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COVID-19 and the shift to Online Language Teacher Education

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Executive Summary

This report examines the experiences of providers of face–to–face English language teacher education (ELTE) as they adapted to COVID–19 and shifted their operations online.

These research questions were addressed:

1. In response to COVID–19, how did an international sample of face–to–face ELTE providers adapt their courses and programmes?

2. What challenges did these providers face in making the transition to online ELTE?

3. What factors facilitated their attempts to respond to these challenges?

4. To what extent do providers feel that shifting their ELTE work online has led to positive outcomes?

5. How likely is it that providers will retain elements of online delivery once face–to–face operations resume?

To explore these issues, qualitative interviews were carried out with representatives from nine ELTE providers, each from a different country. Participants encompassed private, state and non-governmental organisations (universities, schools and institutes) delivering pre–service and in–service courses. Through the interviews, respondents narrated their experiences of responding to COVID–19 from March 2020 until July/August 2021.

The key findings to emerge from the analysis of these narratives are the following:

1. Transitioning to online ELTE involved, to varying degrees across providers, changes in the following aspects of their work: overall delivery model, course structure, content, methodology, assessment (where relevant), teacher educator support and support for trainees. While some providers changed either substantially or very little in relation to these issues, most were characterised by moderate levels of change.

2. Programmes that included a teaching practice component were particularly affected during the first wave of national lockdowns and providers (or individual teacher educators) who had the autonomy

to do so adopted various strategies, such as the use of video recorded lessons, to compensate for the absence of opportunities for trainees to conduct face–to–face observation and teaching.

3. ELTE assessment procedures were also often adapted in response to COVID–19, including temporary adjustments to assessment regulations, the introduction of forms of assessment that had not previously been used, and greater flexibility in how trainees were allowed to submit work.

4. The shift to online ELTE created several challenges for teacher educators and trainees. Both groups had limited prior experience of online education. While off campus, trainees lacked many of the resources and conditions they needed to study effectively. Both teacher educators and trainees struggled with the lack of face–to–face interaction in online classes. Trainees were often seen to be reluctant to participate actively in live online sessions.

5. The study also highlighted factors that supported teacher educators' attempts to move online. Key among these were effective leadership, collaboration (with peers and external partners) and access to instructional and technological support.

6. ELTE, providers also identified a range of positive outcomes of the enforced move to online delivery. These included more obvious issues such as improved competence and confidence for working online among teacher educators but also additional important gains such as the adoption of new forms of assessment and better understandings of trainees' social situations and needs.

7. Providers expressed varying degrees of intention to sustain online ELTE practices introduced in response to COVID–19. In some cases operations had already reverted almost entirely to face–to–face while in others new online options had been retained alongside or integrated with the face–to–face provision previously available. In one case it was suggested that, moving forward, online provision would be the primary mode of ELTE.

1. Introduction

The aim of this report, which was commissioned by AQUEDUTO, is to examine the experiences of providers of face–to–face English language teacher education (ELTE) as they adapted to COVID–19 and shifted their operations online. The theoretical background for the study is first briefly outlined, followed by a description of its objectives and methodology. The core of the report consists of nine narratives of how ELTE providers in different countries responded to COVID–19 The narratives are followed by a review of the key themes that they highlight and the report ends with some reflections on the implications of the study for ELTE.

2. Theoretical Background

Distance education is defined as 'the practical subset of education that deals with instruction in which distance and time are the criterial attributes; that is, student and teacher (and other students) are separated by distance and/or time' (Yacci, 2000, p.1 in Ní Shé et al., 2019, p.18). Online learning is the form of remote education that is most widely discussed in the literature and, while much of this literature predates the COVID–19 pandemic (Zawacki-Richter, Baecker, & Vogt, 2009, for example, review distance education research from 2000 to 2008), the disruption to all levels and sectors of education during this global health crisis[1] has triggered a rapid and much more widespread interest in how education can be delivered remotely and especially online. This has been reflected in numerous recent analyses of the impacts of COVID–19 on education and of how those responsible for educational provision have responded (see, for example, the collections of papers in Reuge et al., 2021; Thornburg, Ceglie, & Abernathy, 2021).

This report focuses on two specific sub–fields of education. The first is teacher education, which as used here refers to work conducted both with prospective teachers (i.e. initial or pre–service teacher education) and with practising teachers (i.e. in–service teacher education or continuing professional development). The second sub–field is disciplinary and relates specifically to English language teaching (ELT),

an area of activity which is also often described as Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (TEFL/TESL) or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The purpose of this study, then, is to examine how organisations that provide English language teacher education (ELTE) – specifically providers with little or no previous experience of online delivery – adapted their provision in response to COVID–19.

Several studies examining how teacher education more generally has responded to COVID–19 have been published (immediately pre-COVID analyses also remain very relevant though, such as the review of online initial teacher education by Dyment & Downing, 2020). Flores and Swennen (2020), for example, edited a special issue of the The European Journal of Teacher Education on this theme, while the Journal of Education for Teaching (O'Meara & Hordatt Gentles, 2020) published a special issue in which authors from around the globe provide 'a series of snapshots of the circumstances for teacher education in their countries' (pp. 437-438). These accounts highlight a range of challenges that teacher educators faced as they adapted to COVID–19, most obviously 'the related rapid development of the technological knowledge and skills required by academic colleagues' (Mutton, 2020, p.439). Disruption to teaching practice, a key element in initial teacher education programmes, is also a salient theme in these accounts (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Kidd & Murray, 2020). The emphasis in this collection on presenting narratives of teacher educators' experiences during COVID–19 reflects the concerns of the current study. It must be noted, though, that the literature on COVID–19 and teacher education focuses largely on university–based pre–service programmes; in–service contexts seem to have been less well studied.

In ELTE, while universities are important providers (especially of pre–service qualifications), the field is characterised by diversity of both provision and providers. Various forms of ELTE (ranging from days to years in duration) are offered to prospective and practising teachers globally by organisations that also include training centres and institutes, language schools, Ministry of Education departments, educational or cultural organisations, publishers and NGOs. As in education generally, online language learning (including ELT) has been an issue of

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[1] See UNESCO's analysis at
https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse

interest for many years (for example, in 2012, Vol. 25 of the journal 'Computer Assisted Language Learning was a special issue on 'Tutoring at a distance'). Online ELTE has also been the focus of academic review (Murray & Christison, 2018).

However, while the impacts of COVID–19 on language learning have been widely discussed (Gacs, Goertler, & Spasova, 2020; Gonzalez-Lloret, Canals, & Pineda, 2021; Jin, Xu, Deifell, & Angus, 2021), studies that focus on ELTE are less readily available. A British Council report (British Council, 2020) provides some insights into teacher educators' reported practices and needs during the pandemic, while a special issue of the journal Ikala (Gonzalez-Lloret et al., 2021) includes papers of relevance, such as Castañeda-Trujillo & Jaime-Osorio (2021), which examines pedagogical strategies used by English teacher educators during COVID–19. Moorhouse's (2020) account of how he adapted an ELT course on a university initial teacher education programme in Hong Kong is another example from our field. Again, though, these last two peer–reviewed papers focus on university programmes.

This report adds to the above literature by presenting qualitative accounts of how different kinds of ELTE organisations in diverse global contexts adapted to the challenges of the pandemic by moving their operations online. Case studies of this kind are an established and powerful mechanism for providing in–depth accounts of personal experience and, some 20 months since the global pandemic started in March 2020, it is an appropriate time for such stories to be told and for us as a field to extract from them insights that can contribute to continuing improvements in online ELTE.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:
1. In response to COVID–19, how did an international sample of face–to–face ELTE providers adapt their courses and programmes?

2. What challenges did these providers face in making the transition to online ELTE?

3. What factors facilitated their attempts to respond to these challenges?

4. To what extent do providers feel that shifting their ELTE work online has led to positive outcomes?

5. How likely is it that providers will retain elements of online delivery once face–to–face operations resume?

3.2. Research Approach

A case study approach (Duff, 2008) was adopted, focusing on each participating provider as an individual unit of analysis and seeking to capture their experiences relevant to the above research questions as holistically as possible. The study was thus wholly qualitative in nature.

3.3. Participants

The criteria for the selection of participants in this study were:

a. they are providers of ELTE
b. prior to the pandemic they were a wholly or largely face–to–face operation.
c. each is based in a different country.

With these criteria in mind, information about the study and invitations for participation were disseminated to and through personal contacts in the field of ELTE, individuals in specific countries who were recommended to me, and organisations involved in ELTE such as the British Council and Cambridge Assessment English. Over a period of several weeks, and through interactions with potential participants in many different countries, nine organisations were secured. In most cases they were represented by a single individual, apart from one case with two and another with three. The sample was diverse in terms of

- geography (nine different countries)
- sector (state, private and NGO)
- stage of ELTE (pre–service and in–service)
- respondent gender (four male and 8 female).

3.4. Data Collection

Informed by the literature on qualitative interviewing (for example, Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018), data collection took the form of one semi–structured online interview (using Zoom) per organisation (see Salmons, 2012 for a specific discussion of e–interviews in research). The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes

and were, with permission, audio recorded. An interview schedule was prepared in advance (see the Appendix) and this provided consistency across the discussions, without, though, overly constraining participants' responses. The interview was organised around four broad themes: background to the ELTE organisation; the situation pre–COVID–19; the impact of COVID–19; and the current outlook.

4. Data Analysis

Full transcripts of the interviews were produced using the automatic transcription platform Otter.ai. These were reviewed and corrected where necessary against the original audio files. The transcripts totalled over 90,000 words. Each was reviewed in turn, with a view to constructing a narrative of around 2,000 words which addressed the themes highlighted in the research questions for the study. The structure of the conversation provided the template for the case report and the analytical process was one of reading the transcripts, deciding what was relevant (in relation to the research questions), identifying key verbatim extracts and assembling this material to form a concise and coherent narrative told from the participant's perspective and in their voice. My textual contributions to these accounts are organisational and discoursal (for example, through signposting and linking); deeper analytical commentary is presented after the cases.

The narratives follow the broad chronological structure embedded in the interview schedule (pre–COVID–19, during COVID–19 and looking ahead), though within this structure the specific themes highlighted by respondents, and the order in which they appear in the reports, varies. Overall, in constructing the case reports the goal was to tell a story about each organisation or individual teacher educator's transition to online delivery of ELTE during the pandemic.

As a form of respondent validation, drafts of the reports were shared with participants and during this process they were also asked to clarify or elaborate on particular issues. In all cases they felt the accounts reflected their experience; for example, the feedback from Spain was 'you have written a detailed account of our case, and the information is accurate', Turkey replied that 'I think it captures our experience very well, while Malta said that

'It's totally accurate and interesting to read'.

5. Results

The nine cases are now presented, in alphabetical order by country. As part of the agreement with participants, the identity of organisations has not been disclosed and pseudonyms approved by the interviewees are used.

5.1. China

Context

This case study focuses on the experience of a Chinese university that provides a pre–service English language teacher education programme. Graduates from the programme are qualified to teach English in primary and middle schools and approximately 35 ELT student teachers enrol each year. They take a range of courses on English language, English culture and language teaching methods and assessment and each course consists of one weekly two–hour class over a term. Fen had worked at the Foreign Languages College for 30 years and she was responsible for the course on English Language Teaching Methodology. Most work on the programme was face–to–face – "there was some online teaching, but we seldom did that".

Impact of COVID

Nationally, face–to–face teaching in universities in China was postponed in March 2020. However, Fen explained that teaching was only delayed for a short time:

> We start our term in March but because of the COVID–19 crisis, we had to postpone our courses … So we just postponed to two weeks later and during this time, we had to transition to online teaching and online learning … teachers are asked to use online software such as Teams meeting, or Zoom meeting, or some other local platforms … to put our teaching materials on.

Preparing to teach the ELT methodology course online, though, did take up much of Fen's holiday:

> So during the Spring Festival, one month,

I have to and other teachers, we have to prepare the new teaching materials for the next term, because the new term started in March 2020. So during this one month time I remember that I recorded most of the lessons for the next term. I use a software, EV Record Screen … we were recommended to use EV recording software or some other kinds of recording software to prepare the lessons, just like the real classroom, we had to deliver the talk and record the whole teaching process. And then put it on the learning platform … I just built a course you know, I put all my recordings online.

