Exploring Chinese Teachers' Reflections on Inter-School Cooperation Chinese Education Project: A Case Study in London

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Abstract

This study explores Chinese teachers' reflections on their participation in the Inter-School Cooperation Chinese Education Project (ISCCEP). It aims to find Chinese teachers' points of view on teaching Chinese in London primary schools and identify the ways in which the ISCCEP project enhanced their professional development. Three semi-structured interviews were used to gain qualitative data from five Chinese teachers. A convenience sample of five participants was selected and three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to collect qualitative data. These data were analyzed using a grounded theory. The results show the participants perceived both positive and negative aspects of the issues related to Chinese teaching there. As part of the reflection, the participants reflected on the training-oriented topics and reviewed teachers' responsibilities and problems teachers encountered. The solution to each problem was also discussed. As regards the enhancement of their professional development, the ISCCEP has provided teachers with great professional development opportunities, such as a diverse work environment, inter-school communication, and a research project. In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical development of Chinese international education and has a positive impact on cultural and educational cooperation between the UK and China.

Keywords :*Reflection, Chinese teachers, Professional development, Inter-School Cooperation Chinese Education Project*

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1. Introduction

Learning Chinese as a second language has been around in Thai and international schools in Bangkok and many parts of Thailand such as in Chiang Mai and Yala (NEA, 2023). Notably, the Chinese government and citizens are committed to fostering amicable relationships and disseminating a deeper understanding of the Chinese language and culture on a global scale (China Daily, 2021). Since 2008, London Banana University (pseudonym) has partnered with Apple University (pseudonym) in Heilongjiang Province, China to establish a Citrus Institute (pseudonym). CI is primarily responsible for the inter-school cooperation Chinese education project（ISCCEP）, which uses a rigorous selection

process to find qualified Chinese language teachers to teach Chinese in London. CI aims to promote language and cultural exchange between China and the UK in education. This project has attracted participation from nearly 30 primary and secondary schools throughout the UK. It includes courses on the Chinese language, culture, history, and health for students at CI. Each year, approximately 30 teachers are selected from China to participate in the project. Most of them are new graduates with no prior international work experience (CITCM, 2023).

Teachers from China are selected and assigned to secondary or primary schools in London. They are primarily responsible for working as Chinese teachers or teacher assistants. Chinese teachers are responsible for the school's Chinese course on their own or in collaboration with other teachers. In their role as Teacher's Assistants, they assist the Chinese teacher in the preparation of lessons. There are approximately three classes in each grade with between 15 and 20 students. Depending on the circumstances, the exact job description will vary. The Chinese teachers, however, have the same rights as other teachers in the school, including the right to take holidays and the right to work no more than 22 hours per week. They are managed in conjunction with the Chinese university, CI, and the work school. The training and assessment of teachers are also conducted simultaneously by them.

Overseas Chinese language education provides practices within the scheme of intercultural communication. As an increasing number of teachers engage in a similar project, various challenges have emerged (Tian, 2021). CI has developed over the years, and some policies are constantly being adjusted, from the selection of teachers to training, to support during the teaching period, to employment after the end of the teaching period. A lot of questions arise in the process as well. The problems led to many research projects including the current study.

Due to the nature of overseas education pursuits such as this one, the researcher has identified three major challenges. The first problem is the differences in learning and teaching experiences. Teaching is challenging for teachers with a background in languages without sufficient pedagogical training and preparation. This inadequacy most likely influences teachers' work, leading to negative evaluations from students and colleagues, thereby resulting in their lowered self-perception (Tian, 2021). Second is the challenge of culture shock. To meet the needs of the Chinese language project, Chinese teachers are required to work in London. Most teachers who work overseas experience culture shock and teachers' intercultural communication skills must be continually practiced to overcome this problem (Deng, 2021). Last, there is a lack of a sense of professional identity. According to Li (2021), a study on the identity status of teachers involved in ISCCEP shows that expatriate teachers who cannot harmonize their identity with their career planning fear that their work will not be long-lasting, which causes them to feel less identified. Given the significance of this educational phenomenon amidst an increasingly interconnected world, a qualitative case study is needed to ascertain the lived experiences of those directly

involved in this educational pursuit. That is, this study aims to extend the edge of knowledge in this otherwise taken-for-granted area.

2. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are two-fold. It attempts to first explore the teachers' reflections on their experiences of teaching Chinese in a primary school in London and to figure out how and to what extent the ISCCEP has developed the teachers' profession in the teaching of Chinese.

3. Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the Chinese teachers' reflections on teaching Chinese to primary students at a school in London?

2. How and to what extent has the inter-school cooperation Chinese education project developed the teachers' profession in teaching Chinese at a primary level in this study?

4. Literature Review

To provide an understanding of the inter-school cooperation Chinese education project and the current state of teacher research, the literature review is included and divided into three sections, ISCCEP, reflection and related studies.

4.1 Inter-school Cooperation Chinese Education Project

Confucius Institutes are non-profit educational institutions. The Confucius Institutes were established to meet overseas demand for Chinese language and culture learning, strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries through Chinese language teaching and related cultural activities, promote sustainable development of their own cultures through good international relations, and contribute to the harmony of the world at large. A primary function of the organization is to provide Chinese language learners in host countries with education, examination, training, and cultural exchange services ('Annual Report on Confucius Institute Studies (2018)', 2019). Specifically, Confucius Institutes meet general and differentiated international Chinese language education needs. Creating and developing Confucius Institutes plays a significant role in promoting and disseminating Chinese language and culture abroad, and contributes considerably to the country's comprehensive strength (Ma, 2021).

Confucius Institute provides general Chinese language education services, such as Chinese language instruction, Chinese language examinations, Chinese education and cultural consultation, and activities involving Chinese and foreign cultures and languages.

Inter-school Cooperation Chinese Education Project (ISCCEP) is a project managed by Confucius Institutes' headquarters. It is intended to select qualified Chinese language teachers to provide service at the Confucius of other countries.

The operation process of ISCCEP includes teacher selection, training, management, evaluation and project support. Teachers for ISCCEP are selected based on the following criteria outlined in the Administrative Measures for the work of Chinese language teachers (Chinese Teachers Management Scheme, 2008.). Mandarin level of Grade 2A or above (There are three levels of grades, A and B. 1A is the highest and 3B is the worst.), and English language proficiency according to the regions, with European, American countries and regions required to reach College English Test Grade 6（Standardized Test of English Proficiency for Chinese University Students (Standardized Test of English Proficiency, 2023.)), Usually, there is a fourth and sixth grade）or equivalent, and Asian, African and Latin American regions are required to reach College English Test Grade 4 or equivalent. A Chinese candidate who meets the requirements of this institute may also apply for the position if they are fluent in the language of the country where they will be working.

There are three important training opportunities in the ISCCEP: pre-service training, orientation and in-service training. The purpose of the pre-service training is to improve the professional quality and teaching level of Chinese teachers and to train and create a large number of qualified Chinese teachers. Usually, CI provides 6 weeks of pre-service teacher training in China. The orientation is an important way of teacher professional development, which, to some extent, helps new teachers to alleviate their sense of anxiety and frustration in teaching, reduce various kinds of discomfort in actual work, and smoothly transition from pre-service to in-services. In-service training is generally scheduled halfway through the program or after the first semester. During the training, teachers share their current work experiences and case studies.

Three organizations manage Chinese language teachers: Chinese schools, Confucius Institutes, and schools abroad. There are two parts to the work of Chinese language teachers: teaching at schools abroad and helping with the activities of the Confucius Institute. The term of office of Chinese language teachers is generally one academic year, and at the end of the term of office, the CLEC will entrust the receiving organization. As a result of a comprehensive assessment of teachers' performance, the managing teacher and the receiving department may recognize those who are found to be in good standing or above (He, 2023).

A variety of materials is provided to Chinese teachers to apply for a visa before they go to work at the Confucius Institute. Visa fees, teaching abroad housing, living allowances, round-trip airfare, and other expenses related to the project are provided by the project. CI also provides psychological counseling services (He, 2023). As part of the project, teachers are provided with the necessary teaching resources and equipment during their tenure.

Furthermore, the program provides teachers with access to a variety of learning platforms. It is recommended that teachers learn from each other among themselves or organize teaching seminars for ten to twenty colleagues. By doing so, teachers can continuously expand their theoretical horizons, improve their practices, reflect on their teaching concepts, and adjust and optimize their teaching methods (Wang, 2015). To ensure the continuous healthy development of the Chinese language project, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued a regulation stating that the program provides employment services.

4.2 The Project of Citrus Institute

Since 2008, Banana University of London (pseudonym) and Apple University of Heilongjiang Province, China (pseudonym) have cooperated to establish Citrus College (pseudonym). CI is mainly responsible for the promotion of the Chinese language and culture in the London area. This includes the organization of university-level collaborative projects, Chinese medicine clinics, various Chinese cultural activities and HSK examinations. The ISCCEP is the main focus. By selecting Chinese teachers and assigning them to different primary and secondary schools in the London area, CI spreads the Chinese language and culture (CITCM, 2023).

