Continuous professional development: Assessing teachers' experiences with the cascading training model

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Abstract

Continuous professional development (CPD) is integral in educational reform; developing and enhancing teachers’ pedagogical skills and knowledge. In Malaysia, the cascade training model is often preferred for CPD programmes in public secondary schools. This may be due to cost effectiveness and reach, where many teachers can be trained in a short timeframe. Critics of the cascade model of training tend however, point to a risk of knowledge being diluted as it is transferred from the trainers to the attendees and then to teachers in schools. This paper focuses on documenting the experiences of Malaysian secondary school English teachers attending school-based assessment (SBA) CPD training courses using the cascade training model. Adopting a qualitative research approach, through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, data was collected from 14 English teachers from 14 public secondary schools. The findings indicate that there were mixed experiences of teachers attending cascade training programs and that of subsequent trainings that were conducted by attendees of the programmes. These experiences were affected largely by the quality of the training programme (i.e. design of program curriculum and materials), trainer quality, participants selected, and follow up support afforded to participants. This paper culminates with recommendations for further CPD improvements.

Keywords: cascade training model; continuous professional development; English language teaching; school-based assessment

The education system in Malaysia has been undergoing significant transformations in recent years to meet the needs of the 21st-century learner. As a result, the demands on teachers are greater than ever, necessitating continuous professional development (CPD) to keep pace with new educational theories, pedagogical techniques, and technology. Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews teachers from across two local education districts of Kuching and Samarahan in the state of Sarawak, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of the cascade model in facilitating CPD of the implementation of School-based Assessment (SBA) in the state.

While the cascade model has been studied and found popular in various contexts for its cost-effectiveness and ability to train many teachers quickly, there is a lack of research specifically targeting its application and effectiveness in East Malaysia and in particular, Sarawak. Furthermore, an extensive search of the literature yielded no recent findings on the effectiveness on the SBA training. The most recent and extensive research on this came from Talib et al. (2014) of 400 teachers in the state of Johor, where she found that only 50 percent of her participants felt that they were confident in implementing school-based assessment practices. The teachers highlighted that there was insufficient time for training, not enough opportunities to conduct practical training, and that the trainers themselves were not adequately versed in school-based assessment practices. Another study by Nair et al. (2014) indicated a need for teamwork and collaboration among teachers to be improved as they faced a number of issues such as time constraints, lack of effective materials and methodologies and facilities.

CPD is a cornerstone for enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Professional development encompasses activities ranging from initial training to various continuous training initiatives. Hargreaves (2010) as cited in Ifanti (2011), emphasizes the significance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in assisting teachers to navigate the ever-changing landscape of educational demands. Research has shown that CPD helps in equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to changing curricula, technologies, and methodologies (Alene & Prasadh, 2019). Teachers play a critical role in influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2009, cited in Pang & Wray, 2017). A recent analysis by Razali et al. (2021) revealed that, while many teachers give detailed feedback on student essays, several others rely heavily on generic marking guidelines. Additionally, there's a noticeable gap in offering constructive suggestions or setting clear objectives for student improvement, indicating potential shortcomings in teacher training and development.
Innovative teaching methods require constant refinement and deep commitment from educators. To evolve these methods effectively, teachers need comprehensive guidance and support. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is fundamental for improving education. Khan et al. (2019) found that many pre-service teachers still prioritize grades over the learning journey in the School-Based Assessment (SBA) context. The persistence of this exam-centric mindset, even after years of introducing English language SBAs, indicates the need for enhanced training for both new and experienced teachers. This overall sentiment underscores the vital link between transformative education and strong CPD initiatives. Thus, it is important that teachers receive CPD training to maintain and improve their pedagogical practices.