So for every weekly two-hour class Fen prepared and uploaded a recording, along with "extra teaching materials and learning materials … readings and also recordings of the real classroom by the middle school teachers in China". This video material was available online and consisted of demonstration lessons carried out by Chinese teachers of English. For the readings that Fen uploaded for students, some were already available electronically while others had to be scanned by Fen as part of the process of preparing her online materials.

Course content, compared to face-to-face delivery, remained largely the same, but Fen felt that it was necessary to provide more resources for students:

The course contents are much the same but because of this distance education we have to put more materials online for students … for further self study after the course … because we cannot monitor their study … I think that's difference between face-to-face teaching and online teaching.

Fen, though, did not simply ask students to work through the materials she uploaded independently: "So I'll give the recordings of my teaching material and also during the class time I open the camera to create face-to-face situation with my students … by Tencent meeting or Zoom meeting".

Teachers were in fact expected to work to the normal course timetable and to meet their students online at the allocated time each week. Students received the recorded lecture

in advance and were required to preview this before the online meeting ("this is one of the ways to monitor students to help them to study"). Then during the online session the students would be engaged more interactively: "I will do some additional exercises for them, for example, form group discussions and ask me questions, I will answer questions, sometimes I will ask some questions combining the teaching recordings".

As this was Fen's first experience of teaching online, she needed to acquire new skills:

For the whole term last year from March to July, I had to learn the knowledge of how to use software, how to manage them, all of this … most of time I teach myself. I spend a lot of time to learn this technology, because most us didn't do it before.

Learning about new technologies for online teaching was in fact the key challenge she experienced:

The difficulty … the competence of online teaching, the competence, how to deal with online teaching and how to make the recordings of my teaching material. This is one of the most difficult things I had to face. I am familiar with the teaching contents and teaching material but I had to put it online, I have to transition to online teaching.

Some support from the university was provided to support lecturers as they moved online: "the university did provide some training, several sessions on how to use software, they did give some training sessions for the teachers on how to use you know, for example, the EV recording [software]".

In addition, technical support was available for the online learning platform and "if we have any problems we can ask the technicians in the WeChat group". The support available was, though, quite general in nature and Fen had to find solutions to problems specific to her teaching: "they will give some general instructions but sometimes we meet some specific situations in our own class, that's why I had to learn by myself, some technology about this".

Fen, therefore, learned about teaching

online through experience, her own efforts at mastering the technology and the support the university provided. Peer support among lecturers was, though, not a prominent factor: "most of them were doing their own individual work, but sometimes we will discuss, we have team discussion, and we could discuss about it and what will be delivered".

The transition to online work also created challenges for the students. While the timing was convenient in the sense that no courses were running, it did mean that students did not have access to books and equipment:

> The outbreak of COVID–19 in China was during Spring Festival. The students, because of the Spring Festival holiday, they returned to their hometown without bringing many books with them. Some left their computers at the dormitory on campus. No notebooks and no computer with them. So a very sudden situation, so all the teachers had to work out plans to cope with it.

Fen felt that students also struggled to adapt to the lack of in–person interaction during online classes:

> Like the teachers, the students also had a very difficult time to change from face–to–face to online. There were many changes for students too and many challenges and difficulties for them. I think the biggest problem for them is that they haven't face–to–face interaction with the teachers, they haven't face–to–face interaction with their peers. Also they all sit in one Tencent meeting room … no face–to–face help from teachers, no face–to–face support from their peer students, just learning in a lonely way.

And while students were assigned some group tasks to do as homework, Fen did not organise any online group work during classes because "it's too complicated".

Linked to the lack of physical interaction, anxiety was another issue that Fen felt many students (and teachers) experienced when teaching moved online:

> Anxiety of teaching and learning during pandemic period. Maybe that's a field we need to explore … the teachers and students and their pressure, and anxiety and psychology, the adaptation of the psychology from face–to–face teaching to online teaching. Maybe we need to have more study in this field I think … their anxiety about the whole process. And their pressure for online teaching and their worries about online teaching. It's a new thing for teachers and students, we need to adapt ourselves to a new situation and we need to mitigate our anxiety and our pressure.

Assessment on the course had previously taken the form of written exams. After the transition to online "there was some change … for the term March to July we adopted online examination". Secure systems were in place to enable this:

> My examination, we will also use Tencent meeting, this learning platform is a very complicated platform. Complicated software, and it has many functions. We can organize online examinations on this learning platform. So all the students are asked to enter this online classroom and then we just give them online examination … a written examination … they write down the answers … We have very strict monitoring system, we ask them to open their camera.

By September 2020, the pandemic situation in China was improving and

> most of the students returned from their home town and returned to the campus. And we adopted face–to–face education again, from last September. But we also maintained online education, we also maintained the learning platform and we also gave students some tasks to do after course.

Various online measures were kept in place in case further restrictions on face–to–face classes were necessary:

> The universities and the local educational administration asked the

students to come back and we could do face–to–face teaching. We were asked to get prepared for the change of situation. In case that the pandemic came back again, because at that time we didn't have any vaccine, so in case the pandemic would come back again so we will transition to online teaching again so that's why [we kept some online measures in place].

And although this was not an issue on Fen's programme, other parts of the university had courses with large numbers of students and to ensure social distancing it was necessary to continue teaching them online for some time. From March 2021, though, all university teaching nationally had returned to normal – "everyone returned back to the campus and we just did face–to–face teaching again".

As part of her ELT methodology work, Fen was also responsible for student teachers during teaching practice. We discussed how this aspect of the course had been affected by the pandemic:

The middle schools and primary schools in our city were very strict with the visitors, they refused visitors from outside for the last year. So my students, if they want to do teaching practice, they will ask for the permission of the middle schools and primary schools in the city, they will show their 'green mark' [certificate of being COVID free].

Student teachers who met the health requirements, then, were allowed into schools:

If you are healthy and if you will show the certificate of your health, you are permitted to go to the middle schools and have your teaching practices. So, from September to December last year, the situation has changed a lot. And they were permitted to go to the middle schools and primary schools to do their teaching practice if they have their green mark.

Supervisors also needed approval to visit schools to observe the student teachers – "I also needed to contact the school beforehand and I also show my certificates of my health".

Overall, though, Fen explained that between September and December 2020 COVID–19 had "little impact on their teaching practice actually ... every one of my students, they entered their chosen schools and they did the teaching practice".

Positive Outcomes

There were two positive outcomes of the move to online teaching for Fen. One was that she and her colleagues had developed their own online competences and now knew much more about different tools and platforms they could use online: "we have made some progress in learning the competences for online teaching, the competence on technology". The second was that, even though face–to–face teaching had now resumed, the online resources she had developed remained available to her students and provided them with additional learning support on the course:

No more online teaching but I still keep the learning platform for the students and I also, apart from my face–to–face teaching, I also asked my students to visit this online teaching material because I think I have put much more teaching materials on the learning platform.

5.2. Chile

Context

This case study focuses on the experiences of a unit which, as part of the Ministry of Education in Chile, has national responsibility for the professional development of teachers of English. The interviewee, Vicente, was a senior member of the unit and had worked there for almost 10 years. The unit had been involved in various professional development initiatives for teachers of English since 2004 and these had always been delivered face–to–face, often in partnership with organisations from the UK and the USA.

Prior to COVID

In the past, the unit's professional development activities had followed what Vicente described as a 'roadshow' model:

We would do what was called the English summer camp, and the English

winter retreat ... And so we would put together one single program that was delivered in two or three consecutive days ... by different international experts . And we would repeat that same training in five, or six cities across the country over a period of two weeks, usually. So we would, for instance, gather all the teachers from three different regions in the far north, in one city, so some of them will travel, we will do this in hotels, I mean, very much like conference style.

However, more recently there had been a strong political emphasis on regional development, meaning that professional development work had to be provided in all regions of the country:

We were required by our authorities to start doing these summer camps and winter retreats in every region, that's when we thought this model will not continue to work because there's no way we can have so many experts being present at the same time in all regions. So that's when we started, we said okay, this is the time to sort of go back ...

This prompted a rethink of strategy and a focus on identifying effective local teachers who could assume the role of teacher educators across the regions. These teachers received training for this new role and became involved in the country's professional development activities. A new model for professional development was also being implemented; this combined three–day workshops (called 'Teacher Academies') with a subsequent mentoring programme through which teachers were supported in schools as they attempted to apply new ideas in their lessons. In 2019, hybrid models were also starting to be trialled – for example, teachers completed some modules online before attending the face–to–face workshops – but CPD was still a largely face–to–face activity.

Impact of COVID

COVID–19 coincided with the start of the new school year in March 2020. At that point, some 500 teachers had completed academy training in the previous October and November and the target was for 100 of them to continue into the subsequent mentoring programme. Plans, though, had to be quickly adjusted in response to the pandemic:

First, we quickly had to cancel the training sessions that were already planned for the end of March, first half of April ... rooms had been booked, catering had been booked, everything was ready, participants had been selected, everything was there. And first, we had to cancel that.

The crisis also prompted Vicente's unit to think closely about how they could still continue to deliver their professional development programme online, whilst remaining close to their original principles and objectives:

Okay, how do we do it now? How could we, because we were still working on this, this principle. Okay, we want to go beyond the input session. And we want to continue working on the main topics that we had identified – lesson planning, differentiation, assessment, and oral skills, and going beyond like the input session. So how we do it now that it's an online thing?

The enforced shift to online delivery also allowed to unit to acknowledge some of the challenges that delivering professional development nationally face–to–face had always created:

This has allowed us to realize the many constraints we have because of the face–to–face model ... And I would say that it wasn't actually too helpful for a lot of the things that you wanted to do because there was too much energy and money invested on logistics, and a lot of our colleagues in the regions they were like event producers, most of the work was around like hiring hotels.

There was, then, an immediate sense that working online might ease some of the logistical and administrative challenges Vicente's unit had traditionally faced.

It was also necessary to identify teacher educators to deliver professional development online and it was decided these would be drawn from an existing cadre: "we had three for each region, we had a team already of around 40 local trainers ... And so we said, okay, let's invite them all to be part of this new adventure of a Teacher's Academy online".

Working online also meant that programmes could be scheduled more flexibly and over time. Previously, workshops for teachers were organised intensively over three days because it was administratively simpler. Online delivery was not constrained in this way:

> *We realized that we didn't need to do this in three days, because I knew that that wasn't actually very helpful. It was because of administrative reasons. You cannot bring teachers to a workshop every 15 days, I mean, it's a lot of money. So we said, okay, let's do this over a longer period, like 13 or 14 weeks.*

The new online Teacher Academy, then, was delivered over months rather than days. Teachers continued to work on the same kinds of 'global' modules (on lesson planning and other topics as mentioned earlier) as they had in the past. Additionally, though, a more local element of content was introduced in the form of one webinar per module that was delivered by local trainers:

> *The local element was incorporated mainly through one webinar per module delivered by our local trainers. So our local trainers had to completely transform themselves. I mean, a lot of them were really good trainers had a lot of experience in doing face–to–face teacher training. But none of them actually, I would say, had experience on doing teacher training online. So there was a lot of learning in that sense.*

At the start of the process Vicente noted that "none of us really knew what a webinar would look like", and to help teacher educators develop the competences they needed to work online, the unit partnered with a British organisation who provided trainer training:

> *There was a lot of support. And we have this team always organized by the combined forces of our UK partner and our local senior team of trainers. So they would conduct a lot of like workshops, for instance about Zoom, which was very new to all of us. So they received a lot of support, then we organized also, like a system … trainers rehearsed each webinar, and then they will receive*

> *feedback from consultants or the senior team ourselves.*

The support structures, especially the feedback on webinar rehearsals, allowed the local trainers to develop their online delivery skills:

> *There was a lot of improvement, things like you need to smile, they need to look at the camera … things that went from more superficial stuff to things, for instance, that was probably one of the main issues, how to deal with questions and comments during the webinars.*

The transition to online delivery happened quickly, and the first online programme ran between May and July 2020. Around 250 teachers registered, with a healthy (especially considering the novelty of online CPD) course completion rate of 80%. Three more courses had been delivered since then and by this stage, Vicente noted that local trainers' online skills had developed significantly and they needed less support: "a lot of them have grown a lot and have developed a lot of skills … but for the first three implementations of Teachers' Academy, there was a lot of support, and we are reducing it gradually".

