iii) educational level (primary and secondary). In this way it was hoped that the relevance of the study would be maximised. The choice of the Philippines in particular as a location of this kind was because of the researchers’ extensive prior involvement with a number of INSET and research projects there (see, e.g., Waters & Vilches 2008).

Four Department of Education (DepEd) administrative Divisions within the Philippines – two metropolitan and two provincial – were selected for data-gathering. This mixture was chosen in order to attempt to take into account the way in which experiences and perspectives can typically differ within a national context in terms of these two types of locale (O’Sullivan 2004).

The research participants in all of these sites comprised a cross-section of personnel with experience of receiving and/or providing ELT INSET – viz., elementary and secondary English teachers, ELT trainers, school Principals, heads of department, and so on - and were identified by DepEd according to criteria provided by the researchers.

Data were generated in approximately equal quantities across the four locations by a mixture of qualitative as well as quantitatively-oriented methods, in order to attempt to multiply and triangulate perspectives, as follows:

By semi-structured interviews with:

- 4 x Elementary School English teachers
- 4 x Secondary School English teachers
- 6 x ELT Trainers
- 4 x Elementary School Principals
- 4 x Secondary School ELT Heads of Department
- 4 x DepEd headquarters personnel with particular responsibility for INSET provision.

By focus group meetings with:

- 4 groups of Elementary and Secondary School English teachers
- 5 groups of ELT trainers.

By questionnaire survey involving:

- 239 Elementary and 154 Secondary School English teachers.³

The interview protocol consisted of a series of questions relating to perceptions of effective ELT INSET, in terms of its planning, delivery and follow-up.⁴ The focus group meetings (involving an average of five participants each) were structured round questions and activities relating to perceptions of what was thought to work best/least well in ELT INSET in general, as well as views concerning a number of fundamental aspects of ELT INSET practice (e.g. use of demonstration lessons). The questionnaire consisted of several main sections, each containing a number of detailed questions, and covered the same areas as the interviews and focus group discussions.

³ Please see Appendix A for further details.

⁴ Please contact the authors for further details of this and the other instruments used.

All three instruments underwent various piloting procedures before being finalised, the questionnaire in particular being further developed and refined in the light of the pattern of responses emerging from the interviews and focus group meetings. Normal ethical procedures regarding anonymity, confidentiality and so on were observed throughout all of the data-gathering. English was used as the main language of communication.

The interview and focus group data were audio-recorded, transcribed and then coded using the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis programme. 'Micro'-, and, subsequently, 'macro'-level codes for these data were

generated primarily in a 'bottom-up' manner, informed (but not constrained) by 'top-down' theoretical understandings. The questionnaire responses were entered into and analysed with PASWStatistics 18.

In what follows, the data obtained from each of the instruments are presented and analysed in terms of the main categories they evinced, arranged in order of the typical overall sequence of events underlying the development and running of an INSET programme, i.e., what can be thought of as the 'pre'-, 'while'- and 'post'-seminar stages.

4

Main findings

Data relating to the ‘pre-seminar’ stage

Logistics

The fundamental importance of appropriate logistical preparation for the training, prior and in addition to more ‘academic’ considerations about training content, and so on, was a frequently-mentioned part of the data for this area. Views elicited by the questionnaire concerning this aspect were as shown in Table 1 below.⁵

As can be seen, the means for these data indicate that the respondents felt it was important to have sufficient advance notice of the training (Q.1), for the right trainees to attend it (Q. 2), and for it to take place at an appropriate venue (Q.3). The kind of thinking behind the third of these views was explained in one of the teacher interviews thus:

Of course, it is important that the place is conducive, because [chuckles] we have attended last time, like a seminar - I would not mention the seminar [chuckles] - where the place is too hot and the teachers are very uneasy. And we cannot learn because the sound system is not functioning well. So we cannot hear, and it's a mass training, and everybody gets uneasy and everything. There is a tendency not to listen to the speaker any more because of the place. So the place

is very important. And make sure that everybody gets to be as comfortable as they can, but not too comfortable, or else they'll sleep (STEI – 3: 151⁶)

On the other hand, as the mean for Q. 4 shows, views were divided about the idea that teachers should have to pay their own expenses to attend training, with the majority opposed (c. 40 per cent of responses fell into the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ categories, but c. 60 per cent into the ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ ones). The means for Qs. 5 and 6 indicate that the timing of the seminar within the school year was thought to be an important factor, as was the question of the number of trainees attending. Regarding the former, the issue was seen by one of the interviewees as one of too little time being allowed between the training and having to put the teaching ideas into practice (cf. responses to Q. 53 below), as follows:

I⁷: Not just –

R: Before the –

I: – three days before class opening, and the teacher will have to implement it in the classroom.

R: I see.

I: I think that was too short a time. (SI-4: 297-301)

Table 1: Before the training - logistics

No.	Question	Mean	SD
1.	Trainees should be given information about all the main features of the training well in advance of it.	3.70	0.479
2.	It is important to ensure that the trainees who attend the training are the ones whom it is intended for.	3.68	0.484
3.	It is important for the training venue to be comfortable (well-ventilated, good facilities, etc.).	3.85	0.356
4.	It is fair to expect teachers to pay their own expenses in connection with the training.	2.24	0.995
5.	The period in the school year when the training takes place is likely to have an important effect on its success.	3.51	0.545
6.	The number of trainees attending the training is likely to have an important effect on its success.	3.56	0.546

⁵ Respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each of the questions in terms of ‘Strongly agree’ (4), ‘Agree’ (3), ‘Disagree’ (2) or ‘Strongly disagree’ (1), and the means for each item calculated accordingly. Please contact the authors if you would also like a summary of the detailed results for each of the questions.

⁶ Please see the List of acronyms (page 24) for an explanation of the abbreviations used for the interview and focus group excerpts.

⁷ ‘I’ = interviewee, ‘R’ = researcher.

Also, regarding Q. 6 (numbers attending a seminar), an illustration from one of the focus group discussions of experiences affecting views about this topic was as follows (cf. responses to Q. 39 below):

FG4⁸: Because when you're too crowded in a seminar, minsan [sometimes]⁹ you cannot situate yourself comfortably. So...

FG3: Yeah, I attended a national seminar... and I agree with Ma'am that too many delegates will – you wouldn't be able to understand what those speakers are talking about, because you are at the back. (TEFG4: 167-168)

Training needs

As the data in the previous section indicate, attending to various types of logistical arrangements were seen as important aspects of 'best practice' pre-seminar planning. However, in the interview and focus group data, the most frequently-mentioned aspect of seminar preparation related to the importance of basing the training on the needs of the trainees:

FG4: ...if they are only sent there because of specific topic or specific training and these are not their needs, then they will just occupy the seats and do not participate. ... And they will just have these three T's ...Tanggap [receive], ... Tiklop [fold], Tago, and this is to put them aside, hide it (laughter). So there are several compilations of hand-outs, actually.

FG3: Without reading.