After the selection process, teachers are required to attend different training sessions. The project helps with visas and funding to teach in the UK. Teachers may be in charge of a school's Chinese courses on their own or in groups of several. They work as a Chinese teacher or teachers' assistant. Take a primary school class in London as an example: three classes per year, each with 15-20 students. The whole school learns Chinese lessons in grades 1-5. The exact number of students and the number of classes depends on the school. Teachers enjoy the same rights and duties as other teachers in the school where they work. The specific content of the work is determined by the school's arrangement, and the overall teaching time does not exceed 22 hours per week. Teachers are subject to the supervision and evaluation of CI and Apple University China.

The duration of the project is usually 10 months, with a term running from September of the new term to July of the following year. Teachers with outstanding performance may be renewed at their request. Due to the impact of the epidemic, the ISCCEP stopped recruiting Chinese language teachers between 2019-2021, and Chinese language teaching was greatly affected. After resuming operation at the end of 2021, there are 34 Chinese teachers recruited to teach in the UK. During this period, the training and dispatch of teachers is still affected by the epidemic. The pre-service training was changed from offline to online recorded classes for 10 days. Dispatch was delayed from September to December, and the actual time spent on the project was significantly reduced.

4.3 Reflections

Reflection is crucial to teacher development. According to Korthagen et al.,(2001), the reflective model has five stages. There are five stages: action, review of action, becoming aware of essential aspects of the event and experience, creation of alternative methods of action, and trial. The reflective model allows for a deeper level of reflection, allowing the individual to review the problems encountered and compare the current problems with their expectations. The next step for teachers is to review their experiences to become aware of ideal situations, limitations, and core literacy. In this model of teacher reflection, the self, identity, and mission of the teacher are explored as core components of the reflective process (Kawai, 2021).

Many experts and scholars have studied and discussed the connotation, characteristics, implementation process, and means of reflective teaching for theoretical Chinese language teachers from around the world. According to Wu and Ni (2019), reflective teaching refers to teachers' continuous and active reflection on their teaching practices, the theories behind them, and the results of their actions to examine and analyze them, as well as to continuously improve their teaching behavior to increase the reasonableness of their teaching practices. Wang (2015) contends that international Chinese language teachers are self-reflective practitioners, i.e., individuals who are capable of actively reflecting on and reevaluating their values and coordinated relationships with others. Through a wide range of activities, students have the opportunity to practice, reflect on, and verify the theories they have acquired, and through continuous learning, reflecting, evaluating, updating, and improving, they are equipped to effectively handle diverse and complex teaching scenarios, solve specific problems, and improve their professionalism. "The complexity and variability of Chinese language teaching activities allow teachers, as the main body of teaching, to repeat irrational teaching practices based on limited experience or intuition without a conscious sense of reflection and reflective behaviors" (Ye, 2019).

Different experts have different views. A qualified reflective teacher should possess at least the following characteristics: 1. be aware of broader social issues, such as educational ethics. 2. Continually strive to improve oneself. 3. Often take the initiative to evaluate his/her teaching actively and consciously look for problems in teaching, and constantly pursue better ways of improvement to apply to his/her teaching practice. It is both a long-term and continuous process. Professional development can only be achieved through continuous reflection and practice (He, 2019).

4.4 Related Studies

The Confucius Institute was founded less than twenty years ago. It is relatively new to conduct research on the professional development of Chinese language teachers at Confucius Institutes. Due to this, a few more representative studies were chosen after reviewing related studies.

The professional development of Chinese teachers is that Chinese teachers have a sense of independent development based on adequate access to and utilization of external support and resources. Moreover, Wang (2015) argues that Chinese language teaching contexts require teachers to continuously acquire new knowledge and develop their professional skills. Zhong and Zhang (2017) note that little reflection and research have been conducted on the professional development of these teachers "The main factor in the success or failure of teaching lies with the teachers, and an important factor in achieving teaching goals lies with teachers' understanding of professional development. " (Zhong & Zhang, 2017).

For international Chinese language teachers, such lifelong learning includes strengthening their belief in international Chinese language education, continuously updating and enhancing their knowledge of the subjects they teach, continuously improving teaching methods and skills, and improving their ability to work collaboratively with colleagues and peers in the international Chinese language teaching community (Dai et al., 2023). Li (2021) asserts that teachers should take responsibility for their growth and development. Li argues that Chinese teachers are not self-directed in their professional development. Aside from this, Chinese international education in China is still in its infancy, and there is no consensus on the knowledge structure and competence structure that Chinese international teachers should have, and the curriculum system is still being developed.