There are a number of CPD models, as highlighted by Kennedy (2005), i.e., the training model, the award-bearing model, the deficit model, and the cascade model. Each of these addresses’ different facets of teacher development and quality assurance. This paper focuses on the cascade model, which is particularly favoured for CPD in Malaysia due to its cost-effectiveness and the ability to reach many teachers in a short timeframe (Pang & Wray, 2017). The model has advantages related to cost and speed (Bett, 2016; Dichaba & Mokhele, 2017; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021). This explains their widespread adoption in developing countries with burgeoning educator populations (Bett, 2016; Hayes, 2000; Perry & Bevins, 2018). However, the cascade model is not without drawbacks. It is prone to the dilution of content and possible misinterpretation as the training trickles down (Hayes, 2000; Fiske & Ladd, 2014, cited in Dichaba & Mokhele, 2017). As Hayes (2000) would put it, “the cascade is more often reduced to a trickle by the time it reaches the classroom teacher, on whom the success of curricular change depends” (p. 135).

In Malaysia, the cascading training model is frequently adopted for CPD initiatives, especially in the realm of School-Based Assessment (SBA). This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of Malaysian secondary school English teachers who have participated in CPD courses that employ the cascade training model for School-Based Assessments. The School-Based Assessment (SBA) system in Malaysia was introduced as an integral part of educational reform efforts to shift from centralized examination-heavy practices towards more holistic, continuous assessment practices. The primary aim of SBA is to provide a broader perspective on students’ capabilities, spanning cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This system emerged as a countermeasure to the prevalent exam-oriented pressure, promoting learner-centric education (Ministry of Education, 2013). With SBA, teachers have the prerogative to design, conduct, and evaluate student tasks, granting them autonomy to employ methods most congruent with their students’ needs. In cognizance of the pivotal shift represented by the SBA, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has proactively facilitated teacher training and resource provisioning, primarily via CPD initiatives, workshops, and prescriptive guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2013).
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is crucial for enhancing teachers' instructional techniques as poor CPD training could potentially lead to a decline in student proficiency standards. Without adequate training and proficiency, teachers cannot excel in teaching English. Singh et al. (2021) delved into in-service teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned School-Based Assessment (SBA). While these teachers were acquainted with various assessment methodologies, they faced obstacles in actual application, ranging from time restrictions and resource shortages to mixed reactions from students and parents. This aligns with Baksh et al.'s (2016) discovery of students' mixed feelings about assessment techniques, specifically the contrast between external exams and SBA. They noted a possible discord between the Ministry of Education's desired assessment approach and the realities students face. The challenges, including insufficient resources and limited time, hindered SBA's full potential and perpetuated an examination-focused mindset in students. Khan et.al’s (2016) study also indicated that sampled students were equally pessimistic over external examinations and SBA.

The Malaysian National Education Philosophy and Policy emphasizes the importance of CPD, incorporating it into In-Service Training (INSET) programs led by the Teacher Education Division under the Ministry of Education (MOE). These programs are especially vital for teachers handling critical subjects such as English, the focus of this paper. However, several challenges persist, including issues related to resource allocation and disparities between urban and rural areas (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021).

Teacher perceptions of CPD, and more specifically, the cascade model, are varied. Some find the incorporation of assessments in the training too demanding, while others view it as a method for identifying their needs (Pang & Wray, 2016; Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013). The variation in teacher experiences and perceptions suggests that the effectiveness of the cascade model may hinge on its implementation, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding.

**METHOD**

In the Kuching and Samarahan districts, there are 30 public national secondary schools (SMK) with Kuching having 21 and Samarahan 9. Upon receiving permission from the respective principals of these schools, the researcher initiated the recruitment process. Through each principal's assistance, an invitation was extended to one English teacher from each of the 30 SMK schools to be potential participants in the study. Before the study's commencement, the researcher distributed participant information sheets to the teachers, who were identified and recommended by their respective principals.

The eligibility criteria for teacher participants were clearly outlined. Primarily, only those teachers who had been instructing students aged 13-15 in Form 1-3 for a period exceeding 4 years were considered suitable for this research. This stipulation was rooted in the fact that the School-Based
Assessment (SBA) is specifically implemented in these lower secondary forms and was fully integrated into the curriculum in 2015. Given that a portion of this study demanded a comparative analysis between SBA and its predecessor, it was vital for the participants to possess firsthand knowledge of the former evaluative method, the Lower Secondary Assessment, also known as Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR).