FG4: Without reading, yes. Although the seminar itself is very, very good. The teacher - the lectures are very, very good, but if the teachers felt that these are not their needs, these are not their felt needs, then these are not important. (TRFG4: 267-271)

The questionnaire responses likewise confirmed the importance of this perspective, as can be seen by the means for Qs. 7 and 11 in particular in Table 2 below. However, as its mean indicates, it is noticeable that there was rather less wholehearted support for the proposition in Q. 7 (the importance of basing training on an analysis of teachers' needs) than for all the other ones (in Qs. 8-11). This may be because of a perception that other factors, in addition to teacher needs, should also act as a basis for seminar design. As it was put in one of the interviews, pupil needs were also seen as important to take into account:

I: – I think it [i.e., the basis for the training] should be the needs of the pupils.

R: Needs of the pupils, too.

I: The needs of the pupils, too. What do they need? In some schools – some schools are – the catchment area of some schools are the above-average – the middle-income group. So they are exposed to the computer, the video games, etc. But in some schools also, there are schools which are – which have catchment area located in depressed areas, so these are the pupils who really need to be given more inputs in terms of books and the computers, the video – video clips. (EPI-4: 349-354)

In another of the interviews, in addition to teacher 'problems', test results were also mentioned as a basis for ascertaining training needs:

They have to survey the problems maybe of the teachers, then maybe also based on the achievement tests that they are conducting. (STEI-1: 121).

In connection with Q. 8 (the use of checklists to ascertain teachers' training needs), many parts of the interview and focus group data also made it clear that training needs 'checklists' and the like were in

Table 2: Before the training – training needs

No.	Question	Mean	SD
7.	Only training which is based on an analysis of trainees' needs is likely to be successful.	3.19	0.709
8.	Having trainees complete a training needs checklist is a good way to find out their needs.	3.58	0.499
9.	Classroom observation by trainers and others is a good way of finding out trainees' needs.	3.34	0.653
10.	The effectiveness of previous training is important to take into account when designing further training.	3.60	0.501
11.	Training should be as specific as possible in terms of the needs of different groups of teachers.	3.66	0.479

⁸ 'FG' = focus group member.

⁹ Square brackets indicate our interpolations.

widespread use and generally viewed favourably, although some reservations were also expressed about their reliability, such as the following (FG3 had just mentioned that the checklist being referred to had 70 questions):

FG2: And so sometimes, 'cause we cannot think anymore, we just keep on check. [chuckles]

FG3: Checking. [laughter] [unintelligible crosstalk]

FG3: Because there are so many things to – to think.

FG2: Because there are lots of – yes, ma'am. M-hm.

FG1: Or there are some apprehensions that the teachers will be sent to seminars or trainings, so they don't like that. So they check nalang those ano [so they simply check those what-do-you-call-them]. (TEFG3: 623-627)

However, the overall impression conveyed by all parts of the data concerned with this aspect of seminar planning is that, as far as possible, training should be based first and foremost on perceptions of trainee needs:

I: The first thing is, since there are so many teachers with so many needs, we really want the – we always want to establish that the training is needs-based. (HQI-1: 245)

The data in this section therefore can be seen to confirm the importance for best practice in the planning of INSET of taking into account features of the 'school system' node in Fig. 1 above, that is, the needs of teachers and of the teaching situation.

Trainers

The importance of identifying trainers with the necessary qualities was also another major focus of this part of the data. Thus, views expressed in interviews and focus groups indicated that, first of all, there were three fundamental kinds of knowledge trainers need to have, viz:

- Language proficiency, e.g:

If it's an English training or seminar workshop, they always look for a trainer who has a facility in the ... English language.(EPI-1: 155)

- Relevant teaching experience, e.g:

They [trainers] should have practiced what they are preaching. That's a requirement. (SHDI-1: 289)

- Understanding of the topic, e.g:

If the participants know that this person is an authority ... when it comes to the field of whatever the topic is... Somehow we get confident ... I would consider such [a] trainer to be a qualified one. Sort of an authority in that line. (STI-4: 168)

In addition, the same part of the data also made frequent reference to three further, more 'process-oriented' attributes needed by trainers, as follows:

- Communication skills (this was not perceived to be same as language proficiency, but rather, the way in which language was used), e.g:

I mean, if they deliver their spiel ... in a boring manner... that will hinder your understanding or absorbing whatever is talked about. (TEFG4: 168-172)

- Facilitation skills (i.e. those needed for successfully handling interactive, participant-oriented parts of the training process), e.g:

The trainer ... must be sensitive [about] why this person or teacher is not listening... So, maybe he could ask a question or he could inject a humour ... maybe an activity will do also... (ETI-4: 205)

- Personality traits (the primary concern here was with those aspects of personality that would enable empathy with the trainee point of view), e.g:

A trainer has to be patient... accommodating... not easily ... irritated by questions of teachers left and right... always ready to respond to ... queries or problems. (SI-2: 95)

Perceptions of these kinds were also strongly echoed by the responses to Qs. 12 – 15 in the questionnaire, as Table 3 below indicates.

In addition, the mean for Q. 16 shows that there was strong agreement with the proposition that trainers need to undergo ‘trainer training’. Although there were relatively few parts of the interview and focus group data that focused on this issue, perhaps suggesting it is still a somewhat novel area in the research locale, it was also the case that whenever such preparation was mentioned, it was regarded as a ‘*sine qua non*’, e.g:

There should be a training of trainers first. Because we cannot give what we do not have ... a trainer should be equipped first with the skills, with the knowledge, with the strategies prior to being a facilitator. (EPI-1: 186)

Some of this part of the data also indicates the kind of approach to trainer training that was seen as desirable. Firstly, as the following data show, it was felt valuable to provide training in both the knowledge and skills involved in the training being prepared for (parts of the INSET literature indicate that it is often only the former which is provided – see, e.g. Ibrahim 1991, Waters & Vilches 2001), and to be given the necessary training materials for achieving the right degree of understanding (cf. Vilches forthcoming, 2012; Godfrey et al. 2008):

we had professional development, then had something for content, and another for skills. So we knew what we were doing, and, you know, we knew how to go about doing it, because the trainers were already provided with the materials. (SI-4: 338)

Furthermore, the need for there to also be a further,

‘field-based’ training phase, involving trainer reflection on and learning from training practice, was also emphasised:

And in the evening, or after the session, we have facilitators and we do debriefing. We gather, we discuss, we - as we take our dinner, we discuss what went wrong, what did not work well, and what should be done. (TRFG1: 128)

Taken as a whole, thus, the findings in this section can be seen as indicating a number of the optimum qualities INSET trainers need to possess, as well as the need for adequate trainer training opportunities to be provided.

Training design

The final main part of the data concerned with seminar planning focused on the area of ‘training design’, i.e. perceptions about the criteria which should guide the planning of the seminar content and activities.

As can be seen in Table 4 below, there was strong agreement with all the propositions in the questionnaire pertaining to this aspect. As the mean for Q. 17 indicates, it was seen as highly desirable for seminars to be based on taking into account the focus and outcomes of previous training, presumably for reasons of the kind explained in one of the interviews (‘it’ in the following refers to the results of post-seminar monitoring of teacher learning):

R: Monitoring the teachers as far as possible in terms of what they do with the teaching ideas. Is there anything else that you think...?