A teacher's perspective can offer insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the current teaching, the effects of training, and the gains in teachers' professional development from their perspective. Few reflections and studies have been conducted on the professional development of Chinese teachers abroad. Most of the research methods employed by Chinese scholars are based on the normative research paradigm of discourse and experience sharing, which does not provide concrete data or cases.

5. Research Methodology

This section provides the research methodology, which contains its design, population and sample, research instrument, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration.

5.1 Research Design

In this study, a qualitative approach was employed, applying a case study to explore teachers' reflections on teaching Chinese at a primary school in London as well as teachers' professional development. Semi-structured interviews were used to develop theories via grounded theory principles. As a result of the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences were garnered.

A total of three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, targeting three different stages: within one month of the teacher's arrival (2022.1), after the teacher had completed in-service training (2022.4), and after the teacher had completed the project (2022.9). Reflections were analyzed by comparing and contrasting the same participant's reflections at different times and between different participants. Conclusions were eventually identified to answer the research questions.

To enhance reliability and validity, a triangulation approach was used. The analysis involved comparing and contrasting the same participant's reflections at different times, as well as drawing comparisons between different participants. As part of methodological rigor, this triangulation was designed to provide a comprehensive and robust understanding of the research questions. The validity of the study was strengthened by comparing reflections from different periods and different participants and the results demonstrated the same answers.

5.2 Population and Sample

By the time the researcher worked in London, 34 Chinese teachers were employed at different primary and secondary schools. In this context, the researcher planned to conduct research using a convenience sampling method. Five participants were selected based on their willingness and availability, emphasizing the practicality of their participation in the study. The reasons why they participated in the study are threefold. First, they wanted to know the findings of this study so that they could see the reflection of their work. Next, they wanted to use the research results for their future career. Finally, they wanted to learn how to do research in a different atmosphere in London.

Three of them major in Teaching Chinese to Speak Other Languages (TCSOL), one in Subject Teaching (English), and the other in Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI). All of them have obtained teaching certificates issued by the Ministry of Education of China. Among them, only one had not received TCSOL certificates. Their Mandarin levels were 2A for four of them and 1B for one. (The Mandarin Proficiency Test is divided into 123 levels, with two grades AB. 1A is the highest and 3B is the lowest).

Table 1 *Participants' backgrounds*

Participants	Annie	Bella	Chloe	Doris	Ethan
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	28	29	27	25	27
Education	MA	MA	MA	MA in progress	MA in progress
Major	TCSOL	MTI	TCSOL	TCSOL	Subject Teaching (English)
Teaching Certificate	Senior Secondary Schools (Chinese)	Senior Secondary Schools (English)	Senior Secondary Schools (Chinese)	Senior Secondary Schools (Chinese)	Senior Secondary Schools (English)
TCSOL Certificate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Putonghua level	2A	2A	1B	2A	2A
English Level	Better	Skilled	Fair	Better	Skilled
Teaching Experience	2 years and a half online teaching Chinese in China	1 year teaching Chinese in the USA	1 year teaching Chinese in Thailand	Novice with no teaching experience	Novice with no teaching experience

5.3 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary research tool. The use of semi-structured interviews was intentional, aligning with grounded theory principles, which seek to derive theories from empirical data. This approach provided flexibility to explore diverse perspectives while maintaining a standardized framework. It combines predetermined questions with flexibility, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of teachers' reflections. The sequential structure of interviews across project phases enabled a longitudinal exploration of changes in teachers' perspectives, making semi-structured interviews an effective choice for capturing the nature of their experiences. Throughout the nine-month project, three rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted at key junctures: project initiation (2022.1), In-service training (2022.4), and project conclusion (2022.9).

5.4 Instrument: Validity and Dependability

In this section, validity and reliability are explained.

Validity

The IOC (Objective Consistency in Projects) is a metric system established by Rovinelli and Hamilton (1977). Its primary aim is to provide a mathematical expansion model applicable to multidimensional indicators in project development. To ensure the validity of research data, researchers can apply reliability and validity tests to the IOC questionnaire, evaluating the appropriateness between the measured content and the measurement objectives. The calculation of the IOC values involves summing up the scores from each expert and then dividing by the number of experts.