We also discussed how teachers had reacted to the shift to online CPD:

> *There were some challenges around like technical or technological issues, because for a lot of teachers, that was their first time participating in online teacher training. For many, it was the first time they would be using Zoom. And so there was a lot of confusion around this idea of working in different platforms, because they will do the modules on the partner's platform, then they will do the webinars in Zoom and the assignment in Google Classroom. So there were some issues around getting them used to that, but … we managed to sort of keep a lot of teachers in the training.*

One factor that enabled teachers to complete the course was flexibility:

> *So I think that flexibility also was very helpful in the sense that teachers were*

able to work at their own pace in their own free time. So of course, within a certain framework, because of course, they had to do things within deadlines. But some of them would work like very early morning, late at night, over the weekends. So that's something that also was very well received by teachers.

Vicente also highlighted how the online model had actually increased access to CPD for many teachers:

I would say that one of the interesting advantages or gains is that well, first, we were able to cater to teachers who usually would not have the chance to participate in teacher training, because they lived in remote areas. And I mean, even in the regional model, training was very centralized in the sense that it was delivered in the capital city of each region. There are regions in which teachers can live three or five hours away from the capital cities, or for them to attend a three day workshop, like a lot of family logistics, so it wasn't possible. So access improved.

Teachers also no longer needed to be grouped according to geographical proximity, as had been the case in the face–to–face approach:

And also an interesting gain was that because when we started like working on how to organize the participants, we said, well, now we don't even have to group them by region, because there's no point. That was something that we had to do in the face–to–face model because of course, we're not going to be moving teachers from one region to another. And that was an interesting gain as well because for teachers, I mean, they were pleasantly surprised that they had the chance to talk and engage and learn from colleagues from different regions. And a lot of the comments that you would see in the feedback forms had to do with, it gave me a sense of like, it's not only my case, it's like, despite the differences in the context and the geography, and we face very similar challenges,

One area of the programme which COVID had impacted negatively, though, was how it connected to the classroom. In the past, teachers developed lesson plans informed by the modules they were studying and were able to try these out in practice; during the pandemic, teachers were providing education online, but the programme did not focus specifically on online learning and thus there were fewer opportunities for teachers to apply straight away new ideas they were obtaining:

Very, very few schools did some sort of online teaching … it felt like teachers were receiving something that they will looking forward to apply when they went back to schools, like 'I've received a lot of things that I'm really looking forward to apply when we go back to schools', because it was not designed specifically around like online teaching. We've been incorporating gradually in the following versions, in like, some trigger questions in the forums about how you would do this if you were doing this online … but it [the training] hasn't been presented as something that is aimed at helping you as a teacher to teach online.

Looking Forward

As life and education started to return to some kind of normality in Chile, Vicente reflected on the extent that online delivery would remain part of his unit's strategy for delivering professional development:

The idea is to continue doing online training, I think it provides more advantages than disadvantages. And I think that if the situation allows for some sort of face–to–face activities … to do that just as a sort of follow up. Because for instance, I think it's important to have that opportunity when you share what you have done … I think that probably it would be better to have like some regional conferences where teachers could actually show the results with experiences. And I think that would be probably done better in a face–to–face model. So my opinion would be to implement some face–to–face activities but very few. Because of the energy it takes, working in a public

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institution, I mean, it's not as easy as it is for a private company to hire hotels, to hire catering. I mean, there's like a lot of bureaucracy and things like that. So I would be very cautious in the sense of, let's do probably like a mid year review or an end of year review, face–to–face activities. That would be my approach, but continue to offer this opportunity of teachers working online over a longer period of time and having the chance to go back to their classrooms and try out.

Vicente acknowledged that the challenge moving forward with this new hybrid model of CPD was one of "sustained participation" – recognizing the challenging conditions that teachers work in, providing them with appropriate support, and creating modes of professional development that allow teachers to learn over time and to make connections with the classroom as they do so.

5.3. India

Context

The context for this case study is a state university in India that offers a two–year Master's pre–service programme in Linguistics and ELT. In the first two semesters of the course students do foundational courses in English language and linguistics, then choose to specialise in either linguistics or the teaching of English. In the second year of the course, those choosing ELT do specialist modules on teaching methods, syllabus design and assessment, as well as teaching practice in addition to proficiency courses on academic reading and writing. Typically 18–20 students specialise in ELT each year. Prisha had worked on the programme for 20 years and was particularly responsible for the teaching methods and teaching practice modules.

Pre–COVID

The programme was well–established and had been running for 20 years. Prior to COVID, courses were delivered in a conventional face–to–face manner; students attended classes six days a week, submitted written assignments and took formal examinations at the end of each semester. Some staff members had in recent years started using Google tools such as Google Classroom during courses, for example,

to allow students to submit assignments, but according to Prisha "we had never ever taught in online mode".

Impact of COVID

India went into complete lockdown at the end of March 2020. This was in the middle of the semester, so "suddenly in the middle of classes, everything shut down, there was nothing". This was particularly problematic for ELT students, because this is when "we actually get down to the business of teaching pedagogy and syllabus design and assessment and everything else about ELT". The suddenness of the shutdown took everyone by surprise:

This was an absolute chaotic situation, no one had foreseen this, no one was prepared, so very suddenly students were asked to vacate their residences and pack up and go home and everybody thought they would be back in around two weeks or maybe three weeks.

In reality the disruption to the MA programme lasted much longer and it was only towards the end of May that online ways of resuming courses started to be explored. However, there was no co–ordinated university strategy and individual lecturers "were just left floundering and trying to find their way … they [the university] expected that teachers, having had experience of attending events in virtual mode, would just know how to do it".

For the ELT courses, teachers started using several platforms simultaneously, such as e–mail, WhatsApp, Google Meet and Zoom. They had to work everything out themselves and no specific technical support was available from the university, apart from wi–fi connectivity for campus residents (not all teachers stay on campus). Much to the surprise of Prisha and her colleagues, not only was the move to online teaching challenging for staff, attending classes online was equally difficult for students:

My colleagues and I had this misconception that they were digital natives, so this whole move to a whole new way of learning was easy for them, until I did a small project with my students because I wanted to find out how they were coping with this … I discovered to my surprise that students

were also facing challenges and getting extremely demoralised.

Online learning was challenging for the MA students in many ways:

· lack of physical contact and socialisation with other students
· no access to university wi–fi (because students had moved back home)
· lack of internet connectivity packages – "one of two classes would end their entire [data] package for the day"
· problems finding study materials online – "they were used to textbooks and they couldn't afford to buy the online versions"
· they also had other responsibilities at home and thus limited time to study
· not every household had personal computers and devices were often shared by family members.

COVID also affected the families of many students and this was a significant emotional strain for them.

Pedagogically, prior to COVID, ELT methodology courses consisted of interactive classes based around practical tasks and discussions. Teachers on the programme found it very difficult to recreate such a learning environment online:

We had to orientate ourselves to teaching black screens. We didn't hear back from the students, it was really difficult for us to give them group activities, synchronous group activities, pair work and group work, if we did that we would have to let them submit later or have a discussion, go offline and come back, so the disruption was there, it wasn't like being in a classroom where you had people just in front of you. In a physical space you could move around, the students could move around, they were used to working in groups and that was difficult to manage in Google Meet. So sometimes we would have the same people responding, there were audio problems and video problems and by the time you had a student write in the chat box someone else had answered. Keeping track of students' voices as well as messages was a problem.

Matters were also complicated by the fact that "everything that students had to do, such as typing in assignments, they had to do on their phones, and that took a lot of time and that for us became a challenge".

In response to these difficulties, staff on the MA programme started looking for solutions. Major modifications to the courses were not initially feasible because "we work in a very tight bureaucratic hierarchical system so syllabus change is not something that can be done overnight". However, staff across the institution pointed out to the leadership that it would not be possible to complete course content as planned in the reduced time available and in the new online environment. The university thus granted permission for staff to reduce content and focus on priority topics.

This reduction in content was also reflected in the timetable (cut from six days a week to three): "we decided to modify our timetable, we wanted to make sure that students didn't feel overwhelmed and teachers didn't feel overwhelmed". Assessment, too, was adjusted, and the university also agreed that at the end of the first online semester formal examinations would not be required, which was a great relief for everyone; students were instead assessed based on the work completed during courses.

The Teaching Practice module in that first online semester also had to be significantly reshaped:

We explored the possibility of our students getting to observe classes online and if possible also to teach, but then schools were also in the same predicament, there was no training, teachers were just having to find their way, and they were not comfortable allowing our students to observe them, so we couldn't do that.

The solution was that

We gave our students video recordings of classes and we had discussion sessions, they had to write observation reports and they had to write lesson plans. We also tried to do a round of peer teaching online (on Google Meet), so they were teaching each other, so that's how we managed last semester.

By September 2020 India had opened up and in–person teaching resumed with face masks and social distancing in place. But in January 2021 there was a second wave of COVID and this meant that university teaching was again moved online. In the absence of a common learning platform for the whole university, teachers on the MA programme continued to use different tools to deliver content and communicate with students. The need for formal examinations, though, was this time not waived and this created a challenge as traditional formats that tested student understanding of knowledge were not feasible in an online environment (systems to prevent copying were not in place). As a result, the university introduced open book examinations where questions focused not just on knowledge but more on understanding and application. As Prisha explained,

> *Examinations were traditionally a closed affair, you had to learn and remember, a lot of papers were very conventional … with an open book examination you could no longer have questions on knowledge alone because students would simply copy paste.*

For teaching practice, in 2021, schools were more comfortable working online and it was possible to find a school that allowed MA students to observe online lessons. Students also had the opportunity to do some online teaching practice themselves, though this was reduced. The assessment of students' teaching was also done in the usual way – by an external examiner – though arranging this online was quite a challenge:

> *it was chaotic, and we did not get the number of classes that we normally do. Students [normally] get to teach at least 4–5 classes before they teach for their examination. This time they were only able to practise in two online lessons and the third class we had to use as an examination.*

The examiner observed three classes simultaneously with three Google Meet windows open at same time; "voices were not being heard, students had to share materials on WhatsApp with the school students, a lot of micro management was needed, it was quite complex but we learned a lot from the

experience".

Positive Outcomes

Prisha felt the 18 months since March 2020 had been a massive learning experience for her and her colleagues. One major positive outcome she identified was a general increase in the compassion and support students are given: "we realised the importance of compassion, we realised the importance of being supported in many different ways … The social–emotional learning aspects had kind of remained buried or at least not foregrounded, I think these are now lessons for all of us".

A clear example of this desire to support students during times of crisis was reflected in new approaches to assessment:

> *In our assessment now we give them options. In a pre–COVID world that would have been unthinkable, we would have students come into the examination halls and take exams and submit their answer scripts and that would be a completely confidential process and now in my own assessments I am giving students several options. We give them extra time so if an examination is supposed to be for three hours we give them at least 15 minutes time before the exam, we upload the examination paper and let them download that and be ready and give them some extra time after the exam. For myself I tell them to write on a Word document and e–mail or they could use a Google Doc and share it. I tell them if this none of this works, because they have to write on their phones, I give them the option of writing on paper, scanning and e–mailing me the pages, if they can't do that I also give them the option of sending screenshots of their scripts on WhatsApp. So I give them at least four different options and keep on telling them not to worry.*

COVID had also driven home the message that it was essential for courses to have opportunities for online learning built in. At the time of writing it was not clear whether university courses would be in–person or online in September 2021. The department is planning on the basis, though, that at least

some of the MA will be delivered online and are reviewing courses to ensure that opportunities for online or blending learning are included:

> *We have begun this process of syllabus revision. We have realised that we can no longer afford not to use a blending mode of learning … We now need to plan our teaching in ways that make blending learning an integral part of course delivery process. We certainly won't be abandoning online course delivery modes even if we come back to full physical mode.*

Staff are also now more confident in their ability to use technology for teaching.

> *[In then past] the most I did was show students YouTube videos or TED talks in the classroom, that was as far as we really went because we were not delivering classes online. Now I'm discovering the power of all the Google tools, we are using Mentimeter, other tools, Padlet and stuff that were just names and that sounded technical and really beyond us but all of these are now being used, some of us senior people are learning a lot from our younger colleagues. It's been a great experience for the staff and we have been learning from the students as well.*

This increased staff confidence is also reflected in the way their focus on technology is increasingly included in their ELT courses. Previously, though, while a course on technology in ELT did exist, "frankly speaking none of us was confident that we would be able to teach and we kept it as an elective course and we didn't have any takers in the last two years and we were very relieved".