Table 3: Before the training – trainers

No.	Question	Mean	SD
12.	Trainers should have experience of teaching in the same kind of situation as the trainees.	3.75	0.450
13.	Trainers need to have a high level of communication skills.	3.78	0.426
14.	It is important for the trainer to be knowledgeable about the training topic.	3.82	0.383
15.	The trainer should have an approachable personality.	3.78	0.436
16.	It is necessary for trainers to have special training on how to be a teacher trainer.	3.82	0.405

Table 4: Before the training – the training design

No.	Question	Mean	SD
17.	The training design should build on and extend previous training initiatives.	3.66	0.479
18.	As far as possible, all the members of the training team should be familiar with all the training sub-topics.	3.73	0.451
19.	Each of the training sub-topics should be inter-connected closely with all the others.	3.70	0.465
20.	Each training sub-topic should consist of a series of steps going from trainer input to trainee output.	3.71	0.456
21.	The training design should allow for regular opportunities for reflective discussion between trainers and trainees throughout the training.	3.70	0.459

I: Well maybe studying it, or analysing it so we can connect it to future trainings, like in what way can we make sense of a new training, which actually makes sense of the previous training that we did, so everything is like connected.

R: And why would you think that's important?

I: Because if we discuss things in chunks, in isolation, I think they don't make sense, actually. So teachers tend to forget them after some time. But if we try to link one with another, I think there's more beauty in it, the teachers can see the importance of it and somehow they will remember it. (SI-6: 270-273)

Also, the importance for the training design of team-work among trainers is affirmed by the mean for responses to Q. 18, and is seen elsewhere in the data as likewise enhancing the inter-connectedness of the training:

I: OK, so as a trainer, based on experience, we also read topics of others. So that they could relate and especially when during the discussion and facilitating the conduct of the training, so we can relate one topic to the other. (EPI-1: 138)

Strong support for a third kind of inter-connectedness – between seminar sub-topics - is expressed in the response to Q. 19. As one of the interviewees put it, the opposite practice causes the following kinds of problems:

I: The tendency is trainers will be repeating the same thing. Given one topic, for example, when we conducted [training for] UBD [Understanding by Design], [one of our trainers] had the first session for three hours in the morning, and he was talking a lot about UBD without taking into consideration that these topics that he mentioned would also be the same things that the supervisors would be talking about once they had their sessions. And what happened was that – what usually happens is that participants get bored listening to the same things. And sometimes there are contradicting ideas being discussed. Because the understanding of one need not be the same with that of the other trainer. Because we don't usually sit down and try to connect the topics. They're just dependent on the topic assigned. (SI-5: 125)

As the same interviewee also explained, however, to ensure seminar topics cohere in this way, the right kind of co-ordination at the administrative level is also needed, so that the people involved have the necessary time to discuss and plan beforehand (ibid: 131).

As the response to Q. 20 indicates, internal coherence and logical progression at the level of how the individual seminar sub-topic is structured was also felt to be an important practice. Finally, the mean for Q. 21 shows there was also widespread support for incorporating frequent discussion opportunities into the design of the seminars, so as to attempt to establish as many links as possible between the training content and the understanding of trainees – another important form of inter-connectedness. One of the interviewees explained the kinds of problems the absence of this provision can cause:

I: 'Cause sometimes, when the speaker has spoken already for a long time, and then, as a participant, sometimes there are things which are not very clear to me, and then I wish I could – how I wish I could – I could immediately clear my mind about it, but there are speakers who say, "Not this time."

R: Ah.

I: "Wait for – maybe – later."

R: The open forum?

I: Okay, the open forum. But afterwards, when her time – [laughter] yeah, when her time is – because there is time limit for them – she has or he has no more time to explain what I want to be cleared of. Because the next speaker is ready.' [chuckles] (EPI-2: 169-174)

Design features of the kind highlighted in this section are something of a 'closed book' as far as the existence of literature on the topic is concerned, but as the data in this section clearly indicate, they are perceived to be important aspects of creating an optimal training plan.

Data relating to the ‘while-seminar’ stage

Training approach

There were three main parts to the data concerning views on how a seminar can best be implemented. The first of these concerned the preferred training approach. The views expressed by the questionnaire respondents regarding this aspect were as shown in Table 5 below.

As can be seen, there was strong support for all the propositions in this part of the questionnaire, i.e. ‘best practice’ in terms of the training approach was seen to involve:

- establishing clear guidelines about trainees’ expected behaviour (Q. 22);
- the use of various strategies to attempt to create a positive learning atmosphere (Q. 23);
- provision of trainer input (Q. 24) – it seems important to note that this element is highly valued, despite what follows concerning the importance of adopting an ‘interactive’, ‘participant-centred’ approach to the training;
- active involvement of trainees in the training process (Q. 25) – this was the most frequently-mentioned aspect of the training approach in the interview and focus group data, and some of the reasons why it was seen to be important were as follows:

I: When there is no activity, the concentration span is only 15 minutes, after which the teachers will

not focus anymore. They will talk, they will do other things. On the other hand, when there are activities... they will be interested; they will be inspired, they will participate. ... even old peoples are still eager to participate, and they really feel good if they have things to do and if their efforts are complimented and appreciated or affirmed. (SI-3: 201)

FG3: ...we see to it that in the conduct of the training, or in the delivery, it is more engaging and interactive... Because we don't want that we will just - it's a one-way traffic. That it's only coming from the lecturer, or from the speaker, or from the facilitator. But rather, it will be - and a more engaging one, where the participants has to relate with the materials ... So it's -

FG4: A free interaction.

FG3: - it's a multi-process. So it's a two- or three-way process.

R1: Mm. Mm.

R2: Okay. Thank you.

FG1: And in other words, it's life-giving. [chuckles] It's life-giving.

FG2: In order to have good output, we should also need to have good input. (TRFG1: 852-858)

Table 5: During the training – training approach

No.	Question	Mean	SD
22.	'House rules' about punctuality and so on are important for effective conduct of training.	3.76	0.453
23.	It is important to use 'ice-breakers', humour and so on to establish good rapport between trainers and trainees.	3.75	0.442
24.	Trainer input is an important aspect of effective training.	3.72	0.454
25.	Active participation by trainees in the training process is essential for effective training.	3.74	0.442
26.	The trainer(s) should try to take the trainees' points of view about the teaching strategies into account.	3.67	0.476
27.	The trainer(s) should be able to answer the trainees' questions about the teaching strategies.	3.69	0.464
28.	It is important for the trainer to explain the rationale behind the teaching strategies.	3.73	0.442
29.	It is important for the trainer to explain how the new teaching strategies build on and extend existing ones.	3.76	0.426
30.	It is important for the training to focus on how the strategies can be made to fit the realities of the trainees' teaching situations (e.g., class size, student language level).	3.78	0.414
31.	Trainees should be encouraged to work collaboratively with each other.	3.70	0.459
32.	Output produced by trainees should be critiqued by fellow trainees.	3.36	0.636
33.	The training approach should resemble that of the teaching strategies being presented (e.g. be participant-centred).	3.58	0.520
34.	During the training, trainees should prepare action plans to guide them in implementing the teaching strategies once back in their schools.	3.48	0.554

Also, with reference to the previous point, (concerning the importance of input in the training process), these data can be seen to imply that i) however valuable it may be, if input is delivered in a lecture mode, it should be kept relatively short, and ii) it is possible (and desirable) to provide input in an interactive, participative way;