The scoring range of IOC is between -1 and +1. The three item experts are invited to choose one of the three options -1, 0 and +1 as the given mark. The total score of each project must be above 0.67, so that the item can be effective and the item can be consistent with the measurement objective. There were in total 10 the interview questions in this study. The researcher counted the results of IOC experts' assessment, the result is 1. This means that all interview questions are valid.

Dependability

Dependability pertains to the consistency, stability, and dependability of test outcomes. Standardized interviewing procedures and pilot tests are two important steps in ensuring the reliability of an interview study. These two methods help to ensure consistency and accuracy in the interview process (Gray, 2014). Combining these two methods, this study ensured consistency in the interviews, making the data collected more reliable and credible. All interviews were conducted with the researcher, and all interview question

outlines as well as the interview process were identical. The online meeting room interview mode was used for all of them. Before the formal interviews, another Chinese teacher who was also involved in the project was chosen to conduct a pilot test. The pilot test was used to identify possible problems and make adjustments(Cohen et al., 2017).

5.5 Data Collection

All the interviews were conducted by the researcher using a consistent procedure, facilitated through online conferencing. The VooV meeting was authorized by the interviewees for direct recording. The interviews were conducted in Chinese. Transcripts of interviews will be faithfully translated into English by the researcher. The first interview centered on participants' experiences during their first month in London and lasted about 45 minutes. The second interview addressed situations before the completion of in-service training (before April 1, 2022), with a similar duration of about 45 minutes. The third interview delved into post-project completion situations (Sept. 2022), lasting around 90 minutes.

5.6 Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher used a grounded theory, a method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), to analyze interview data from five participants. Each participant went through three interviews, representing different stages of their project involvement.

In terms of open coding, first, the researcher carefully went through the interview data, picking out initial codes without any predetermined categories. As for axial coding, which builds on the initial coding, the researcher organized and connected the identified codes. This step aimed to create a more detailed and structured set of categories based on each participant's story across the three interviews. Concerning selective coding, the researcher focused on finding a central theme or main process for each participant. Iterative Process. the researcher went back and forth during the analysis, refining codes, categories, and the overall framework.

By using a grounded theory, the aim was to uncover patterns and themes directly from what the participants were saying. This approach helped to understand their experiences at different stages of the project. The resulting theoretical framework provides a deep and contextually rich analysis grounded in the participants' own words. It gives valuable insights into how they perceived the project as it unfolded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

5.7 Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the RSU Ethical Review Board (ERB), and a research ethics certificate (COA. No. RSUERB2023-173) was obtained

before data collection commenced. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study and had the opportunity to provide their consent voluntarily.

6. Results and Discussion

Within this section, the researcher offers a summary of the research directions tailored to address two research questions.

6.1 Chinese Teachers' Reflections

The results of this study indicate that participants' reflections on issues related to Chinese teaching were categorized into **seven main areas** including opinions, suggestions and lessons learned. The topics the participants reflected were training-oriented, reviews of teachers' responsibilities, problems teachers encountered in their work and how they resolved them, teachers' adaptation to their work, teachers' perceptions of the requirement to conduct case studies, perceptions of teachers' assessment, and suggestions made by teachers. Among these reflections on training issues, the problems encountered in the workplace and how to solve them confirm previous research. Other reflections are based on the research and are specific to the UK context.

Training was primarily intended to assist teachers in preparing for teaching. Teachers were trained in their professional knowledge as part of the **pre-service training** so that they would be prepared for their work in London. Participants perceived both positive and negative aspects of this training. A positive aspect of the training is that a large amount of expertise can be acquired in a short period. It was also possible to schedule classes according to your convenience. The negative aspect of the online format was the lack of interaction. Here is evidence from the interview (IV):

> *"In my opinion, this online training is very efficient.* It is possible to acquire specialized knowledge within a short period. Moreover, you are free to schedule the class time on your own. Even though there is no offline experience, it is preferable to attend the training at home for those who do not wish to socialize. A relaxed atmosphere is created throughout the training, there is no interactive questioning" (Annie, IV 1)

A major objective of the **orientation** was to assist teachers in integrating quickly into CI and to gain a greater understanding of British schools, students, and so on. According to the analysis, teachers were very satisfied with the effectiveness of the orientation.

> "This was a very effective icebreaker activity. In this way, I was able to become familiar with the CI quickly and integrate into the new team. I

learned a lot about working in the UK. Increased the sense of belonging."(Annie, IV 1)

The purpose of the **in-service training** was to assist teachers with their recent teaching problems and to provide a forum for them to exchange ideas for professional development. According to the study, teachers have a negative attitude toward in-service training. In general, teachers found the training to be rewarding, but the online meetings and the large number of classes scheduled on one day made it difficult for them to concentrate.