One final benefit of the enforced shift to online teaching noted by Prisha is that teachers of English generally are now more comfortable using digital tools:

> *Rural areas, people with not much exposure to English or technology, to have our school teachers even in remote areas of the state, the fact they are now beginning to use e–mail and WhatsApp groups and Google Docs is a big boon.*

One side–effect of this was that it was now also easier for department staff to interact with teachers for the purposes of research through, for example, online surveys and interviews.

5.4 Jordan

Context

The teacher education provider that features in this case study is a non–profit organisation in Jordan that offers a range of programmes for both prospective and practising teachers. Two key diplomas were launched in 2016; a Teacher Education Professional Diploma and a Leadership Diploma, and the former will be the focus here. This nine–month programme is offered to primary and secondary school teachers of a range of subjects (such as Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science) and consists of both generic pedagogical modules and those which are subject–specific. Although the programme has recently been offered to practising teachers, it was designed largely for a pre–service context, including for graduates from other fields who want to obtain a teaching qualification. Around 2500 teachers have completed the Diploma in the last four years, about 400 of them specialising in teaching English. Two interviewees contributed to this account, the programme director and a senior teacher educator.

Impact of COVID

The organisation's programmes had in the past been delivered largely in–person with some online elements: "we always used to have the virtual learning environment where we also do some work online, so it's kind of blended but mostly face–to–face". So when the pandemic started work was undertaken to adapt all modules for online delivery:

> *In 2020, when we started the lockdown here in Jordan, there was no more face–to–face teaching. The good news is that we were already used to teaching online. But now we totally shifted the whole diploma online … We started working on developing online content. And having a mix of asynchronous and synchronous sessions.*

In designing the new online modules, the organisation followed a model called ILEAP,

which they developed during the pandemic to ensure that asynchronous model was creating an interactive learning experience and knowledge and skills were developed gradually:

> *I stands for introduction, L for learn, engage, apply and practice. So having followed this ILEAP has really helped us in designing and organizing the content that we used to teach face–to–face.*

The timing of the lockdown in March 2020 was fortuitous in the sense that the course was nearing its end and was in the midst of a planned break. Using the ILEAP model, then, the organisation's team of some 30 teacher educators were able to work intensively on adapting the few remaining sessions on the course that year for online delivery:

> *It took us around a week or 10 days and we were ready to teach online … it was a good coincidence that we had a break, so during that week we had everybody working in order to develop the online content … And this time, we thought that the best model is ILEAP because we were creating a learning experience that is consistent for learners, for everything that they take. So they do the Learn, where they have videos, articles, case studies, they read, then they get Engaged through discussion forums, they share good practices and experience. And then they go to the Apply, they apply the knowledge that they have gained. And then the professional Practice, where they practice in schools during their school experience practicum. Due to the lockdown the practicum took place virtually, because we usually placed them in schools. So we made sure that the schools that they're placed in are schools that have platforms, where the teachers would actually gain good experience. And we thought that this cycle, allowed them to build knowledge gradually.*

During and beyond this intensive initial phase of materials adaptation, the team extended their own knowledge of online technology and online teaching; senior members of the team were able to attend a range of relevant webinars

and to subsequently share information from these with the trainers. Another important element in the process was collaboration with educational technology staff, who were able to advise on technical matters. One general point that everyone became clear about quite soon was that simply transferring online "content developed as if it's face–to–face does not work". The revised materials, then, needed to be significantly reconfigured.

The team were able to prepare and deliver online the final sessions of the programme for 2019–20 and the feedback from participants was positive. Summer 2020 then gave the team the chance to review their approach to designing online courses and to prepare the whole Diploma programme for online delivery:

> *In the summer time of 2020 we started the review and developing the full program online, so it came at a good time … it [the intensive work before the summer] was a very good trial for us. There were a lot of lessons learned where we had to amend [materials].. The revision of the curriculum was based on evidence collected from the feedback of trainees, surveys, interviews and focus groups. … So again when developing the online content, we started with large groups of teacher educators and ended up with four main people, as the core team, going through developing the online content. Each one had a group with them.*

The online materials emerging from this process addressed some issues that were highlighted in the earlier work. One was that some teachers needed more support to develop their digital literacy skills:

> *Teachers in rural areas, they do have technology as a challenge, plus the digital literacy part. So what we did was that we created a supporting module that is specifically for digital literacy. And we ensured that we have short videos, in addition to guidelines, because we felt that you need to reach different learning styles. Some people would prefer a short video, others would prefer to read guidelines. So we made sure we had this because it was a challenge.*

Teachers also received support, through documents and videos, to help them manage routine administrative tasks such as uploading assignments.

In terms of delivery mode, the emphasis was also on asynchronous learning, to give teachers flexibility since they have other duties in their schools; each week there was just one live 90-minute session (delivered through Google Meet), with a range of additional self-study tasks. There was also support for teachers who were unable to follow sessions live: "the live sessions, we also made it a point that they are all recorded, and they're downloaded. So if you don't have the chance to attend you can watch them".

Another change in the full online programme designed was that whilst initially video material used on the course came from existing online sources, during this second phase of development the team (supported by experts in the e–learning department) created their own videos and they felt "that was a great shift" in providing more localised content for teachers.

Furthermore, the team now had a better understanding of the demands of delivering teacher education online – especially the amount of time needed, compared to face–to–face work, to get through sessions. Initially the assumption had been "that you need the same time" but for the second phase of materials development it was acknowledged that more time was needed to cover content in an online context.

One additional element of support added to the full online programme were the advisors who were responsible for communicating with teachers and encouraging them to sustain their engagement with the course – some teachers did find this a challenge:

> *It is a shift in the mindset, it is the idea that because it's online, it doesn't matter if I appear or not. It's the role of the advisor to motivate and inspire and engage them … We had teachers who were not engaging as they used to in face–to–face sessions [prior to COVID] … And sometimes it's the assumption that it is online, so I have the choice [of participating].*

Having reflected on how teachers had responded to the new online environment, the team felt that this was affected by their prior experiences of teaching and learning:

> *I figured out something. When it comes to the teacher, those who used to have that traditional way of teaching in the face–to–face lecturing style were the ones who suffer more from this. And for the ones who are used to the engaging classes. I think those were able to adapt to the new unprecedented changes.*

Diploma teachers had to complete assignments and we also discussed the extent to which the shift to online delivery had affected assessment on the programme. At one level there were no significant changes:

> *First of all, our assessment policy here before the COVID–19 crisis does not require the student to come here to take traditional exams. It's based on written assignments, essays, and reflective essays … So they have to submit it from home. So nothing has changed in terms of the written assignments, because at the end of the day, students have to submit it.*

However, for one particular module students normally conducted school–based inquiry and this was not possible during the lockdown:

> *We have an assessment, the inquiry assessment, where teachers collect data, they analyze it, and they come up with results, findings, recommendations, and so on, which was a bit difficult to be implemented in schools at that time … some practicum schools were off, some of the schools had platforms, but were not being able to deliver the way we were expecting. So we turned it into an inquiry plan that we wanted them to go through, and then this plan would be implemented the following year.*

In this case, then, rather than expecting teachers to submit a completed project, it was decided that the assessment be based on the project plan. Another change in assessment prompted by the pandemic was that the physical portfolios student teachers

had to complete as evidence of their learning throughout the course had now been converted into e–portfolios produced using the Book Creator application.

Positive Outcomes

Developing an online version of their Teacher Education Professional Diploma programme had always been part of the organisation's plan and one benefit of the pandemic is that these plans had been accelerated:

> *We've always been talking about online programs and turning our diploma online, it was our strategic plan for the coming few years, but we had to expedite it. So what we're doing now is actually reaching not only teachers in the country, but also in the region. What we're doing now is that participants in our programme are becoming self–learners, independent, whereas in the past with those face–to–face sessions, you still feel that they depend on you, they depend on the information that you give them. Now, they do it at their own pace, they became more independent with time, there's this shift in the mindset. I believe this shift from March 2020 to where we are now, if COVID was not there, this might have taken us more time … This definitely made us move much faster.*

As noted here, there were various additional benefits of going online. One was an expanded regional market that extends outside Jordan (and the added value to the programme of having access to teachers and experiences from different contexts). Increased independence among student teachers was also evident, as they had become less reliant on lecture-based programmes. The need to change rapidly and to constantly evaluate the impact of those changes also meant that trainers had extended their online pedagogical competences significantly and it was felt that "this was one of the main benefits" of the transition to online delivery.

5.5. Malta

Context

Harry was the Director of Studies of a small to medium sized private language school (nine full–time teachers, increasing to 20 in the summer) in Malta. English language courses for adults and juniors are the school's primary activity, but they also engage in teacher education in various ways:

> *In terms of teacher development, and teacher education … we obviously organize a lot of our in our own in–house CPD for our teachers, but occasionally we open those up to teachers in Malta in general. And, particularly in summer, we do a lot of these Erasmus+ teacher education courses. These are language development courses for people who teach other subjects. There are also CLIL methodology courses as well, those happen mostly in summer.*

In normal times, around 200 teachers a year would attend these courses, which were generally led by staff within the school – not full–time trainers but experienced teachers who also took on some training responsibilities from time to time. Harry himself delivered the bulk of the in–house CPD provided for the school's teachers.

Prior to COVID, the teacher education work provided by the school was done in face–to–face mode. For example, Erasmus+ teachers would visit Malta and complete their courses there.

Impact of COVID

One immediate impact of COVID was that the school stopped running its introductory TEFL course: "we used to run TEFL Certificate courses three or four times a year, but those have been discontinued now because the demand has obviously dipped since the pandemic started". Staffing in the school generally had been reduced ("we're very, very short staffed at the moment") and Harry did not have the time to design and run an online version of the course himself.

The shift to online education also had implications for the in–house CPD work that

Harry was responsible for. Teachers were required to complete at least eight hours of CPD a year, four of which were provided internally by the school. These had previously taken the form of face–to–face workshops but were now moved online, though Harry did not feel this required major changes to the content delivered through PowerPoints and handouts:

I don't think there was a massive amount of adaptation necessary. And maybe this is just me being naive, maybe there should have been a lot more adaptation that I needed to think of, but didn't. But small things … for instance, if I want teachers to discuss something in pairs, I know that they can't see the screen that I'm sharing while they're in their breakout rooms. So it's just these little things that you kind of have to plan for in advance … But whereas in a face–to–face context, you kind of just not even give it a second thought, in an online setting you'd have to think about all these little things in advance, I think, 'Oh, ok, for that bit, I'll need to send this document so that they have it so they can share it in their own breakout room'. So it's just little tiny things like this really. Nothing major, to be honest.

Online teacher development was a novel activity for Harry, but he was able to draw on experience acquired during the pandemic of teaching English courses online:

I'd never even taught online before the pandemic, I kind of always shied away from it. I thought it would be awkward and I just I didn't quite like the thought of it. But then obviously we were forced to go online and I was surprised at how easily I took to it actually and how comfortable it all felt.

For him, in fact, adjusting to online delivery was more about learning to use the technology needed than about changes in course content and pedagogy:

Around that time, there was a an explosion of seminars and workshops about how to use Zoom, how to teach online, so I went to quite a few of those. And it didn't really take me long to kind

of grasp the basics … as soon as I got to grips with the technology and how you use it, I was kind of fine after that. I had a good idea of what I needed to do to adapt the [face–to–face] materials … but I didn't really have any major preparations.

To extend the CPD of his teachers, Harry had also introduced development discussions, "where basically once a month in theory, we get together on Zoom. And we pick an element, an aspect of language or teaching. And we basically just discuss it as a group of teachers for an hour". As this additional form of CPD was introduced during the pandemic, it was, as Harry put it, "born into the online era".

His teachers were also able to adjust to doing CPD online quite quickly too; they had all been required to start teaching English courses online and "were already quite comfortable with computers and technology".

The shift to online provision also led to changes in the delivery of the Erasmus+ courses. This form of professional development was attended by European teachers of subjects other than English who wanted to improve their English. Previously, teachers on these courses spent a week or two in Malta, largely during the summer, but during the pandemic this was not possible. When lockdowns were imposed mid–course, "everything just had to go online, pretty much from one day to the next" and teachers attended lessons online via Zoom from their accommodation; where it was known before teachers arrived that courses would be online, then they did not travel to Malta at all and attended via Zoom from home. Some teachers who were forced to study from home after arriving in Malta were not happy;

So their course, basically they were halfway through their course when we had to make the switch to online … and the vast majority of them were very understanding, and realized it wasn't our choice. Many of them were not very happy, though. I remember one, one teacher saying do you expect us to sit in front of a computer for three hours?