- it was also seen as desirable for the training approach to be ‘participant-centred’ (Qs. 26 & 27), in the sense of taking trainee’s points of view into account, answering their questions, and so on;
- knowing why a teaching idea being advocated was also regarded as important (Q. 28) – the following part of the focus group data indicates that such information was seen as deepening the potential for ‘ownership’ of the training content:
- FG4: Because you know the rationale or the reason behind why you should use that particular strategy. Because you believe that that strategy will work, will spell a difference in terms of teaching and learning process, because you believe that that was already piloted, tested, and it has a very good result. And so adhering to that belief or adhering to that principle behind will help that teacher own that kind of strategy. (TRFG3: 659)
- the training approach should attempt to show the teaching ideas interconnect with i) existing teaching practices (Q. 29), and, in particular, ii) the realities of the trainees’ teaching contexts (Q. 30 - cf. the responses to Qs. 7-11 above, and Kelly 1980, regarding the effect of the ‘feasibility’ criterion on innovation adoption by teachers); as one of the participants in a focus group put it:

It [i.e. the teaching strategy being advocated] should match. It should match the class size, the level of the students, etcetera. [unintelligible] etcetera. Economic factor and so on and so forth, readiness of the teachers to implement, the knowledge of the teacher - they cannot give what they do not have. (TRFG2: 737)

Also, in one of the interviews, the particular issue of ensuring a match between local circumstances and educational ideas originating from abroad was mentioned:

Well of course we always take into consideration

the realities of the classroom. One of the... weaknesses of the echo seminar, meaning coming from the main office, is that sometimes these trainings come from abroad, with a different context, with a different setting, so they try to impose something which is not applicable. So in our division-initiated trainings, we always consider the realism in the classroom. So what is plausible inside the classroom (SI-6: 279).

- collaboration among trainees should be encouraged (Q. 31), including peer-critiquing (Q. 32) – however, it should be noted that the relatively lower mean for responses here indicates a less strong degree of agreement regarding the value of the latter. Further light is shed on the possible reasons for such conditionality in the thorough, detailed and very interesting discussion which occurred in TRFG3: 496:585 (see Appendix B), where the point is made that peer critiquing does not preclude trainers from also adding their own feedback as well, i.e. the former should be seen as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the trainer’s point of view. The wording of Q. 32 may not have made it clear enough, however, that it was a scenario of this kind which was envisaged.
- the ‘medium’ should not contradict the ‘message’ (Q. 33), i.e. the training approach should be in harmony with the teaching ideas being advocated (cf. Woodward 1988).
- the seminar should also include work which involves the trainees in making plans for follow-up, school-based activities concerning the teaching ideas they have been introduced to (Q. 44) – in other words, the training needs to function not just as an end in itself, but also as a means of preparing the teachers for the next, post-seminar stage of their learning (cf. Waters & Vilches 2000).

In overall terms, thus, these data contain a clear expression of views regarding a wide range of aspects of what are seen to be optimal practices in terms of the INSET training approach.

Demonstration lessons

The second main area which the data for this part of the study clustered around was concerned with the value of demonstration lessons ('demos') as a training device, especially the pros and cons of the 'peer' type (i.e. those involving fellow trainees playing the role of learners) vs. the 'live' variety (i.e. those using 'real' learners, similar to those normally taught by the trainees).

As Table 6 below indicates, there was widespread agreement among questionnaire respondents about the value of demos as a means of providing concrete illustration of teaching ideas (Q. 35), including via involving trainees in carrying them out themselves as much as possible (Q. 38).

However, as the mean indicates, there was something of a division of views (c. 70 per cent 'strongly agreed/agreed', c. 30 per cent 'disagreed/strongly disagreed') regarding which main form of 'demo' ('peer' vs. 'live') was more effective (Q. 36), a divergence that was reflected in the interview and focus group data as well. In the latter part of those data, it was the live demo that was seen as preferable in overall terms, although some of the practical limitations it involves were also pointed out, such as the way in which it can also be relatively artificial (e.g., SI-2: 137), logistically complex to arrange (e.g., SI-5: 306), and so on.

It seems likely that it is also issues of this kind which underlie the response to Q. 37 above, i.e. issues such as the practical difficulties involved in arranging for live demos that consist of the same number of students as the trainees normally teach means

that a match in terms of this factor is not viewed by everyone as a requirement for an effective demo. In addition, in some parts of the interview and focus group data, the potential advantages of the peer demo were also mentioned, such as the 'insider', learner-oriented perspective that taking part in it can offer, e.g:

[when] teachers themselves are participants or acting as pupils, they realise that, "ah, so this is the experience of the pupils"... They try to experience what their pupils are supposed to experience. And there could be more realisations and reflections. (SI-5: 323)

Taken as a whole, thus, the data here indicate that both forms of demo were seen to have their respective strengths and weaknesses, and that they are therefore best regarded as being in a complementary relationship with each other, i.e. both, in their different ways, have a potentially valuable contribution to make to 'best practice' in increasing understanding of teaching ideas.

Resources

The third main focus of the 'while'-seminar part of the data concerned aspects of the resources – human and material - that can be involved in this stage of the training. As can be seen in the questionnaire data in Table 7 below, the overall response to Q. 39 indicates that although there was a good deal of agreement that the ratio of trainers to trainees should be relatively low, its strength and therefore the mean was relatively low in comparison with the others in this section and throughout the rest of the questionnaire.

Table 6: During the training – demonstration lessons

No.	Question	Mean	SD
35.	Demonstration lessons are helpful for clarifying new teaching strategies.	3.68	0.472
36.	Demonstration lessons involving trainees playing the role of students are more effective than those involving real students.	3.02	0.890
37.	Demonstration lessons need to have the same number and level of students as the trainees usually teach.	3.29	0.704
38.	It is important for trainees to show their understanding of the teaching strategies by doing 'return' demos during the training.	3.45	0.552

Table 7: During the training – resources

No.	Question	Mean	SD
39.	The ratio of trainers to trainees should be no higher than 1 to 15.	3.36	0.599
40.	Use of information and communication technology (ICT) is likely to make the training more effective.	3.60	0.501
41.	The trainers should provide trainees with copies of sample teaching materials illustrating the new teaching strategies.	3.73	0.446
42.	Copies of output produced by trainees (e.g. 'return' demo lesson plans) should be provided for all trainees.	3.59	0.556
43.	All the training resources needed for trainees to be able to conduct 'echo seminars' after the training should be provided.	3.61	0.487

These results perhaps suggest that respondents may have felt that the ideal ratio might depend on the type of seminar. One that has a more information-imparting role, for example, might be seen as not requiring such a large number of trainers. The assumption behind the question, however, was that the kind of seminar in question was one in which trainees would not only be given information about a new teaching idea, but would also be actively processing it, attempting to apply it, and so on.

In the context of the interviews and focus group meetings, when it was possible to clarify this assumption more fully, a preference was frequently expressed for a trainer-trainee ratio of 1:20 (STEL-2: 220-235), 1:15 (TRFG1: 180-206) and even 1:10 (HQI-1: 507-553). The following is a typical example of the reasoning behind these views:

FG4: In my SEDP [Secondary Education Development Project] experiences, the part which I did not like was in mass – it is a mass training. So we were not given such time to actually learn, because we are so many in groups – especially, I think, in the training which I did not like is when we are in large groups.

FG1: Yes.

FG4: When we are in large groups. Because the trainer cannot actually see each of our problem, each of our needs. That's why we just get it from – just a part of it. [Unintelligible]. So mass training for me is not good.

R1: Okay.