> "There is only one day of in-service training, but many courses are offered. Generally, *I find it effective, although the short duration of the training makes it difficult for teachers to concentrate.*" (Bella, IV 2)

As a result of COVID-19, the format of pre-service and in-service training was changed to online. A significant impact was made on the arrangement of online training by teachers' perceptions during the training process. Training recommendations include suggestions such as elective courses for the content of the training to facilitate the training process more efficiently.

According to the study, **teachers' responsibilities** in London primary schools are primarily composed of Chinese language teachers and teacher assistants. In some schools, teachers are required to serve as both Chinese teachers and teacher assistants. It is also the responsibility of some teachers to manage the Chinese club at the school. There will be no more than 20 hours of teaching per week. Classes and teaching materials vary based on the school's needs. Here is evidence from the interview:

> "I teach Chinese in a primary school in London and Along with teaching, I'm also a teaching assistant for the other teachers. There are three Chinese teachers in the same grade, we are all from this project. I teach all grades except 1 and 3. There is no textbook for the Chinese class. The teachers need to negotiate and modify the British syllabus. The students must also take the YCT exams, so we prepare for them as well." (Bella, IV 1)

In reflecting on the **problems at work,** the study found that problems are constantly being created and solved. In the second interview, teachers discussed problems related to working with Chinese teachers, kindergarten teaching, special needs students, and online classroom management and parent communication. The teachers identified problems and attempted to resolve them. During the final interviews, some teachers were successful in resolving previous problems and new problems arose. Communication problems with students and tiered instruction are examples of new problems. Additionally, teachers were able to look at problems objectively and accept them as they arose, which led to new

perspectives on the problems that were not solved the previous time. Chinese teachers working in the UK are likely to encounter these types of problems.

For Annie, the most important issue is the cooperation with the Chinese teacher.

"Unfortunately, the Chinese teacher did not communicate with me in advance and informed me of the class at very short notice. I was required to give the students the culture class temporarily. It seems irresponsible to me to do this to the students. There is a lack of cooperation between teachers and a lack of effective communication." (Annie, IV 2)

There is a problem with Teacher Bella's approach to teaching kindergarten. Because they are younger, the students do not cooperate in the classroom. An excerpt is provided below:

"I found it is not easy for me to teach kindergarten. For me, it is the first time, regardless of how enthusiastic the teacher is. But the students were too young to interact. British school education adopts a non-forceful attitude towards children who do not want to talk and emphasizes encouragement."(Bella, IV 2)

Chloe encounters difficulties with children with special needs students. Managing a classroom with special needs children poses some challenges. Here is a detailed description:

"It is common for children with special needs to be enrolled in classes taught in the UK. A special teacher usually accompanies them to class. However, two little boys do not.

A child in reception was playing with Lego in Chinese class and occasionally participating in class activities. Attacks on the teacher occasionally are difficult to control. A boy in the nursery is more interested in attention and makes a mess in class, attacking other children for playing, shitting his pants, or whatever else. Unable to concentrate and unfocused." (Chloe, IV 2)

As a Teaching Assistant, Doris has not had the opportunity to teach. For her, it was a very disappointing experience.

"The majority of my work is as a teaching assistant at the primary school. Providing oral and reading training to the teacher, teaching students pronunciation, and selecting appropriate learning materials. I am also responsible for editing projects, recording students' listening materials, and

selecting reading materials for students. There was a bit of disappointment
for me that I didn't get to teach a class." (Doris, IV 2)

Ethan teaches online classes at a school affected by the pandemic. Due to the young age of the students, classroom management is very challenging. Communication with parents regarding school arrangements is also very challenging. Here are the main points of the interview:

"To begin with, I would like to discuss classroom management. I
take online classes and the students are only four or five years old.
Classroom management is very difficult. Also, it's my responsibility to
arrange my teaching. But it is difficult to communicate with parents
frequently." (Ethan, IV 2)

The study indicated that the main problem with **adapting to work** was communication problems. They all considered themselves well-adjusted. The teachers perceive themselves to have a good understanding of the job content and to be competent in their position. On reflection, however, two teachers indicated that they needed more time or support from others because of the level of English they speak and the way they communicate with their leaders and students. Below is an example in more detail:

"I respect school rules and regulations, and I can communicate well
with line managers and other teachers to resolve any problems we meet.
Sometimes it may take more time to understand other people's perspectives
and empathize with them." (Chloe, IV 3)