Apart from issues beyond the school's control, such as power cuts in Malta and connectivity problems for some teachers, Harry did not

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feel, once again, that moving these English courses for Erasmus+ teachers online created substantial challenges:

> *There weren't any major adaptations. Teachers just continued teaching as they would, but online. Now the way each individual teacher adapted, I'm not quite sure, I guess everyone faced their own issues and challenges. We tried to have regular sort of meetings to check that everyone was keeping up ok with Zoom, and that, you know, if anyone had any issues, they could they could share them or we could try and help. But no, I wouldn't say there were any major adaptations that we had to make.*

One factor that facilitated this rather straightforward transition to online teaching was that courses were based on a coursebook and everyone had access to a pdfs of this ("they were a godsend during the pandemic, especially when we had to make the change so quickly"). Teachers were thus able to continue working with the textbook as they would have in a physical classroom. As already noted, the school's teachers were generally comfortable with computers and technology and were able to master the basics of Zoom quite quickly.

This sense of a rather unproblematic transition to online work also emerged from Harry's accounts of how CLIL courses for teachers were delivered during the pandemic. These courses were typically taken in the afternoons by the same Erasmus+ teachers who did language development in the mornings. CLIL sessions were handled by one specific teacher, who was responsible for developing all the course materials. The course had been running prior to COVID and all the materials were already in place. Delivering it online, then, did not call for major adjustments:

> *I think it was fairly seamless. Because I mean, let's face it, nowadays, even before the pandemic hit, most stuff was being delivered via PowerPoint anyway. So I think there probably would have been some minor adaptations, like how to go about group work and pair work in discussions. But ultimately, I think it was just a case of sharing the screen via Zoom rather than on the interactive whiteboard. Minimal adaptations as far*

> *as I'm aware,*

There was one impact of COVID, though, that Harry was concerned about and which was relevant to both the school's teacher education and teaching work. Social distancing regulations meant that, even when face–to–face teaching resumed (as it was expected to a couple of weeks after we spoke), it would not be possible to have more than five people in a classroom. But class sizes in the school were typically nine, which meant that participants (all of whom were physically in Malta) would take it in turns to study in class or in their accommodation (from where they would take part on Zoom in the physical class). Logistically and technically, Harry expected this to be challenging:

> *We don't really have the technical infrastructure to do this properly. We don't have cameras that follow you around the room. We don't have good enough quality microphones. So the online students can't really hear what the physical students are saying.*

To prepare teachers for these hybrid classes, Harry was in the process of organising some training for them.

Positive Outcomes

The key benefit for Harry of the enforced moved to online delivery was the opportunity for him and his teachers to develop their online teaching skills:

> *I feel a lot more comfortable now. Not only with the technology, but also with the experience of teaching online. I think that's what I'll take away because, like I said, I always shied away from it before the pandemic, and I thought it would be very awkward, but I feel very comfortable now doing it. And I think that's the main thing which I'll take away.*

As for his teachers:

> *I think there's a consensus among teachers that face–to–face teaching is preferable. And we're looking forward to getting back to that. But I would definitely say that, for the majority of teachers now, that they're quite*

comfortable teaching online. And they've kind of settled into it quite nicely. So I think that their takeaway is probably quite similar to mine, that if we need to go back online, or if they have opportunities online in the future, they'll be more prepared for it.

5.6. North Macedonia

Context

The context for this case study is a state university in North Macedonia that prepares pre–service teachers of English through a four–year Bachelor's in English Language and Literature. On this programme, teaching methodology is somewhat marginalised and more emphasis is placed on literature and linguistics. The focus here is on the modules entitled 'ELT Methodology 3' and 'ELT Methodology 4' which are taught in the final two semesters of the programme and involve practical teaching practice (with a focus on primary and secondary contexts respectively). Around 50–60 students (split into four smaller teaching groups) typically take the course. Maria had worked at the university for over 15 years was responsible for the practical component of the courses.

Pre–COVID

Prior to COVID, teaching practice was organised through in–person school visits. In groups of 10–15, student teachers would observe (for 4–5 weeks) lessons taught by school teachers then (for another 8–9 weeks) teach lessons in pairs while their colleagues observed. After each weekly session in schools, student teachers attended classes at university where they discussed their experiences with one another and the lecturer. Assessment was based on their contributions to these discussions, written reflections and their practice teaching. Lecturers had full autonomy for the design and delivery of their courses, and typically went about their business without too much awareness of what colleagues were doing. "We don't speak to each other much, or we didn't before COVID", was how Maria described the situation.

Impact of COVID

From March 2020 onwards North Macedonia experienced a series of lockdowns which meant that education at all levels moved online. The transition happened quite quickly and schools and universities were working online within a couple of weeks. Initially, there was no formal approach within the education system and in schools, according to Maria, "every teacher was doing their own thing, some Facebook, some Viber, not all of them had video conferencing available, I'm not sure they were trained for it". At some point the educational authorities created an online platform to enable teachers to share online teaching practices; teachers were encouraged to record their online lessons and to upload them to the platform.

Methodology 4 had started in February but observations in schools were no longer possible when the lockdown started in March. Maria knew that teachers were worried about the shift to online teaching and decided

It was too stressful for them to have me on their backs when they were not confident with their own new teaching … so we decided to observe classes by proxy, we observed some that I found from the internet, some already recorded classes, we watched them and used a platform, Slack, to discuss the classes that they watched weekly.

Videos of teenagers learning English in state school (as opposed to private) settings were, though, not readily available online, so Maria decided to study the online platform that had been set up locally and to see if any of the lessons uploaded there could be used for student teachers' observations. She was surprised to find that the few lessons that were available consisted of PPT slides which the teacher read through to explain grammar: Maria was "shocked" but student teachers "surprisingly didn't react at all, they thought this is how it should be, so we had an interesting discussion there about our perspectives".

By using this combination of recorded lessons from the internet and locally, Maria managed to deliver Methodology 4 during the first lockdown. It was not possible, though, for the student teachers to do any teaching themselves. The assessment of the adapted course did not change much, and student teachers were still required to submit (on the online platform) weekly written reflections on the lessons they observed and to comment on

at least two contributions by others.

During the first semester of online teaching at the university there was no formal training or support for staff. To explore the situation, Maria and a colleague conducted a study asking staff and students how they were coping with the switch to online education. The results were shared online and picked up by the Dean of the Faculty. A committee (which had funds to spend) was formed to support online learning institutionally and Maria was invited to set it up and lead it. This was a pleasant surprise to her as "previous Deans didn't really care about reading other people's research, let alone acting on it".

The study found that teachers felt under-supported – they wanted to get in touch with colleagues and discuss online teaching and receive training. It was also clear that teacher–student communication was not effective and as a result teacher and students' perspectives were often not aligned. For example, Maria found that "teachers felt that their students really liked online teaching and when we asked the students they didn't really agree with the teachers". In particular, for some lecturers online teaching simply involved sending tasks to students by e-mail, who returned their work in the same way but never received feedback. Students said that they did not feel this was good online teaching; they expected feedback and more real–time interaction.

In response to these findings, various seminars were organised in the Faculty where staff met and had the "opportunity to share perspectives, to meet colleagues, we sometimes don't know who we work with". Only about 25% of the staff attended these sessions, but those who did were very engaged.

Another change stimulated by the study was that students were invited to evaluate every single course they took – the regulations until that point only required this to happen every five years. Students were also invited to describe exceptional online teaching and many submitted wonderful "real–life qualitative stories" which were shared with lecturers.

After the 2020 summer break the new academic and school year resumed and teaching was still online. However, by now "all the schools had access to Teams and all the teachers had to deliver their classes via this platform". Student teachers, however, did not have access (user accounts had to be obtained from the Ministry

of Education) so for Methodology 3 it was not possible to observe real online lessons. Instead, student teachers were asked to work in pairs and to form small groups of learners (for example, from amongst relatives and family friends) who they could do some online practice teaching with. The lessons were (with written consent) recorded and submitted for assessment as part of a portfolio.

Later in the semester, student teachers were granted access to Teams for Methodology 4 it was thus possible for them to observe live online lessons. Maria had contacts with school teachers and chose two "who were particularly passionate" about teaching online. Student teachers joined their Teams lessons on a weekly basis, observed the class, then discussed the lessons online afterwards as a group with Maria:

> *The task was very similar to what they did when it was recorded teaching, the difference being that the teaching was live now … after observing each class we had a session 40–45 minutes to discuss things. We usually met on Zoom and discussed the highlights on what was observed. They still posted their reflections on Slack but I made them shorter so they didn't have to write these essay like things, so things are more manageable for them on a weekly basis.*

Students also worked in pairs and did some actual online teaching with the classes they had been observing.

More generally in the Faculty, Maria felt that in the second year of online teaching more staff were delivering classes interactively and in real time. However, she also felt that while colleagues "might have changed the medium, they might have gone online and did sessions in real time, but some of the students continued to report very monotonous lectures … so I am not sure that things changed drastically".

Positive Outcomes

Reflecting on her experiences during the lockdown, Maria identified several positive outcomes. One was increased collaboration and communication among colleagues:

> *It made the whole experience less solitary because we met up twice a*

month, sometimes three times a month … the same conversations going on, how do you teach, what tools, what do you do with the [students'] switched off cameras … the challenges were very similar … people felt that they were not on their own in this whole thing and that their concerns were shared and that solutions were proposed .. it kind of triggered lots of thinking and curiosity among colleagues.

A second positive outcome was greater attention to staff and student well–being. This was not an issue that had been given much thought in the past, but during the lockdown it became clear that staff and students needed psycho–emotional support. A group of about 15 staff receiving training that focused on maintaining their own mental health and also helping students feel less disillusioned and more empowered during challenging times.

Within the Faculty, too, there was now greater awareness of the value of allowing students to give feedback on their courses.

Attitudes towards assessment had also changed as a result of COVID–19:

Many of my colleagues' opinions about assessment have changed and people have started thinking about alternative ways of checking students' understanding of the content so it's not necessarily to do with them getting students to define things, which is easily copiable from other sources, but we encourage them to think about other ways doing things, writing essays or solving problems … I see that happening a lot more now and for many of my colleagues this is something they are going to be thinking about introducing in their regular exams … that's good because there was such a strong focus on the memorization of stuff and repeating facts and they couldn't do that anymore because students could easily cheat.

In the 2021–22 academic year lecturers have been given the choice of whether to teach online or in–person. Maria said that "some of my colleagues are thinking of doing stuff face–to–face because they feel they are missing this connection with the students and they want to get back to the classroom". But she is also aware of others who are considering hybrid or blended options in which good practices introduced during the lockdown could be retained.

5.7. Spain

Context

Three lecturers from a Faculty of Education at a state Spanish university contributed to this case study. They worked on a pre–service programme for primary school teachers. Graduates are qualified to work as generalist teachers (who can teach all primary subjects), but in their final year students specialise in one subject, including English. Approximately 500 teachers join the primary programme each year and about 75 of them specialise in English language teaching. There are around 30 lecturers in the ELT section. Before the pandemic, teaching at the faculty took place through conventional classes on campus, though Moodle (an open-source Learning Management System) had also been used to share information with students for several years.

Impact of COVID

The lockdown in March 2020 was sudden and severe:

Suddenly there was lockdown, and very dramatically on the 13th of March we were sent home and the college was closed. And from then on, everything was done online … The same happened with schools, there was total lockdown … The children remained at home till the [summer] holidays.

The switch to online teaching at university did not happen straight away, though:

For a few weeks, of course, we were waiting for instructions. We kept in touch with the students by email basically … And then the university provided Blackboard Collaborate … and it was not very easy. But at least that helped.

However, using this platform, "we could not

see the students' faces at the same time, just one or two" and this was seen as a persistent limitation by lecturers used to more interactive forms of teaching. As a result, the university made a paid version of Zoom available and this was appreciated, though staff had to learn how to use this platform quickly:

The first thing we had to learn was how to manage the online platform. I mean, none of us were used to teaching with Zoom, where we would collaborate or any other [application]. So like getting familiar with the platform was the first thing. And I would say that was the most important one, because what I did in class is what I did online. For me it was a challenge, because I like contact with the students, you know, just getting close to them. And if one has, like a question, you can see how they are working. So it can be more individualized. In a way online I didn't know if they were following or they weren't because if they didn't ask the question, there wasn't a way for me to know.