R2: It's not individualised enough?

R1: Yeah.

FG4: Yeah. I like small groups where –

R1: Yes.

FG4: – just like this one (TEFG3: 171-181).

Where the purpose of the training is to impart deeper understanding, thus, the data as a whole indicate that the preferred best practice is for a relatively high trainer-trainee ratio.

There was reasonably strong agreement with all the remaining propositions in this part of the questionnaire. Thus, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), such as lively PowerPoint presentations, videos of teaching, and so on, was seen by the majority of respondents as likely to enhance the quality of training (Q. 40); there was likewise a good deal of agreement about the importance of providing trainees with hand-outs that illustrated the teaching ideas being advocated (Q.41), as well as copies of

trainee outputs (Q. 42); and it was also thought helpful to provide any additional materials needed for trainees to conduct 'echo' seminars (i.e. replica or condensed versions of the original) for colleagues in their home teaching situations (Q. 43). As it was put in one of the interviews, 'Never, never do a training without materials for the teachers to carry when they go back. Never.' (HQI-3: 161), for reasons elaborated on elsewhere:

For me ... I think if the teacher during the seminar... was able to identify already that this strategy will be used for this, it will be clearer... [when] she goes back to the classroom, she will be able to go over those things given to her like a hand-out, or a set of materials, rather than have the seminar then you have no hand-outs, you have no materials that you will bring to the classroom. I think it will be better also. (ETI-1: 259)

The issue of 'materials that you will bring to the classroom' will be returned to in the next section.

Taken as a whole, data in this section once again point to further ways in which the while-seminar phase of INSET can be optimally conducted, in this case via the provision of a range of training resources.

Data relating to the 'post-seminar' stage

Support

Data in this area fell into two main parts. Firstly, many of them testify eloquently to the importance of an appropriate post-seminar follow-up support strategy, in order to maximise the potential for actual adoption in the workplace of the teaching ideas focused on in the training. The following focus group extract is typical:

FG3: ... Usually the good teachers are sent to the seminars. But the school administrators usually forget to make these teachers echo what they have learned from the seminars. So that would leave the other teachers who were not able to attend not to learn anything. So it's the end.

R: Right. Yeah.

FG1: The training ends there [chuckles].

FG3: The one who attended has kept the –

FG5: Kept the hand-outs to herself.

FG1: Hand-outs.

FG3: – hand-outs and so on, and so there is no follow-up, there is no continuity.

R: Right, 'cause of lack of echo.

FG3: So no – nothing. (TRFG5: 406-414)

To counter this kind of problem, the active involvement in follow-up support and monitoring of education system personnel at all the relevant levels was perceived to be crucial. As it was put in another of the focus group meetings:

Because they are behind this. We cannot do it alone. We cannot do it ourselves. So co-operation [is needed] from the higher-ups - from the school administrator to the superintendents. (TEFG3: 1341)

It was also seen as important that the involvement began with 'line managers' being sufficiently aware of the training themselves to be able to support teachers properly:

In my experience, strategies fail - INSETs fail because the ones up there do not attend. So they are not made familiar and they don't accept some of the updates or some of the latest things that we do. So there is some sort of a conflict between what they know and what is being done, or is supposed to be done. So teachers are kind of hesitant to follow, because there is such a conflict. (TRFG5: 423)

The head should be the first to be educated with that strategy. (STI – 2: 287)

One further form of post-seminar support 'best practice' that was very frequently mentioned in the interview and focus group data¹⁰ was the provision of teaching materials based on the seminar teaching ideas, e.g:

If there will be ... textbooks that will be available... designed in the new curriculum... of course this will be a very, very, big, big help to teachers. (STEI-4: 405)

No matter how much you aspire for a very effective teaching lesson, if you are short of materials, then ... that will be very difficult for you to achieve your goal... There's no ready-made thing for you to be used in your teaching demonstrations. So you have to search first, that's very taxing on your part, 'cause if every day you do that - specially preparing all those materials, and especially if pupils do not have their own, I will be the one to structure all those materials, then it's very taxing. And then your whole day will be allotted to just doing all those things. (TEFG4: 408-419)

It seems important to note here that there is a tendency within applied linguistics for language teaching to underestimate the importance of this factor, because of a theoretical concern that textbook teaching materials may have a de-skilling effect on teachers (see, e.g. Kumaravadivelu 2006). However, empirical research reported in Hutchinson & Hutchinson 1996 (which, coincidentally, was conducted in the same locale as the study being reported here) points in the opposite direction, i.e. towards the major role of published teaching materials in facilitating change in teaching practices.

The parts of the questionnaire data concerned with the same area evince a similar picture, as shown in Table 8 below. There is very strong support for the propositions in Q. 45 (regarding teachers' 'line-managers' being sufficiently knowledgeable about the training ideas), Q. 46 (concerning the support school authorities should provide for teachers' implementation efforts) and Q. 47 (the need for appropriate teaching materials to also be provided). Taken as a whole, it is clear that in both the interview and focus group and the questionnaire data here

Table 8: After the training – support

No.	Question	Mean	SD
44.	The 'echo seminar' is an effective way of orienting fellow teachers in the workplace to the teaching strategies introduced in the training.	3.57	0.545
45.	It is important for school authorities (the Principal, Head of Department, etc.) to also be familiar with the teaching strategies introduced in the training.	3.72	0.450
46.	The school authorities should actively support the implementation of the new teaching strategies by the trainee.	3.68	0.473
47.	Trainees should be provided with the teaching materials and other resources needed for implementing the new teaching strategies.	3.74	0.444
48.	There should be regular school-based meetings of teachers and others to review progress in implementing the training.	3.59	0.502
49.	There should be further training to follow up on progress in putting the new teaching strategies into practice.	3.63	0.490
50.	Success in implementing new teaching strategies should be rewarded in terms of, e.g. 'service credits'.	3.67	0.553
51.	Once implemented, the effectiveness of the teaching strategies for learning should also be monitored.	3.64	0.482

¹⁰ It was the second most frequent of the codes in this part of the data.

that there is extensive confirmation of two of the key features of the framework in Fig. 1 (p. 4), viz: i) the need for meaningful school-based learning to complement seminar-based training, and ii) the need for the educational system to provide sufficient support to the 'school system' to ensure that this occurs.

A number of other aspects of 'best practice' in the post-seminar stage are also evinced in this part of the data. The mean for Q. 44 in Table 8 indicates that the 'echo' seminar' is seen by many as a potentially helpful post-seminar strategy, although, as the mean also indicates, the strength of agreement was not quite as high as for the other responses in this section. Such an overall response may relate to problems of the kind mentioned in the interview and focus group data, such as (cf. Hayes 2000):

Because what happens if there is only one teacher who attends, and then – and then he would try his best [chuckles] to do the same like how the five speakers in the seminar have done, it is very impossible for him. Because you know a teacher, [chuckles] a normal teacher is not all-knowing, so he cannot absorb everything and then be able to pass it on to the rest of the teachers. (STEI-3: 112)

In the remainder of the data in Table 8 there are also relatively high levels of support for the propositions in Qs. 49-51, viz., that further, implementation stage trouble-shooting training should also be provided (Q.49); that success in follow-up implementation should be accorded some form of professional recognition (Q. 50); and that, once implemented, the effectiveness of teaching ideas in terms of affecting learning outcomes should also be monitored (Q. 51).