Out of the 30 targeted schools, a total of 16 teachers expressed their willingness to participate. However, a unique scenario emerged wherein two teachers from the same institution showed interest in being a part of the research. To maintain an equitable representation and avoid bias, the researcher decided to interview only one teacher from such schools. Table 1 indicates the participants’ demographics.

Table 1. Interviewee’s Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Years of ELT Experience</th>
<th>Positions Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>4 - 8</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>46 - 50</td>
<td>24 - 28</td>
<td>HOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>41 - 45</td>
<td>14 - 18</td>
<td>HOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>51 - 55</td>
<td>24 - 28</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>31 - 35</td>
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<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>41 - 45</td>
<td>19 - 23</td>
<td>HOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>Kuching</td>
<td>51 - 55</td>
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<td>HOE</td>
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<tr>
<td>T11</td>
<td>Samarahan</td>
<td>46 - 50</td>
<td>24 - 28</td>
<td>HOE</td>
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<td>T12</td>
<td>Samarahan</td>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>9 - 13</td>
<td>ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>T13</td>
<td>Samarahan</td>
<td>51 - 55</td>
<td>24 - 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>T14</td>
<td>Samarahan</td>
<td>41 - 45</td>
<td>14 - 18</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ET – English Teacher, HOE – Head of English Language Subject

A semi-structured interview research method was used to collect the data in this study. Semi-structured interviews, characterized by pre-determined questions, offer flexibility in their order based on the interviewer’s discretion (Robson, 2016). Such interviews permit the interviewer to tailor the phrasing of questions to fit the interviewee’s specific context, and also offer the flexibility to skip or introduce additional questions based on the conversation. (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, they provide the researcher an opportunity to explore deeper insights, delve into compelling responses, and understand underlying motivations, a depth unachievable with standard questionnaires (Robson, 2016).
To ensure the study's validity, the researcher utilized validation techniques from Cresswell and Poth’s (2018) recommendations. Part of this process involved clearly defining open-ended research questions focused on the central phenomenon: the cascade CPD training of SBA. The interview schedule’s validation involved triangulating multiple data sources, including an extensive literature review on SBA implementation in the Malaysian context. Feedback on the draft interview questions was sought from participants, senior teachers, principals, and academicians to ensure credibility and relevance. Based on their input, the questions were refined before conducting the interviews.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions, designed to elicit detailed and comprehensive responses from participants. The interview began by delving into the teachers’ personal backgrounds and inquiring about the frequency of their attendance at SBA training sessions. It further explored their experiences with both in-house and centralized training methodologies. A pivotal aspect of the interview sought to understand teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the cascaded training model currently in use. Moreover, teachers were asked to define what they regarded as "effective training" and were encouraged to provide suggestions for further refining and improving SBA training initiatives for their peers.

Finally, the "outcomes" section serves to capture teachers’ overarching views on the SBA’s implementation. This part encourages a self-reflective evaluation of teachers’ perceived skillset and their competency in conducting SBA. It also examines the views and perceptions of various stakeholders within the teachers’ school context regarding SBA. Importantly, this section captures the perceived student opinions on SBA implementation, the level of support received, and the overall administration, coordination, and monitoring of the SBA implementation at their respective schools. Further, teachers are prompted to discuss challenges they might have encountered during SBA’s integration and to suggest potential areas of improvement to bolster the efficacy of the SBA policy implementation.

Individual interviews were conducted, where the researcher voice recorded the interview and jotted down key points from the interviewees and personal insights, in line with Creswell's (2002) concept of grasping the general sense of data. After transcribing, interviewees received their respective transcriptions for validation, enabling them to confirm, clarify, or amend their statements, following the approach of Lincoln and Guba (1994). After this member checking phase, data was segmented into broad themes manually. Miles, Huberman and Saladana (2019) classify codes into three types: descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes, each offering varying depths of understanding. Initial categorization of codes was conducted. Subsequently, based on the research questions, further sorting was conducted, resulting in descriptions that illuminated the interview analysis themes. Thematic analysis was employed as a tool to dissect and understand the transcribed interview data. This method
allowed for the identification and analysis of patterns or themes within the data. By integrating the systematic coding methods suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saladana (2019) with the structure of thematic analysis, the researcher was able to derive rich and detailed insights from the interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives on the cascade CPD training of SBA.