To support staff as they learned about online teaching, the university also provided training:

There were two programmes. It was the general program for every faculty which was interesting to be in with colleagues from physics, economics and everything, all together, trying to go ahead. And it was interesting this course, and also the faculty provided a course of 60 hours. So I think it was really good, it was really practical ... We can deal with real problems, not just with the technical, there's real problems, what are the problems in your classroom? And how to deal with these problems? So it was good.

This support started in April, quite soon after online teaching had started.

As working online became the norm, lecturers varied in how exactly they adapted their courses. One explained the approach she took on her English language course:

So we gave lectures online, we met the students twice a week as we used

to before the pandemic. And it was absolutely different, you know, teaching language online ... But we managed as students had a book to follow ... In our course there is some grammar teaching, so what I did at the beginning, was looking for videos for explanations, and I would upload them onto Moodle first, and then the students would watch them at home and in class we just did exercises. But then the students asked me to change the approach. And they asked me to explain the grammar in class in our online teaching. So I adapted, I changed and I tried to meet students' needs.

She commented further on the reasons for students' request:

I think they were not used to that ... I think that meant extra work for them, because that meant watching the videos before going to class, and then in class the idea was doing exercises, asking questions, etc. But for them, it was easier if I came to class, and I explained, and then together we did the exercises.

As a result, on that particular course in 2020 there was no pre–session video work. For 2021, though, lecturers had access to a development course called 'Just in Time' teaching. This was provided by the university and its goal was to support the delivery of online classes. With insights from this course, the lecturer revisited her original plan to have students do independent pre–class work:

Basically what didn't work last year, it worked a lot this year. So in advance we prepared not only videos explaining grammar but also some Word documents and pdf documents just to meet students' needs ... So in advance, we uploaded them on the Moodle. We gave them one week and after they had read or watched these videos they had to answer a quiz with some questions related to the grammar topic. And then the teachers, before the following lesson, what we did was go through all the quizzes, answers, plus a diagnostic test

we had prepared, where we asked what kind of problems they encountered, if they would like to delve a bit more into a particular subject, etc. We've read that and then, taking into account their answers, we taught the following lesson. And it worked really well, 95% of students said they like the approach.

More generally, though, it was noted that certain student behaviours created challenges during online classes, particularly a reluctance to have their video on:

They were not very keen on that. Sometimes they were shy, sometimes it's because they were combining listening to us with other activities, I imagine … some of them have really been difficult that in that respect.

Teaching practice was an important part of the methodological training student teachers received and this was particularly affected by the pandemic. In 2020, the first lockdown in March hit just after third year students had started their teaching practice phase and students and lecturers had to make alternative arrangements quickly:

Last year, so everything was normal and then suddenly, it was like this lockdown. And there were two weeks, two weeks, like impasse. What are we going to do? The schools, even the schools, what are we going to do? What was interesting is that I had six schools. And so I had six different solutions to this lockdown. So it was not like a real programme from the department or from the education [system]. It was every school had to do what they could. And six schools with six different solutions. The students had to prepare all these materials or these didactic units of everything, depending on the solution that that school had.

Student teachers thus had to complete their teaching practice by observing and delivering (though this did not happen much) online classes depending on the particular digital strategy adopted by the schools they were attached to. In some cases Google Classroom was used, in others it was "just take two photos with mobile, photos of exercises and they send

to the students at home". Some schools "were just sending emails to parents once a week".

in 2021, schools were open and teaching practice took place normally, but supervisors were not able to visit and conduct observations and the tutorial that students attended after their observations each week was held online. One of the lecturers tried to organise some micro teaching during these sessions but it was a challenge:

Traditionally, I would observe them and when there was something new, relevant, special they did in the schools with the children, I would ask them to micro teach in the tutorial for the group to see because it's new activities, different approaches. And this year, I've only succeeded twice or three times. First, because I didn't see them [in school] … And then of course, I suppose they were shy, or maybe because there was no feedback. They were not that confident. So the role of being in class or discussing lessons they are teaching, observing and discussing, you cannot substitute that. The result has not been the same as in previous years … when they share, they don't share as much.

Another aspect of the faculty's work that was disrupted was assessment, particularly formal examinations. For English language courses, the exam consisted of two components, oral and written, and these were both administered online, using BB Collaborate or Moodle. Orals were done individually and the process was not problematic; the written examination, though, was harder to monitor:

The students normally were very honest, and very good and behaved very nicely. And very naturally, we had a few cases of students who cheated, who sent their [exam login] code to someone whose level of English was much higher, someone who did the exams for them, and when they had to do the oral part of the exam, they were very poor, but the written part was excellent, was above average, you know, in some cases better than the teachers.

It was stressed that there were not many such

cases, and lecturers were able to moderate the final results accordingly; the experience, though, did highlight for them some challenges of online assessment.

Looking Ahead

University teaching remained online until April 2021, at which point the faculty started experimenting with a hybrid model with "one session at the college in class face–to–face every two weeks, and the rest would continue to be online". For the new academic year in September 2021, the university's policy was that hybrid teaching would continue. All classes were to be delivered by lecturers who are physically present at the university, but only 50% of the students would attend in person, with the rest following online. Methodology lecturers from the English department were not keen on this model though and were considering alternatives:

> *We have facilities for streaming, but when you want to do tasks in class, when you want to discuss documents in small groups, what the students see from home is not really relevant, it's not good, because they cannot follow the discussions in small groups and so on. So with big groups at the moment, personally, I have one meeting next week, to think of the special approach we will have to develop in order to organize ourselves in a way that when we are at the faculty with half the group, we work with them, while the others are reading documents, fulfilling some tasks, some work, ok, while the others come to the faculty again, we give them work to do and so on. But what we are not planning for them to do is to be watching with streaming, because that for us, is not going to be motivating. … You can't have it because the way we do ELT methodology courses is there is a limited introduction to a topic but very, very quickly, it's hands on, it's discussing tasks, it's singing songs … So we are thinking now of planning lessons in a way that when the 25 out of 50 students come to class, we do a lot of work, you know, interaction, work in small groups, and so on. At home, they'll be doing more reflection on articles.*

Positive Outcomes

While the lecturers were looking forward to working with the student teachers in person again, they recognised that one benefit of the pandemic was that students were requesting tutorials more often:

> *The students would have to come all the way from far away to the faculty for a two hour session. Whereas online, they are at home, it's very comfortable … They would not ask for an individual tutorial. They would not say 'can I come next Tuesday and talk to you about my problems with my unit?'. But because from home, they send an email, can I see you? I've been doing much more individual tutorials. And I think that has been very good for me, because I've had the chance to discuss issues much more … and I would like to stick to individual tutorials online … because that has been for me a great discovery.*

The lecturers identified other positive outcomes of COVID:

> *Yes, it has encouraged everybody to really make this training in new technologies. So now I think my competence in digital learning and everything are good … increased my kind of strategies, and everything since one year ago, so yes, it was good for me. And also, for this kind of meetings, coordination meetings, Everybody comes, online meetings are really easy to everybody. And, yes, I have the time to be together. And it was good. Because before it was 'Oh, on Friday', people living really far away. We did a lot of work in these online meetings and people that usually cannot come to these meeting came and participated.*

Working online had thus not only enhanced their digital teaching competences but also allowed them to participate more fully in meetings.

5.8.Turkey

Context

The context for this case study is a private teacher training institute in Turkey. It is Cambridge–approved and most of its work consists of CELTA and DELTA qualifications[2], with other courses (such as for trainer training) offered more periodically along with some tailored consultancy work. About 120 teachers a year attend courses and the institute employs three full–time and about 10 freelance trainers. Peter, the interviewee, is the co–owner and Director of the institute and had been involved in ELT for over 30 years. Prior to COVID, the institute did occasionally run online sessions but according to Peter "95% of what we did was face to face".

Responding to COVID

In reacting to COVID, the institute had according to Peter "gone through kind of three phases of coping, the first phase was obviously sort of confusion and panic –what are we going to do?". Peter commented on this first phase in more detail:

We've never been through something like this … the main worry was what business is going to come next month? What are we going to do? So one of the things we started doing was obviously brainstorming what we could do. And one of the things that we noticed is that all the publishers in Turkey suddenly started offering free courses, free webinars. And it started to make you think … it's nice that they're doing that, but then it doesn't give you much room to manoeuvre. So we thought we could start offering some online webinars, but if we charge for them, there's a danger that your reputation, people are going to say, 'Oh, look at these people, they're charging money, others are doing it for free'. So we ended up offering some webinars as a package where the first one was free. And if you wanted to do the

others, you would pay something like six pounds or something like that. And we ended up with like, 190 people signing up. And that that sort of got us through a couple of months, just enough to pay the wages.

When the lockdown hit, some courses were already running, "so the first thing we did was to kind of reconfigure what we were already doing … as far as we could we turned the input sessions into online sessions". This was feasible for DELTA courses that were input–based and these were able to continue without interruption "because we use PowerPoints a lot … so that was kind of ready, we just had to spend you know a day or two adapting things". Early in the pandemic, Cambridge also provided rapid guidance which allowed CELTA courses to be delivered online without too much disruption.

It was more problematic, though, for the practical component (Module 2) of the DELTA and some months were required for Cambridge to establish new regulations that would allow teaching practice to happen online:

Eventually they said 'yes, you can have either completely online or hybrid' but they just set very strict rules for how you do assessment online, so it could be a live class, but the observer is on the computer on Zoom somewhere else. The class is live streamed or it could be that the class itself is online and therefore the observer obviously isn't there … once that came in then we were able to think okay, we can we can actually have online courses as well so we can have a course which is completely online [with] people all over the world who before wouldn't have been able to join us … so that became an opportunity for us.

COVID thus gave the institute the chance to widen its market from largely Turkey–based to international and in 2021 it started two DELTA courses where most of the participants were from outside Turkey.

In the new online environment, assessing teaching remotely was something that Peter had come to enjoy:

I started to really enjoy it because, you

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[2]See https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/ for details of the teaching qualifications offered by Cambridge Assessment English.

know, when you're observing in the classroom normally, you've got to be really careful to be unobtrusive. You know, you mustn't make any noise. You shouldn't be coughing or sneezing or moving your desk, you can't really have a drink … And I started to realize as long as the connection is good, and you've done a trial run beforehand, the technical check and you've made sure that the, you know, the camera's in the right place, it felt just like being in the real classroom … So, at the moment when one of our teachers on a course is ready for an observation, where possible I prefer to do a live stream rather than going and sitting in the classroom.

Peter also reflected on the gaps in their competences which he and his trainers had to address when they started moving to online provision:

Using, Zoom, for example … I think we had maybe attended one or two Zoom meetings before. But we hadn't actually worked out what it was, how it worked … And we needed to learn how to use Zoom for training, basically. So that was a learning curve. Obviously, at that time, we didn't know, are we doing it just for a month or two? Or are we just coping? When we realized that probably this is here to stay, then we started taking it a bit more seriously and really checking out what we could do.

This process of trainer development was all managed internally by Peter, working with his team. Adjustments also had to be made to the manner in which sessions were delivered and this is something that evolved over time:

I mentioned sort of the first phase was this sort of confusion … the second phase was then, okay, we've got to do a lot of things online. Here's my PowerPoint presentation that I normally use for a session. And I'm going to transfer that to online, I'm going to look and see, so we do pair work here, we do the breakout rooms. So it was sort of a kind of short term solution, just using the same content, and just finding a way to make

it fit really the online thing. So that was kind of the next stage we went through. Okay, once we realized that this is here to stay, then we started thinking, well, maybe we need to change the content because you know, for online, it's not just a case of we'll do this in the breakout room. Some things don't work that way. So we started then what I think it was the third phase actually maybe adapting our content more to, to online.

In adapting training content and pedagogy to the online environment, Peter took inspiration from an online course provided by Cambridge and which illustrated how things could be done. This allowed him and his trainers to move beyond "a sticking plaster approach" to deeper changes in the way their courses were delivered. For example, initially they attempted to deliver whole courses synchronously ("everything is synchronous. We're just doing it in a different way"), but the example provided by Cambridge made them aware of effective ways in which asynchronous tasks could be set, often supported by videos for teachers to watch in their own time.

Facilitative Conditions

There were, Peter felt, certain conditions that had allowed the institute to cope with the transition to online delivery during the pandemic. One was that, although some teachers were fatigued, there was still sufficient demand for professional development:

I think there were enough teachers who said this is a good opportunity you know, I can't go on a summer holiday, I might as well spend time on training and that has sort of given us the market to still carry on doing things.