Finally, there was also support for the idea that teachers and others (e.g. 'line-managers') should meet regularly in their schools, in order to review implementation progress (Q. 48). Once again, however, the mean for this item is a little lower than for most of the others in this section. This may be because, however desirable, the practicalities of, e.g. finding the necessary time for this kind of activity, given teachers' typical work-loads, are regarded as a significant obstacle (cf. Waters & Vilches 2008).

Observation and feedback

The second main focus of data in this part of the study was concerned with a variety of aspects of classroom observation and opinion. Some of the features of this kind highlighted in the interview and focus group data were as follows:

- the importance of taking into account the affective dimension in giving opinion, e.g. by using a 'sandwich' principle:

We have this sandwich kind of feedback, positive, negative, and positive giving the feedbacks to the teachers when we observe them. (TRFG3: 410)

- the value of encouraging the teacher to self-evaluate first of all:

[The principal] would ask you first, 'okay, what can you say about your class, your demonstration?' and the like... I wouldn't think that, 'oh I was critiqued, I was downed and most of the weaknesses [are] all that the principal have seen, not my strengths.' So in other words, I myself had discovered what is wrong first, then the principal. (TEFG4: 395-400)

- the overall role of the observer as a 'coach', rather than just a fault-finder:

The first thing that I need to have in my mind is to help the teacher develop professionally and personally. (ETI-4: 245)

- the issue of whether or not prior notice of lesson observation should be provided:

Our principal comes - go to our classroom once in a while, without telling us that he would come... It's very good. Because you have to be ready. (chuckles) our principal, if they are lax, we also become lax. (chuckles)... It give us the drive to do. (TEFG3: 1354-1363)

Regarding the last of these items, however, it should also be pointed out that most of those who commented on this issue nevertheless said that they felt it was better for prior notice of observation to be given.

The questionnaire data regarding this area were as shown in Table 9 below. As can be seen, while there is considerable support for ensuring that there is observation of and opinion on teachers' implementation efforts (Q. 52), the means for the responses to the remaining items, while still signalling a good deal of agreement with each of the propositions, are all relatively lower. This may in part be due to lack of clarity in some of the questions. For example, Q. 53 was intended to address the issue of whether there should be a certain (relatively lengthy) period of time between attending training and being expected to implement the teaching ideas. Such a question was included because of data in the interviews and focus group meetings such as the following:

I: Well, I believe a teacher should – to effectively implement the strategies they learned, they should be given enough time. And the training should be done a month before the opening of classes.

R: M-hm.

I: Because they have the time to prepare the materials, they have the time to organise, or to improve their plans, so that they can integrate what they have learned from the trainings. Unlike if the seminar is too close to the opening of classes, there is an implementation of such, but it's in a – I consider it not so effective. But once the teacher given enough time let's say, after the end of the school year there's a series of training and then they have time to prepare ... so I believe it's –

R: Time, the time element.

I: Time element. M-hm. (EPI-1: 549-553)

However, unfortunately, no indication was provided in the question of the potential periods of time after the training and before observation and opinion that were being assumed.

Qs. 54-57 all concern themselves with various aspects of observation and feedback management. There is first of all (Q. 54) some support for the view that focusing on a relatively small area of teaching, rather than all of it, can be effective (c. 15 per cent of respondents 'disagreed'), the majority view was that such a strategy is not as effective as focusing on a larger area. As for Q. 53, Q. 54 was included because of data in the interviews and focus groups, such as the following:

... if the one observing could say, 'you did well, but then it could be better that the next time this will be...' okay, the strategy, how to handle this. Then the next time – you know in the classroom, there are so many aspects, like management – classroom management. How did you handle the behaviour there of the children? So the teacher is focused to a lot of things: the way you had your lesson there, the way you presented it, at the same time, your visual aids, your support instructional materials. Then you are again be focused on your evaluation. But if the observer is just focused on 'today, I will focus on this thing, I will be looking for this in the classroom,' so the teacher will be less burdened and threatened, I think, ma'am. (ETE1-1: 315)

Here, in other words, reducing the feedback 'information load' was seen as likely to make the teacher feel less threatened by and better able to process the observer's views (cf. Gaies & Bowers 1990). There were no instances of this part of the data which contradicted this view. However, it may have been the case that Q. 54, especially because of its 'reversed polarity' (included as a guard against 'autopilot' answering) was too complex to be properly understood, and thus the responses to it should only be 'read into' to a limited extent.

Table 9: After the training – observation and feedback

No.	Question	Mean	SD
52.	Observation and feedback on trainees' attempts to apply the teaching strategies in their workplaces is important.	3.53	0.505
53.	The timing of when observation and feedback occur after the training affects the implementation of the teaching strategies.	3.37	0.575
54.	Observation which focuses on a relatively small aspect of teaching (e.g., handling of errors) is usually less effective.	3.13	0.688
55.	The trainee should be allowed to decide which aspect(s) of teaching the observer should focus on.	3.25	0.640
56.	The feedback is more effective if the observer and the trainee first clarify what actually took place in the lesson.	3.45	0.543
57.	The feedback is more effective if the trainee is allowed to take the lead in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson.	3.38	0.578

Also, as the mean for Q. 55 indicates, although there was a good deal of support for the idea that the teacher might be 'empowered' to take the lead in deciding on what the focus for observation should be, the strength of agreement was, as for Q. 54, on the lower side. Some of the possible reasoning in favour of the proposition emerges in the following focus group extract:

R: Why do you think it's good practice to ask a teacher what she wants you to observe?

FG1: By making her –

FG5: Feel at ease.

FG1: ...tell us where she would be doing well, and where she would not be doing – not very well, where she could tell us what she needs.

R: Okay, but why? Why do you think that's a good idea?

FG1: I think that would make her more prepared about the observation, and as we have mentioned, not so stressful, and so when she calls me back to observe her, she's rather prepared to have me with her inside the classroom. (TRFG5: 200-205)

There are no parts of the rest of the data where clear reasons are given for the contrary view (that the teacher should not be allowed to determine the observation focus). However, frequent mention is made in them of the need for observers to use officially prescribed observation check-sheets, and this, along with other possible issues, such as the need in a large-scale system to ensure sufficient objectivity and consistency in observation, may account for the nature of the questionnaire responses.

The strength of agreement indicated in the overall response to Q. 56 (the observer and trainee should first of all establish the 'facts' of what happened in the lesson) was more positive than for most of the others in this section. This perception was echoed by several parts of the interview and focus group data, e.g:

I: And when they use it [i.e. a form for recording objectively what happened in the lesson], during their feedback-giving, their post-conference with the teacher, they have a lot to say to the teacher. They were able to avoid comments like, 'the teacher has good command of English,' 'the teacher has good rapport...'

R: So the judgement.

I: The teacher - they were able to avoid that. Because they were able to note the actual things that they saw and heard, they were able to say things which are more objective to the teacher, to mirror to the teacher.

I: The teacher was able to see herself. The teacher was able to see himself or herself based on the...

R: So ... what has been the effect, other than the teacher saw herself or himself? Did it translate into change of behaviour?

I: Yeah, yeah. I think so. First, the supervisor was more confident that he was really able to really give good feedback, and the trust and confidence of the teacher to the observer ...

R: Yeah.