**FINDINGS**

In Malaysia, CPD training is typically cascaded between three levels, i.e., the national level, to state level and lastly to school level (Chan et al., 2006). National level and state level CPD trainings are considered centralised training while school level is considered as in-house training. Centralised training refers to a structured, formalized training session where teachers from various schools convene at a central location to receive instruction from designated experts or "master trainers." Participants usually are the head of the English language subject who are experienced teachers or a teacher who has been nominated by the headmaster to attend. After the training is completed, the teacher who attended is expected to return to their schools and provide further in-house training to all of the teachers in their respective schools.

In-house training, within the Malaysian context of the cascaded model, refers to subsequent training sessions held within individual schools, led by teachers who had previously attended the centralised training. The intention is for these educators to cascade or relay the knowledge and skills they acquired from the centralized sessions to their colleagues. These sessions can vary in length, depth, and effectiveness, often contingent on the teacher-trainer's comprehension of the content, their pedagogical skills, and the engagement level of the attendees.

**The Duality of Training Experience: Centralized Vs. In-House in the Cascaded Model**

The first theme identified in this study was the duality of the training experience, between centralised and in-house training. Interviewees found that the centralised training was more effective as the trainer engaged in the session had a higher level of understanding of the SBA policy and were highly engaged during the session. One teacher explains:

"When he went in to train, he was able to get the teachers to understand him. He did not just ‘regurgitate’ it out." – T13

This excerpt underscores the importance of engaging training sessions, fostering understanding while keeping them lively. The teacher also highlights the importance of synthesizing the information and making the information easily understood by the teachers instead of merely disseminating information or in her words, regurgitating information. However, not all trainers deliver to
the same standard. T13 alludes to this variability, emphasizing the dependency on the specific trainer chosen:

"It depends on the master trainer that is selected. There are other master trainers who came in just hand out things and expect you to know when you don’t " – T13

Comparatively, In-house training, a subsequent layer in the cascade, introduces more variability. The efficacy of these sessions can be a gamble. T6's experience where she mentions delivering "secondhand information" shows how content may get filtered or diluted in this process. She explains:

“After the 5-day course, we go back to school to impart what we have gone through and to other teachers. The thing is, we are giving the teachers secondhand information which may not be very clear to them because of my explanation as I wasn’t very clear about it either.” – T6

The in-depth discrepancy in the cascaded model is also glaringly evident in T1's account:

"it's diluted [the training] quite a lot... The teacher went for a few days of training and she gave us a workshop for less than two hours. How much can you squeeze within two hours?" – T1

The reduced duration of in-house sessions, as highlighted by T1's experience, often equates to a condensed, less exhaustive training delivery, which might fail to capture the nuances of the centralized sessions.

**Determinants of Training Effectiveness in the Cascaded Model**

Based on the interviews, the effectiveness of in-house training sessions largely hinges on the teacher-trainers' comprehension and delivery acumen. T9 provides insight into this variability:

“I remember the teacher who was asked to go to the training course. He came back from the course and said okay, here’s a pile of notes I got from the training. I will just brief through the main points and as for the rest, I think we all know how to read.” -T9

T2 recollects her own personal experience going back to conduct the in-house training:

"I did not understand all of it [centralized training], so I picked the things that I really understood. The things I understood, I tried to explain more, the things I did not, I had to contact the master trainer to reconfirm...." – T2

Furthermore, the success of these in-house sessions isn't solely the responsibility of the trainer. The engagement levels of attending teachers matter significantly. Some teachers who attend these trainings may not pay full attention
during the sessions either. T2’s observation of certain teachers’ attitudes resonates this point:

"In-house training doesn’t really work as not all teachers are interested most of the time... They keep playing with their phones and they don’t listen..." – T2

The teacher’s observation that teachers can sometimes be disengaged—playing with their phones, for instance—reveals the challenge in ensuring uniform attention and interest during these sessions.