The flexibility of the training team was also important:

We're quite lucky that our team is quite flexible. So we're able to sit down and brainstorm, 'what can we do how can we cope?'. Yeah, we didn't sort of panic in the sense of 'Oh my god, what are we going to do?'. You know, we're able to calmly think about it.

A willingness to embrace challenges was also

critical in Peter's view:

You go through a period of maybe suffering and not enjoying it and whatever [but]if you sort of realize … it's here, we have to cope with this, this is the future, how can we adapt, then if you've got a positive mindset to it, and you're flexible, and you've got people who can actually, you know, be creative and come up with ideas.

Support from Cambridge, who regulate much of the institute's work, was also important, and the provision early in the pandemic of a solution for the online delivery of CELTA courses allowed Peter "to cope with the uncertainty over DELTA", which took longer to resolve.

Positive Outcomes

The ability to reach a wider market has already been noted as one benefit of COVID–19 for Peter and his team

Opening up our market in the sense that we can reach people who, you know, in the past would have had to pay a lot of money to come here. Or who couldn't if it's like during the year, they couldn't come here for one day a week.

The knowledge they have gained about working online is also a benefit he thinks will persist:

The learning that we've got of using online training, I think that's something that we're not going to throw away. Even if everybody went back to face to face training, there's still going to be an element of online that we would still build in. So I think what we've learned is, you know, lots of skills that we didn't have before, which are going to stay with us.

In particular, Peter now appreciates the added–value that asynchronous tasks can bring to training courses:

This sort of synchronous asynchronous debate … we tended before to be very traditional in the sense that you know, you come you sit in a room, and we teach

you something, or we do some activities together, we reflect on them, then you go away, but you don't necessarily do anything offline, except for the officially assessed assignments … And I think we realized obviously, there are different modes of learning.

Developments during the pandemic had left Peter feeling positive and given him ideas about how to develop the institute's teacher training work:

I think looking forward, I'm thinking more about having sort of two branches to our work, sort of online and face to face and actually employing a new person so that we've got sort of one person who does all the online stuff… so that's what I'm thinking for the future because I'm thinking the online gives us the opportunity to reach people geographically that we couldn't normally whereas the face to face deals with a domestic audience, so I see that as an opportunity for the future really.

5.9.UK

Context

The context for this case is a well–established private language teaching and teacher training organisation in the UK. Teacher education has always been a core part of its work and is central to its reputation. The organisation has for many years provided various kinds of courses for beginning and practising teachers from a wide range of countries. It also offers tailored teacher development services to organisations on a consultancy basis. Around 10 full–time teacher trainers are employed, supported by others engaged for specific projects, and approximately 500 teachers attend courses each year. Angela, the interviewee for this case, had worked for the organisation for 14 years and was responsible for its teacher training work.

Prior to COVID

Prior to COVID–19, the organisation's core offer for teachers consisted of CELTA and DELTA courses; the former was offered face–to–face while options for the three DELTA modules

varied: Module 1 was face–to–face or online, Module 2 face–to–face or blended and Module 3 was online only. Apart from DELTA, though,

> *most of the work was being done face–to–face. And the main reason for that … was a lack of appetite from senior managers to engage with online learning, a kind of misconception about what potential online learning had. So the last few people at the top were not very keen on developing online provision.*

More specifically, senior management felt that

> *online learning is high volume, low cost business, and we are high quality premium. And other companies have tried to play the online game and lost and we've had one case of one of our senior managers who used to work somewhere where there was a big loss when they tried to launch an online product, so that was a logic applied.*

Despite this lack of interest, Angela was keen to start exploring online options for teacher education work:

> *I was very frustrated with this idea that we can't possibly do more online learning so I started saying [to her team] let's plan anyway, let's start putting together some plans and we'll just fight again and we'll try and build the business case again. So there were plans already in place to upscale our digital provision.*

Impact of COVID

COVID impacted "massively" on the organisation's teacher education activity in 2020. It "killed" plans to relaunch the residential summer campus programme that had been a key professional development activity for several years and "there was absolutely no face–to–face provision at all in the summer". Many teachers and teacher trainers were furloughed and "we really had very few people and very few hours of work to do it all". Nonetheless, the senior management team did not initially see this as a long–term problem: "at the time, the thinking was that this was a temporary glitch. And they were very optimistic about returning to a brick and mortar school". The immediate plan, then, was to lie low for a while.

To sustain the organisation's profile over the summer, a series of very well–attended free webinars was offered, "just to keep our name alive and our reputation still out there". During the summer, COVID restrictions were lifted and it was thus possible to complete some CELTA activity face–to–face. That ended quickly, though, when the lockdown was reimposed. Attitudes in the management also started to change as it became clear that the crisis would be prolonged:

> *And the beautiful thing, and the great, great gift of the pandemic was to help senior leadership understand that online was viable. And that we did need to develop teacher development provision online … so it opened their minds, maybe because there was no other choice, to the possibility that this was something we could do and something viable.*

Angela was thus given the go–ahead to work with her team of four trainers on online teacher development products. This started in September 2020, after six months of little teacher education work apart from the DELTA. The outcome of this work was a package of four 'specialist routes' (for example, teaching English online'). Each route consisted of four modules and each module lasted five–hours and was delivered via three units. The modules progressed from input at the start to application at the end – what Angela described as "a solid, pedagogically sensitive, sensible model, with a with a lot of asynchronous activity". She illustrated it using the example of a course on linguistic mediation:

> *So for example, Module number 1 would be understanding linguistic mediation. Number 2 would be teaching linguistic mediation, number 3 would be creating, adapting and selecting materials and number 4 would be assessing mediation, and each of them has five hours. There's a design that's a little bit flipped at the beginning, in Unit 1, with around two hours of online content and activities quite interactively built on Moodle with Articulate Rise materials. Unit 2 would be a live webinar. And the third unit, which would be the last two hours, would be an implementation task, where we're asking participants to apply*

what they have learned in Units 1 and 2, and it's highly related to the context. That is assessed informally, they're given feedback ... we're not passing or failing anybody. So that's, that's the structure of each five hour mini course.

Teachers were able to register for whole specialist routes (four modules on the same theme), separate modules across specialisms or even a single module.

Reflecting on the process of developing these new online courses, Angela noted that the trainers involved in the design were highly experienced but were not "particularly skilled in online provision" (particularly in designing activities for asynchronous work). Thus they were learning about this as they went along:

So this was a fascinating challenge around building capacity just in time ... we were training the trainers ... helping them understand what the model looked like, what kind of activities, doing all the induction around online.

Angela elaborated on the processes trainers went through in developing their ability to design online teacher education materials:

So we were having weekly meetings with the trainers. So it was very just in time, so we were doing a briefing meeting about what we're working on ... then they went off, it was very collaborative and it's a lovely model really, to work very closely together. So, to give you an example, Unit 1, this is what we aim to achieve, so what content would you need to include here, what kind of activities, we will have a little briefing about the different types of activities that you might want to include there so off they went, they thought about it. They were assigned a buddy, so they kind of spoke to each other about the ideas.

Angela and another senior colleague reviewed the materials trainers produced and provided feedback.

The four new courses were meant to launch in January 2021. However, limited time to market them and what Angela saw as

unrealistic pricing meant that few teachers signed up and the launch was postponed. Pricing was a particular challenge because "you're competing with a lot of free products, because, you know, all the publishing houses now are kind of our competitors". After lengthy discussions with the senior management, Angela persuaded them to reduce the fees by some 50% and the courses were re–advertised.

The first courses ran in March and April 2020. Angela described it as

a very positive experience ... the feedback we got was really positive, the tutors had a very positive first experience of these courses as well. It was very pedagogical for them in the sense that they learned you know, what worked, what worked less well, what changes they could make going forward.

The courses were offered for a second time in May 2020, along with some additional courses that had been developed in the meantime and which, given the design team's initial experiences, were produced more rapidly and with the need for less support.

In terms of how teachers responded to online courses, Angela provided the following analysis:

The feedback is overall really very, very positive. So they found the content, the structure, really, really good ... it's not a very taxing model, if you think about it, it is five hours in five weeks. Yeah, it works really well with a very busy teacher. Particularly the asynchronous units worked really well around their busy lives ... I think the tricky bit sometimes was the webinar, even though we tried to timetable it taking into account where people were in the world .. I think it's this kind of thing, that because people have had this experience of attending webinars ad nauseum, that it's the same to actually attend a webinar and participate and to watch the video later. There was a little bit of that, you know, of people not attending and then wanting to watch the video later, which is a shame given that this is a little bit of a flipped model. The webinar part was meant to be much more interactive. So

there is a loss there.

Teachers also varied in how closely they worked through the activities provided on the course and which were meant to lead them through a structured model of professional development:

I would say many were very able to kind of participate as and when it was needed, so they came in quite early, they did the sort of socialization orientation tasks at the beginning and the forum posts that they did. But there were a few, that's either because they were really busy or because you know, the kind of more maverick type that 'I'll do it in the way I want to', and they didn't quite I would say take as much advantage of the courses as they could have done had they followed that the kind of the progression of the course.

For 2021, there had also been plans to develop an online offer to replace the summer residential courses that the organisation used to run in July and August. It was not possible to organise anything early in July but a sufficient number of teachers had enrolled (mostly from partner organisations outside the UK) to enable plans to go ahead for later in the summer. One challenge for the online summer courses noted by Angela was that "who, realistically, who has been spending 16 months in front of a screen, will want to spend the summer learning in front of a screen?".

Positive Outcomes

Like many commercial providers of teacher training services, the organisation has lost business as a result of COVID. Angela felt, though, that "it was wonderful in many ways". One was that it allowed her team to show that online provision was feasible:

I was able to prove that we could actually design a number of teacher development courses in a short space of time. We're not terribly high experts in online design, we pulled it off, we did a good job. And we can keep doing that. It changed senior management team's mindset about the viability or the need to have online teacher education courses. We're looking forward to developing more. So in that sense, it's amazing.

The attitudes of trainers to working online had also become much more positive:

If you think of March 2019, some of these tutors wouldn't be near an online course, wouldn't touch it with a bargepole. And last week, one of them had a hybrid course and she was saying that it wasn't that difficult at all. Just thinking in 16 months, somebody who's able to handle designing an online course, and teaching in a hybrid setting. Yes, yes. So huge.

6. Discussion

The research questions addressed by this study will now be reviewed in turn.

1. **In response to COVID–19, how did an international sample of face–to–face ELTE providers adapt their courses and programmes?**

To address this question, key elements of ELTE and how far they changed in response to COVID–19 can be considered: overall delivery model (for example, cascade training), course structure, content, methodology (i.e. instructional approach), assessment (where relevant) and teacher educator and trainee[3] support. Based on these criteria, it is clear from the cases discussed here that the adaptation of face–to–face ELTE took place along a continuum. At the more elaborate end of this, as illustrated by, for example, Chile. Jordan and the UK, providers reconfigured their whole delivery model. This typically involved moving from intensive in–person engagement with teachers to longer–term work involving various forms of synchronous and asynchronous activity (the latter was particularly important to minimise the time participants were expected to spend online). New content was also developed (alongside the repackaging of existing material), while teacher educators received targeted support (additional support for trainees, though, was less frequently highlighted in the narratives). Where assessment took place, processes were also adjusted. At the other end of the continuum, illustrated most clearly by Malta, adaptation to online ELTE was a more straightforward process of remote delivery of existing content without

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[3]Trainee will be used here to refer collectively to pre– and in–service teachers.

substantial changes to other aspects of ELTE. Turkey, North Macedonia, India and China were somewhere between these extremes, though they varied in the specific areas of ELTE where most adaptations were evident.

How quickly organisations and individuals had to adapt and how much autonomy they had in doing so varied across cases based on several factors, such as:

- the local or international nature of qualifications offered (for example, private providers delivering Cambridge ELTE qualifications had to adhere to the awarding body's rules for online delivery)

- financial pressure to sustain profile or business, in the case of private providers (who, for example, quickly launched webinar series)

- national regulations regarding the delivery of education during COVID–19 (for example, regarding social distancing)

- the degree of institutional control teacher educators were subject to (for example, in India this was high)

- whether courses were actually in progress when face–to–face education was suspended (this called for quicker adaptations)

- the institutional availability of platforms and tools for online delivery (teacher educators often had to make their own arrangements to access Zoom, for example)

- the competences of teacher educators and the support available to them

- whether moving online was seen as a temporary emergency measure (see Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020 for a comparison of emergency remote teaching and principled online teaching)

- perceptions of the differences between face–to–face and online teaching (where these were seen to be small, adaptations were less extensive).