I: If the principal is not a major of English, it's building confidence of the principal, that 'even though I'm a major of TLE [Technology and Livelihood Education], I can mentor the teacher.' (SI-5: 450-475)

Here, such an approach to conducting observation feedback is seen as enabling teachers to obtain a clearer picture of their teaching, as well as making it possible for non-ELT specialists to also provide useful information.

Finally, there was a reasonable level of strength of agreement with the proposition in Q. 57 (that the teacher should be allowed to take the lead in the feedback), but also a degree of reservation (c. 43 per cent 'strongly agreed', while c. 50 per cent 'agreed'). The interview and focus group data concerned with this feature were patterned in a similar way. There were several occasions where the advantages of letting the teacher take the lead were mentioned, such as the potential for increased receptivity, e.g:

FG3: ... sometimes, it [i.e. feedback coming initially from the observer] will create a negative feeling on the part of the teacher. You are the one presenting the lesson, and then this particular observer will tell you, 'you have done this wrong. You have done...' You have the tendency to - instead of taking the suggestion positively, it will create an impression, a bad impression on you that next time...so it is much better that the reaction or feedback should come first from the teacher, so maybe the observer can say, 'what do you think is the best part of your lesson? Could you think of possible ways to make...' so more or less, it is not that hurting on the part of the teacher [laughter] - on the part of the teacher observed.

FG1: Yes, and the observer - probably the observer can say, 'you see, you can [do] better than what you just did. You still have more ideas.' [crosstalk, laughter] (TEFG1: 635-636)

On the other hand, such an approach was not seen as of equal potential value for all teachers, such as those with less experience:

When it comes to the evaluation of oneself, when it comes to teaching, the new one, the new in the service are having the hard time evaluating their own self. But it is through the guidance of the principal that the teachers will know her strengths and weaknesses. (EPI-3: 223)

Taken as a whole, this part of the questionnaire data can be seen to indicate that, while there was broad support for the importance of observing and giving feedback on teachers' post-seminar follow-up activity, some of the questions (e.g., Qs. 53 & 54) about how this might best be done were perhaps insufficiently clear and comprehensible, and interpretation of responses to the remainder (Qs. 55-57) needs to be mediated by findings from the accompanying interview and focus group data.

Recommendations for ‘best practice’

The findings from this study are taken to have the following main implications for practitioners and policy-makers involved in the design and delivery of ELT INSET, in terms of how to achieve ‘best practice’ in this area.

The overall **theoretical framework** informing practice in this area needs to be of the kind represented by Fig. 1 (on page 4), i.e. one involving a close integration of both course- and school-based teacher learning opportunities, on the one hand, and of the school and educational system levels on the other.

In terms of the **planning** of INSET, the findings indicate that:

- Due care and attention needs to be paid to a variety of logistical concerns, such as providing sufficient advance notice, securing a training venue of the right quality, choosing the optimum time within the school year, and so on.
- The training should as far as possible match the needs of the teachers and the teaching situation.
- Trainers should have the appropriate knowledge and skills, and trainer training provided accordingly.
- The training design should be developed in such a way that the potential for coherence in terms of a number of dimensions is maximised.

In terms of the **delivery** of INSET courses, the study shows that:

- The training approach should be ‘participant-centred’, i.e. actively involve the trainees in understanding, discussing and working with the teaching ideas in collaboration with the trainers and themselves.
- Demonstration lessons of both main kinds (‘peer’ and ‘live’) are an important means of increasing practical understanding of teaching ideas.
- Training resources, both human and material, should be provided at a level that is likely to maximise the potential of the training.

In terms of INSET **follow-up**, the data show that:

- Active and extensive educational and school system support is needed in order to ensure that teaching ideas introduced in seminars are implemented. In this connection, the provision of appropriate teaching materials is of particular importance.
- Systematic observation of and feedback on teacher’s attempts to implement the training ideas is vital, and need to be approached in ways which take into account situational realities but which also attempt to maximise the potential for teacher learning.

Conclusion

Effective INSET is crucial to the development of improved and new ELT (and any other) curricula. Nevertheless, there is evidence that it is frequently approached in a manner which results in it being less effective than required. This study has attempted to build on existing understandings of how to remedy this problem, by combining a variety of insights into a single and relatively straightforward theoretical model of the overall conditions needed for the design and delivery of more effective INSET. It has also gathered data from both INSET 'suppliers' and end-users in a representative ELT situation, in order to identify what are perceived to be the optimal ways in which a range of the main factors involved in such INSET can be configured. It is hoped that the resulting picture of 'best practice' will be of value to others working in similar situations elsewhere.

List of acronyms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DepEd	Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines
ELT	English Language Teaching
EPI	Elementary School Principal Interview
ETEI	Elementary English Language Teacher Interview
FG	Focus Group participant
HQI	Department of Education Central Headquarters Personnel Interview
I	Interviewee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSET	In-service Teacher Training
R	Researcher
SEDP	Secondary Education Development Project
SHDI	Secondary School English Department Head Interview
SI	Regional or Division English Language Supervisor Interview
STEI	Secondary English Language Teacher Interview
TEFG	English Language Teacher Focus Group
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
TRFG	English Language Teacher Trainer Focus Group
UBD	Understanding by Design

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Appendix A – questionnaire respondent details

a. DepEd Division:

Name ¹¹	N	%
M1	86	21.9
M2	96	24.4
P1	128	32.6
P2	83	21.1
Total	393	

b. Type of school:

Level	N	%
Elementary School	239	60.8
High School	154	39.2
Total	393	

c. Total number of years of English language teaching experience:

No. of years	N	%
Less than 5	109	27.9
More than 5, less than 10	126	32.2
More than 10	156	39.9
Total	391	

d. Position:

Position	N	%
Teacher	343	87.9
Acting/Master teacher	29	7.4
Acting/Department Head	13	3.3
Other (not defined)	1	.3
Principal	3	.8
Co-ordinator	1	.3
Total	390	

e. Participation in in-service seminars on English language teaching strategies.

Position	N	%
None	22	5.6
Less than 5	212	53.9
More than 5	159	40.5
Total	393	

f. Involvement in delivering training in English language teaching strategies.

	N	%
No	295	76
Yes	93	24
Total	388	

g. Level of involvement in training of those answering 'Yes' to F. above.

Highest level	N	%
School	34	36.6
District	17	18.3
Division	33	35.5
Region	6	6.5
National	3	3.2
Total	93	

¹¹ 'M' = 'metropolitan'; 'P' = 'provincial'.