**Missing Out: The Untrained Few and the Limitations of the Cascaded Model**

An unforeseen consequence of the cascaded model is the inadvertent sideling of a subset of teachers. Due to various reasons – be it sessional timing, administrative oversights, or logistical challenges – certain educators are left out of both centralized and in-house training. This typically happens when the school has dual sessions, where upper secondary classes are conducted in the morning (form 4 – 5), while lower secondary classes are conducted in the afternoon (form 1 – 3) or vice versa. A teacher might have been teaching in the upper forms when the training was conducted and thus, that teacher would not have been asked to attend neither the centralized training nor the in-house training conducted by their fellow teachers.

T3 and T7’s testimonials shed light on this crucial gap, painting a picture of educators playing catch-up, reliant on peers and personal resourcefulness.

"I moved schools in 2015... I hadn’t had any form of training because only the afternoon teachers in my previous school received in-house training. I had to learn it [SBA implementation] as I went from my colleagues, and it was very difficult at the start." – T3

Similarly, T7’s recount echoes this sentiment:

"Somebody in the afternoon session went for the SBA course and the teacher who came back from the training was reluctant to give the training for the morning session teachers... We always had that problem and by the time we find a common place and time, and when we did find a common time, weeks later, some information were left out as it had been so long since the centralised training." – T7

**The Need for Teacher Resourcefulness and Peer Support**

When structured training avenues fall short, the onus shifts to the teachers to navigate their learning journeys. The narratives underscore the instrumental role peers play in such scenarios. As exemplified by T3’s experience, the presence
of a supportive teaching community can significantly mitigate the challenges of inadequate training.

“Fortunately, in my new school, all the teacher are very cooperative. We like to have discussions, we talk, we share. We share materials, we share what we have prepared, we try to help those who are having trouble to understand [SBA implementation]”. - T3

This sentiment of collegiality is also commonly echoed throughout the interview. Other teachers have also voiced their opinions on the importance of it:

“If we don’t have materials, we should just ask fellow teachers. Some teachers don’t share because they assume you already have it. It’s not really being selfish. Also, we should be open to share and help. I share all the materials to my fellow teachers”. - T9

Lastly, it is also important that be it centralised training or in-house training, provision of follow up support after the training should be provided to teachers as well. One interviewee illustrates what she considers as best practice:

“The Master Trainer after training still keeps in touch with us in our chat groups. She always asks us how are we doing in our lessons and whether we are coping well. Even though the training has passed, she still keeps in touch with us and share materials”. - T12.

The post-training support, as highlighted by T12, demonstrates the value of sustained engagement and the importance of trainers' commitment beyond formal training sessions. Such interactions not only reinforce the learnings from the sessions but also foster a sense of community and continuous learning amongst educators.

**DISCUSSION**

The cascade model of professional development, characterized by centralized training followed by in-house dissemination, has been the subject of much debate, with its efficacy contingent upon various factors. The present study, examining the experiences and perspectives of teachers in Sarawak, sheds valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of this model.

From the outset, the value of centralized training cannot be understated. When conducted effectively, with master trainers taking the time to impart knowledge in an engaging and comprehensive manner, centralized training provides a robust foundation for educators. Findings from our interviews resonate with Talib et. al (2014), where teachers expressed concerns over the adequacy and delivery style of the training. In line with Talib's findings, the study's participants found centralized training to be more engaging and comprehensive. As one teacher, T13, poignantly highlighted, the effectiveness of such training sessions hinges greatly on the master trainer's ability to explain concepts lucidly, integrate diverse teaching strategies, and sustain participant
interest. This is a sentiment that echoes previous findings that the success of any professional development initiative depends on the quality of its facilitators (Alene & Prasadh, 2019).