This last point is particularly interesting. Malta was the case where adaptations to ELTE provision were most modest. But in that context online teaching was not seen to be particularly different to face–to–face work; it was largely a question of communicating the same content remotely by, for example, sharing PowerPoint slides.

Programmes with an element of assessed teaching practice experienced particular challenges in adapting to COVID–19. Where teaching practice was regulated by an external awarding body, providers had to follow its regulations and in the case of Cambridge's Delta Module 2 this meant there was a substantial delay to activity while new procedures were formulated. For university pre–service programmes, teaching practice during COVID–19 was adapted in several ways (for further examples from the UK and Oman respectively see Kidd & Murray, 2020; Osman, 2020):

- where no observation of teaching (face–to–face or online) was possible, teacher educators used existing video material as the basis of discussion

- where online teaching could be observed, arrangements were made with school teachers to give student teachers online access to their lessons

- in one case student teachers were also able to form small groups of online learners (using friends and family) and to practise teaching online with them.

There was also evidence here of the way that assessment procedures had been adapted in response to COVID–19. These included:

- postponing formal examinations altogether

- closely and more loosely monitored online mechanisms for the conduct of written examinations (with, in one case, some concerns about the robustness of the latter)

- a move away from assessment that focused solely on the reproduction of knowledge to include, for example, open–book examinations, problem–solving tasks and essays

- giving students more flexibility during

online assessments, both in terms of time and how they were allowed to submit their work

- remote online assessment of face–to–face practice teaching (for a discussion of emergency virtual observation, see Ó Grádaigh, Connolly, Mac Mahon, Agnew, & Poole, 2021).

Online assessment is an issue that has been discussed for many years in the literature but again, like all aspects of remote learning, it has been the focus of renewed attention during the pandemic (for example, Meccawy, Meccawy, & Alsobhi, 2021; Montenegro-Rueda, Luque-De La Rosa, Sánchez-Serrano, & Fernández-Cerero, 2021), including analyses of threats to its security (for example, Hill, Mason, & Dunn, 2021)[4].

2. What challenges did these providers face in making the transition to online ELTE?

Box 1 summarises the range of challenges that arose as the ELTE providers in this study moved their operations online in response to COVID–19. There were general challenges that affected all participants, as well as those that affected teacher educator and course participants specifically.

Box 1: Challenges in transitioning to online ELT

General

- Interruption to the delivery of courses and teacher education
- Uncertainty, emotional stress and anxiety for all participants during health crisis.

For Teacher Educators

- Limited prior knowledge and experience of online teachin
- Limited time to adapt courses, get access to new tools and platforms and master these
- Covering the syllabus (reduced time/different format)

- Monitoring and assessing student understanding
- Lack of face–to–face interaction with students
- Limited scope for practical sessions online
- Reluctance by trainees to contribute actively during synchronous sessions
- Lack of institutional support strategy
- Learning by doing, largely individually.

For Trainees

- Limited access to resources (internet, devices, materials, space, privacy) at home
- Lack of face–to–face interaction with peers and teacher educators
- Limited prior knowledge and experience of learning online
- Limited digital skills
- Shyness in participating in online work
- Adopting new approaches to learning (more independent study)
- Online fatigue, especially for in–service teachers who were also teaching online.

The challenges for online ELTE created by gaps in teacher educator knowledge are unsurprising. It is well established that teaching online requires an enhanced set of competences (Ní Shé et al., 2019) and prior to the pandemic many educators (as Moorhouse, 2020 notes in reflecting on his own experience) will not have had opportunities to develop these. In relation to students, COVID–19 has also created more awareness of their social conditions and how these are often not conducive to effective online learning (this issue is discussed by Castañeda-Trujillo & Jaime-Osorio, 2021 in the context of pre–service teacher education in Colombia). The cases from India and China here, for example, showed how when undergraduates were suddenly sent or told to stay home they found themselves deprived of many key learning resources they benefited from on campus, including internet connections, libraries and study space. Teacher educators often assumed trainees would find it easy to adapt to online learning and discovering this was not the case was a revelation.

[4]See also https://tinyurl.com/2p8a5baa for a British Council report on secure online assessment in higher education.

What factors facilitated attempts to respond to these challenges?

Looking across the cases presented here, it is possible to identify a number of factors that supported the transition of ELTE to online delivery during COVID–19. These are summarised in Box 2. This is a composite list and the extent to which these occurred varied across cases.

Box 2: Facilitative factors in transitioning to online ELTE

- Informed leadership
- A coordinated institutional strategy
- Collaboration and sharing among teacher educators
- External support and partnerships
- Teacher educator commitment
- Institutional support for teacher educators
- Awareness of trainees' social situations and needs
- Flexibility in the delivery and assessment of programmes
- Reflection on the effectiveness of online delivery processes
- Positive attitudes to the transition to online work.

Systematic support for teacher educators, where this was provided, was a critical factor here in allowing them, with appropriate guidance and opportunities for collaboration, to build confidence and competence in working online. The focus of support for teacher educators and trainees during a crisis such as COVID–19 needs to extend beyond pedagogical matters and also ensure that emotional and mental health needs are addressed (Jones & Kessler, 2020). For example, in some private ELTE contexts, the pandemic will have created uncertainty around teacher educator job security and this will have been a source of stress for which support is needed. Generally, the advice in the extensive literature regarding the kinds of support teachers have needed during the pandemic applies to teacher educators too (see, Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; OECD, 2021). For example, the importance of effective leadership in supporting practitioners during the crisis has been highlighted (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020), while the three principles for supporting teacher effectiveness during COVID–19 noted by Beteille et al. (2020) – focusing on building resilience, instructional competence and technological competence – are also very relevant to teacher educators:

3. To what extent do providers feel that shifting their ELTE work online has led to positive outcomes?

Respondents generally agreed that the enforced move to online delivery had been beneficial for them, colleagues and the organisation in some way. Box 3 summarises the collective range of positive outcomes noted in the cases discussed here. This list indicates that the educational crisis caused by the pandemic has in fact been seen to stimulate positive changes in attitudes, competence, confidence, pedagogical practices, working relationships, awareness of trainees, assessment practices; especially for the private sector, it has also opened up new markets for ELTE. This range of benefits reflects discussions in the literature of COVID–19 as a catalyst for educational change (Zhao, 2020), an issue that has been illustrated through some country–specific analyses (for example, in Singapore and Georgia respectively – Ng, 2021; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). The deeper understanding of students' social situations and perspectives (see also Cutri, Mena, & Whiting, 2020) on learning is an obvious example of a benefit of COVID–19 that has implications for ELTE post–pandemic too.

Box 3: Positive outcomes of transitioning to online ELTE

- Enhanced awareness of the viability of online provision
- Improved teacher educator attitudes, competence and confidence vis–à–vis teaching online
- Improved teacher online competence and confidence
- Increased interaction and collaboration among teacher educators
- Reduced logistical and administrative demands compared to face–to–face ELTE
- New business opportunities
- Access to ELTE for a wider group of trainees
- Greater focus on teacher educator and trainee teacher well–being
- Better understanding of trainees' perspectives and needs
- Introduction of alternative forms of assessment
- Awareness of how online work can be integrated into face–to–face courses.

4. How likely is it that providers will retain elements of online delivery once face–to–face operations are able to resume?

In terms of intention to sustain online ELTE as face–to–face education resumes worldwide, the picture to emerge here was generally positive. The value of face–to–face work was, though, universally acknowledged, and in most cases, then, it was suggested that, moving forward, elements of online ELTE could be usefully integrated with in–person activity to create some form of blended or hybrid course. In India and China, both pre–service programmes subject to tight institutional regulations, teaching had already returned to largely face–to–face mode, though in India the hope was expressed that the new forms of assessment introduced during the pandemic might be adopted more widely. In China, the online resources created during the pandemic remained available to support trainees. Going a step further, in Spain, while it was felt that the practical and hands–on nature of ELT Methodology classes required face–to–face work, the value of online individual tutorials with trainees was recognised as a remote element that could be retained. Stronger intentions to sustain online ELTE were expressed by other providers. The new online ELTE courses developed in the UK were likely to remain a core part of their work even as it became possible to restart face–to–face teacher development courses. In Turkey, too, online ELTE was seen as an exciting opportunity to expand the provider's market and it was envisaged that a co–ordinator responsible solely for online work would be appointed. The clearest future commitment to online ELTE was signalled in Chile. Here, the logistical and financial benefits of operating online nationally meant it was felt that this could become the dominant mode of CPD for teachers, with less frequent face–to–face events built in to provide opportunities for personal interaction and the sharing of experiences.

7. Conclusion

The nine accounts presented here provide insight into the experiences of a diverse range of ELTE providers as they transitioned from face–to–face to online modes of delivery in response to COVID–19. Despite differences in the nature of their programmes, the organisations involved passed through a largely similar set of broad processes, from initial disruption and rapid emergency response to (in many cases, but not all) the development of a more informed strategy over time for delivering ELTE online. There were, though, significant variations in the specifics of each organisation's journey during the pandemic; while some were characterised by strong leadership, collective effort, a focus on trainees and a re–envisioning of ELTE provision, in other cases these features were less evident and teacher educators' efforts to move online unfolded largely independently and with a strong focus on delivering existing syllabi online. And while for some organisations the enforced moved to online delivery was embraced positively and seen to offer lasting potential for the improvement of ELTE, in other cases it remained more a case of finding a way to cope until face–to–face education could resume.

This study has highlighted a range of challenges that arose when ELTE moved online. An awareness and understanding of such challenges enable providers of online ELTE to take pre–emptive steps to minimise the difficulties that teacher educators and trainees experience when working online. The identification here of facilitative factors that supported efforts to move ELTE online is also of value in alerting providers to strategies they can adopt in order to maximise the effectiveness of their online provision.

Finally, all participants in this study were able to identify positive outcomes of their experiences of shifting to online ELTE during the pandemic, even though these experiences were often stressful. An awareness of the viability of online ELTE and the different ways that it can be beneficial to teacher educators, trainees, and organisations more generally should be a source of encouragement to ELTE providers who continue to have reservations about the role that learning online can make to the process of becoming, being and developing as an English language teacher.

As Hattie (2021) notes, 'perhaps the greatest tragedy to come from COVID–related distance learning would be not learning from this experience to improve our teaching when we physically return to classrooms'. It is hoped that the stories shared in this study will contribute not just to more effective online ELTE but to the improvement of ELTE more generally as we move into a post–pandemic era.

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Appendix

Interview Schedule

1. BACKGROUND TO THE INSTITUTION AND ITS TEACHER EDUCATION WORK
    a. Pre-service/in-service
    b. Courses (BA/MA) – topics, length
    c. Teaching practice
    d. Number of students/teachers
    e. Number of staff
    f. Choose ONE area/course to focus on.

2. BEFORE COVID
    a. How were courses taught?
    b. Number of sessions/hours each week for x months
    c. How was assessment done?
    d. Teaching practice?
    e. Any online delivery then?

3. IMPACT OF COVID
    a. What were the restrictions (no f2f teaching?)
    b. Were courses suspended for a while or was there an immediate transition?
    c. Did you have previous experience of teaching online?
    d. What changes did you make to your courses to adjust?
    e. Was it necessary to have these new courses approved or were you allowed to work freely?
    f. What platforms and tools did you use for teaching? Were these provided by the institution?
    g. What challenges did you face? (own online teaching skills?)
    h. Did the institution have particular guidelines for online teaching that you had to follow?
    i. Did teacher educators receive support (e.g. training) from the department/institution?
    j. Were you and colleagues working together on changing courses or did everyone focus on their own courses?
    k. What about the teachers – how did they feel about learning online? Motivation?
    l. Did they receive support from the department/institution?
    m. Did assessment become virtual too? Tell me about that.
    n. Were there any advantages of delivering courses online? Disadvantages?

4. TODAY
    a. What is the situation now in terms of restrictions?
    b. Back to normal or still online delivery?
    c. Once the pandemic is over, will online delivery continue or will everything revert back to the way it was?
    d. Anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of delivering teacher education online during the pandemic?

AQUEDUTO
Association for Quality Education & Training Online