Appendix B – TRFG3 transcript excerpt

- R2: So you know, typically, though, the teachers in a seminar will work together in a small group and solve a problem like this.
- FG4: Yes, oo [yes].
- R2: There will be some output from that group work, and then –
- R1: What to do with the output. What can be done with the output after problem solving?
- FG4: Then I think the output will be presented to the body in a plenary session, then some of the group will critique, and then the ones who is conducting the training will jot down the best feature of the presentation, trace similarities and differences, and after that you can input to what is really the side output of the activity. And then –
- R2: Okay. So you get a critique from the group first.
- FG4: Yes. Other group will critique the presentation of the ones presenting their output.
- R2: Or is it also possible for that group that did the output to give the first critique?
- FG4: Yes, yes. Oo [yes]. The ones presenting will critique their work, the other group – the ones listening will also critique, and probably the trainers will do the same.
- R2: Right.
- FG4: To make a maximum –
- R2: Why do you feel that it's first of all going to start with a group or another group themselves rather than the trainer in doing the critique?
- FG4: The other group?
- R1: Why – the first group.
- R2: Why do you think the participants, it doesn't matter where they're from, but the point – I think, ma'am, you said that you would start with the other participants being the ones to begin the critique.
- FG4: It's – psychologically, it's good, because they will – of course, they will – before the critiquing process will surface, of course there will be criteria to be considered. I think that group, intellectual ones, and English teachers at that, will be amenable to underscore all the criteria to be considered in critiquing, and so they will be very objective in also jotting down the good feature of their output and the weaknesses of the output.
- R2: But ma'am, why not begin – why not just have the trainer do the critique? Why have the participants do it, first of all, as you suggested?
- FG4: It's good to see your limitation first, rather others see that. But there's a saying that our eyes cannot see our own eyes. So it's better that other people will see our mistakes.
- R2: Right. But why would it be better to begin with the eyes of the other participants rather than the eyes of the trainer?
- FG4: Because it is easy for you to admit your weaknesses once you see it by your own self.
- R1: No, if it is, for example, this is the group that did the output. There is a group that critiques this group. So that you're saying that before the trainer does the critique, it's this group that does the critique. Why is it important to do that, instead of having the trainer do it first?
- FG4: Ah, it's important because we will be considering the perspective of the co-trainers, how they perceive the presented output in their own level, because it is too highly critical for the trainer to, you know, spot, to do the critiquing first prior to the other participants.
- R2: You mean it's more threatening? If the trainer – yeah.
- FG4: Yes, it's more comfortable [chuckles]. It's more – you know, it's more affirming, and for me, it's –
- R1: Coming from the groups.
- FG4: Yeah, from the group. It's somewhat a friendly transmission of conversation.
- FG3: I go along with [FG4's] idea regarding the standard. Is it the standard before the critique

– before we critique the outputs of the participants. We encourage them to critique the output first before the trainers, because you know, this is one way of – we have to process – as trainers we have to process their answers. There will be commonalities, differences, something like that. So we inculcate the knowledge and the wisdom of these participants. Because you know, before the training, they have the prior experience, e [you see].

FG4: That's [unintelligible].

FG3: So we will enhance their experiences by – basing on the outputs given by the trainers. So we can easily identify that these participants learned from your lectures or from your inputs through these activities. So the skills of the trainers should be enhanced on how to process the outputs of these participants, especially in critiquing. So we set the standard before the critiquing, then based on the standard, the participant will butt in – the final say will come from the participant, if there will be differences on the answers of the participants.

R2: Okay. Could I – so – is it the case, then, that we are saying that, first of all, you have the participants who produce the output, and then if you have other participants who start the process of critiquing, this gives the trainer the opportunity to gauge the understanding –

FG4: Yes.

R2: – not only of those who produced the output, but also a kind – as a result of the kinds of critique which the other participants are offering –

FG4: Yes.

R2: – then this also provides the trainer with an opportunity for further guide – to provide further guidance.

FG4: One way of counter-checking if their line of thought is still the same.

R2: Yeah. Yeah. So there are two levels of learning, or learning is gradually spread out.

RG5: Yes.

R2: But then can I also ask about the last point? I think you've been saying that the trainer should still, if you like, round off or provide a kind of capstone for the end of the discussion. In other words, it's not – or is it okay if the discussion finishes only with the feedback from the other participants, or is it important for the participants to also, at the end, hear the feedback from the trainer as well?

FG3: Yeah, that is right. Both right.

FG4: Both sides.

R2: Both.

FG3: Both. Both.

R2: So it's also important to get feedback from the trainer as well.

RG5: Yes.

R2: Okay. But why?

FG1: In my own view sir... I believe that the trainers are expected to be expert in their topics to be discussed. That what output to be produced by the participants are trainings. They knew already the criteria, how to do this, di ba [isn't that so?]. So the trainer really plays a big role or the person who must be expert in knowing if the participants have the best output that matter.

R2: Okay. So you mean that in the end, it is likely that the trainer will have more understanding and so on than the participants, and so it's important that the trainer's voice is also heard at the end? Is that correct?

FG1: Yes, sir.

R2: Yeah. And is that the same view that the rest of you...?

FG4: It's different [chuckles].

R2: Okay, no. So what's the difference, ma'am?

FG4: For me, because we are handling – we are training – we are considering adult learning, Four A's, I think with inputs alone, our English teacher might be bored of hearing lectures to be consuming all the time, talking all the time. And it would be more engaging if we'll give engaging tasks for them. If we see that there's lacking in their presentation or outputs, that's the time for us to fill in the gap or to give more inputs. In that case, we are also boosting the morale of the participants.

- R2: Yeah. Thank you. But my point was just a little bit different, if we still have time to just try and clarify that just a little bit more. My point was that if we are using problem-solving activities of this kind, let's assume at the moment that we've decided that [chuckles] they have got value and we are using them, and we've been talking about the participants producing the output, and there is critique by the other participants which might be moderated or guided by the trainer. But then after that, after that part of the process to give the output is completed, should the trainer give a kind of summing up?
- FGs: Yes.
- FG4: Yes.
- FG2: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- FG4: Yes. Capsulise everything.
- R2: Okay, but why? Why?
- FG4: To give the – a whole gist of the presentation, so that concepts and insights will retain in the long-term memory of the participants.
- R2: Right. So by doing that, the trainer is adding something –
- FG4: Yes.
- R2: – to the discussion which might not be seen otherwise, a kind of conclusion, or something of that kind is –
- FG4: Yes. So that it will be clear. [laughter]
- R2: Okay. Thank you. Thank you.
- RG5: It should not only be left at there are problem-solving activities, but there should also be –
- FG4: Processing.
- RG5: Yeah, processing from the trainers themselves, so that they will have an idea of what should be done about that strategy.
- FG4: What's the desired one.
- RG5: Yeah.
- FG2: Yeah.
- R2: Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right.
- FG3: Maybe misunderstanding, misconception, or –
- FG4: Clearinghouse [chuckles]. [some crosstalk as other participants comment on the term 'clearinghouse'.]
- FG3: Yeah. That is one way of clearing their minds, what is in their mind.
- FG4: Clearing doubts.
- FG3: So if the trainer would like to tell them something about that, the final words, or let's say the generalisation or the summary of the training, where the participant will clear those talks.
- R2: Yeah. And in fact is it your experience that the trainees will usually expect that to be given by the trainers? Is it normally the expectation, in your experience, that the trainer will be expected to provide that kind of input?
- FGs: Yes.
- FG4: Yes. Prior to that, as trainer you can solicit – you can solicit insights, functional concepts. Say for example you have an activity, so you will ask the participants, 'what are the insights that you've learned from the activity itself?' So before giving the actual meat of the – or substance, then the participants can give.
- R2: Right. Right. So that's a further stage or twist to this process of developing the thinking as a result of the problem-solving activity.
- FG4: Yes. Critical thinking skills.
- R2: And is it – you would certainly regard that, would you, as a best practice, ma'am?
- FG4: Yes. But the trainer has the final say, the final conclusion of what is really the actual –
- R2: It goes without saying... [laughter; crosstalk] (TRFG3: 496-585)

ISBN 978-0-86355-683-8

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