CI management included the monthly reflection o**n international Chinese language teaching cases**. As part of the project, teachers were asked to reflect and record one case per month to become more reflective and improve their teaching skills. It was recognized by participants in the study that teaching reflection is effective. There were some suggestions regarding the format and requirements for reflection. As an example, there should be no limit to the number of words or format and it is not mandatory to reflect every month on the teacher's experience. Below is a detailed explanation of the evidence:

"It is important to promote self-reflection among teachers who work
in complex intercultural workplace environments. It is a good way to reflect
and summarize experiences to improve oneself. Teachers can store more
cases for subsequent research, and they can learn from one another and their
colleagues' cases. Promotes growth." (Annie, IV 2)

In terms of **teachers' evaluations**, the study found that there was a large gap between the teachers' performance and their self-perceptions. Through a marking scheme, teachers were assessed in ten quantitative areas by the school line manager. Using the same

criteria, the two teachers' self-assessments differed significantly. Their perception was that the school did not know what they did and that the scoring was subjective. The scoring system was viewed as more objective by other teachers. For example:

> "87/100, I am satisfied. I believe that this is a more objective and reasonable response." (Ethan, IV 3)

Based on the final **common** of their participation in the project, participants reported that the project provided a unique opportunity for Chinese teachers to work abroad. With only nine months, the project was limited by the impact of the epidemic, etc., and the experience was not in-depth. The following evidence has been gathered:

> "Provide students with the opportunity to work and live in the UK. Provides me with the opportunity to experience the country of my second language. Learning about overseas teaching experience is a great complement to a career in the teaching profession." (Bella, IV 3)

> " This project isn't stable. There's a problem with visas expiring for our teachers. It was short-term because of the epidemic. There's not much depth to the experience." (Ethan, IV 3)

There were several **suggestions** for the project, including mentioned suggestions for training as well as suggestions for pedagogical support. Hopefully, the project will provide more teaching materials, syllabuses, or teaching resources to assist teachers in their teaching.

> "The number of training opportunities is greater. The content of the training is homogeneous and does not reflect the current state of technology. There is no change in the basic framework, and I hope to add more specific themes. The training form becomes mandatory and optional. Teachers should be allowed to make their own decisions based on their circumstances. If a teacher has mastered Spanish or another language, they are not required to learn it as a requirement." (Doris, IV 3)

In general, teachers reflected on these seven points in their reflections on teaching the Chinese language. Both positive and negative reflections were expressed regarding teaching-related issues. The teachers also provided suggestions for the project. The reflections also included the teachers' gains and professional development, which are summarized below in response to the second research question.

6.2 Ways to Professional Development

According to the study, There are seven ways in which the project has increased career development were identified by comparing the motivation of participation and the gains made in the workplace and professional development. Previous studies have identified training, learning from teaching, organizing Chinese language activities, and providing diverse working environments as developing methods. This study explores international Chinese language teaching, inter-school exchanges, and dissertation research.

Professional development is primarily concerned with the acquisition of professional knowledge and the development of teaching skills. As a result of the project, teachers received the most rapid and comprehensive enhancement of their knowledge. Teachers viewed the **training** as an important foundation for the professional development brought about by the project. Different skill enhancements were provided to teachers at different times during the three training sessions. Here is the evidence from the interview:

> "For me, training is the most effective way to improve. As I am not a Chinese teaching major, there is much room for improvement in my professional knowledge. The training made up for my shortcomings to the greatest extent. I gained a lot." (Ethan, IV 3）

As Teachers carry out their **responsibilities,** they are constantly confronted with problems and are required to solve them. Their professional skills were enhanced through practical training on topics such as classroom management and the handling of special needs children. Teachers can improve their teaching skills, intercultural communication skills, and other professional skills through their professional development activities.

> "The project allowed me to go to a British primary school and improve my teaching skills by teaching and observing as a teaching assistant. Understood the management method of British schools. Improved my teaching skills by giving feedback on each lesson. Gained teaching experience and developed professional skills." (Bella, IV 3）

Furthermore, by **organizing cultural activities** related to the Chinese language, teachers can improve their organizational and coordination skills as well as develop their professional skills.

> "There are many activities about Chinese in my school. I'm also in charge of the school's Chinese club, so I have to organize a lot of Chinese-related activities. Through these activities, I feel that my organizational skills are improving" (Chloe, IV 3)

Through the use of case reflections, teachers are required to complete monthly reflections on **international Chinese language teaching cases**. The teachers keep a record of the problems they encounter in teaching and learn from one another. Through continuous reflection and learning from others' experiences, teachers develop their teaching skills and advance their careers.

"I think monthly reflection should also be a way to improve. novice teachers, including me, lack a sense of reflection. Mandatory reflection helps me to develop a reflective habit and improve my professionalism." (Bella, IV 3)

The project promotes intercultural communication skills by providing teachers with **a diverse working environment.** Teachers can broaden their international perspectives by working in different cultures. Personalities become more confident when they receive an encouraging education. Here is the evidence from the interview:

"The diversity of students and teachers in the school has improved my interpersonal and communication skills. Having the praise of my colleagues and students at school has strengthened my sense of self-acceptance." (Annie, IV 3)

CI Teachers' Network provides teachers with the opportunity to observe and interact with Chinese teachers in other schools. The **inter-school community** gives Chinese teachers a deeper understanding of Chinese teaching in the region.

"During the project, I met many Chinese teachers teaching in different schools. I gained a lot from talking to these teachers and observing them, and I got a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese language education in the UK" (Annie, IV 2).

Last but not least, the project offers opportunities for **teacher researchers**. While participating in the project, two teachers were studying at the postgraduate level. Based on their experience with UK projects, they collected and analyzed data locally. In addition to enhancing the teachers' research capacity, this also contributes to research in Chinese language teaching or related fields, thus providing a greater range of data.

"I am also a researcher in academic research as a graduate student. While working on the project, I conducted research at the same time. Data collection. In the future, contribute to the development of related fields." (Doris, IV 2)

"I'm working on my graduation thesis. I'm also doing more research this year. This project allowed me to do that. Learn how to do scientific research." (Ethan, IV 3)

To summarize, the project offers at least seven ways for teachers to develop their professional skills. Among these ways, international cases of Chinese language teaching, inter-school community, and thesis research have been found to contribute to the understanding of Chinese language teacher development. In contrast to other approaches that are common models of teacher development, these three approaches are unique to the CI context in the UK. As part of the International Chinese Teaching Cases, teachers reflect on building a library of international Chinese teaching cases for exchange and enhancement by all teachers within the institution monthly. There are approximately 20 primary and secondary schools in London participating in the ISCCEP. Each school has 1-3 Chinese teachers. The CI offers teachers opportunities for school-level exchange and enhances their competencies through observation of other schools in the same region. CI Chinese teachers who are studying for master's degrees are more likely to work as researchers, and participating in the project as an internship not only enriches their teaching experience but also enriches their knowledge of teaching. It is a way for these teachers to improve their skills by completing their academic papers during the project.

7. Conclusion

As a result of the analysis of the data, teachers reflected on seven areas: teacher training, teacher responsibilities, problems at work, work adaptation, international Chinese language education cases, teacher evaluation, and comments and suggestions. The project would provide teachers with the opportunity to improve in at least seven areas of their professional development. Training, teaching and learning, organizing Chinese language activities, and providing a diverse working environment are common development ways for teachers working overseas. As part of this study, international Chinese language education, inter-school community, and thesis research are viewed as unique ways within the context of CI.

This research has explored the experiences and reflections of Chinese teachers engaged in ISCCEP in London. In addition to providing a holistic understanding of the complexities involved in teaching Chinese language and culture in primary schools in London, this study provides insights into how Chinese teachers develop their professional skills, the so-called lived experiences. International experiences are enhancing teachers' teaching skills, language proficiency, and pedagogical knowledge. ISCCEP can serve as a platform for educators to develop.

8. Limitation and Recommendation

Data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews, despite the incorporation of triangulation strategies for enhanced reliability. It may be constraining to limit the scope and depth of the findings by relying solely on interviews. Future research studies may consider diversifying methods of data collection to provide a more comprehensive portrayal of Chinese teachers' experiences within the ISCCEP

There are three groups of people addressed in this section: teachers, Citrus Institutes (pseudonym) and future researchers. This project has provided teachers with several opportunities for professional development. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the resources provided by the project for professional development. Teachers can improve their professionalism by reviewing previous teaching experiences. As a result of this study, the participants made recommendations for ISCCEP. Provide training on current and popular topics. There was a request for pedagogical support in the form of teaching resources, such as textbooks or syllabuses.

Based on the limitations of this study, three recommendations are made for future researchers. First, research instruments should be increased and multiple data collection methods should be used to ensure valid and reliable data. The second is that researchers can use mixed methods. In addition, comparisons across countries or regions could be included, or the development of Chinese teachers could be tracked over time.

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