However, challenges arise when transitioning from centralized to in-house training. While the intent is to efficiently disseminate the acquired knowledge to a broader educator base, its effectiveness is often inconsistent. The depth and breadth of the in-house training are contingent upon multiple factors: the teacher-trainer’s grasp of the content, their pedagogical capabilities, the duration allocated for the training, and the engagement level of the attendees. The ‘watered-down’ nature of some in-house sessions, as described by T6, draws attention to the potential pitfalls of the cascaded model. When educators receive only a fraction of the training duration and depth compared to their centralized counterparts, the likelihood of gaps in understanding and application magnifies. Again, the concern of content dilution in the cascade model has been previously well documented (Hayes, 2000; Fiske & Ladd, 2014, cited in Dichaba & Mokhele, 2017).

This disparity is further compounded by the apparent variability in teacher-trainers’ dedication and aptitude. As T9’s account suggests, there are instances where the delivery might be rushed or superficial, with teachers expected to sift through piles of notes independently. This points towards a potential gap in the selection or preparation of those tasked with disseminating the centralized training knowledge.

Furthermore, the efficacy of in-house training is also influenced by the audience’s engagement level. T2’s comment about teachers being disengaged, playing with phones, and displaying an overall lack of interest highlights an essential aspect of professional development: participant buy-in. Without genuine interest and engagement, even the most meticulously planned and executed training sessions might fall short of their intended outcomes.

Unique scenarios also emerged from the data, wherein certain teachers found themselves excluded from both centralized and in-house training due to logistical or structural reasons within their schools. This inadvertent omission is particularly concerning, considering that these educators are then expected to navigate the complexities of SBA implementation without any formal training or support. This jeopardizes the overarching goals of educational reforms like SBA. However, in the face of these challenges, the value of collegiality became evident, emphasizing peer-learning and support. This collaborative approach to teaching and learning has been widely recognized as instrumental in filling the gaps where formal training may fall short. Additionally, the provision of post-training support, as noted by T12, reflects the best practices in CPD. This consistent and continuous engagement with trainers reiterates the principles articulated in the Malaysian National Education Philosophy and Policy, which emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and development.
In light of these findings, the cascaded model, while resource-efficient and expansive in reach, requires meticulous planning, rigorous selection, and preparation of teacher-trainers, and strategies to enhance participant buy-in. It underscores the need to consider not just the content and delivery of training, but also the broader ecosystems within which these training sessions operate.

This study has revealed a nuanced understanding, as experiences varied between those trained through centralized methods and those in in-house settings. The intricate balance between consistency in training content and adaptability to the unique contexts of different schools emerged as a focal point. While the cascade model's scalability and reach are commendable, potential content dilution and the sidelining of a few due to logistical challenges were palpable concerns. The study's findings resonate with the broader literature on professional development and training models, emphasizing the paramount importance of continued engagement, feedback, and adaptability in teacher training endeavors.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In conclusion, while the cascade model offers scalability in teacher training, it grapples with content dilution and logistical challenges. The key takeaway is the need for sustained engagement and adaptability in training approaches. This paper provides a number of recommendations for further improvement in training and teaching and learning practices.

Firstly, the success of the cascade model is significantly contingent upon the effectiveness of the master trainers for centralized sessions. A meticulous and rigorous selection process should be prioritized. Moreover, even the best trainers need regular upskilling. Periodic workshops and training enhancement programs can ensure that these master trainers remain at the forefront of pedagogical advancements.

Secondly, while the cascade model allows for the dissemination of training to larger groups, it's vital to ensure that the content remains undiluted. By fostering an environment of interactive in-house training sessions, where teachers actively engage in problem-solving and discussions, the depth and integrity of the training content can be maintained.

Instead of having face to face synchronous training, online asynchronous training methods can also be considered as accessibility and convenience are key. By introducing online training modules that can be accessed as per the convenience of individual teachers, it ensures that the training is not bound by time or place. Such platforms can supplement in-person sessions, ensuring no teacher is left behind.

It is also important that we foster greater collegiality amongst our teachers to form meaningful communities of practice as the strength of the teaching community lies in its collective experience and knowledge. By formalizing peer
learning systems, teachers can bridge any gaps that might emerge in the training process. Such systems encourage knowledge exchange and mutual growth.

Lastly, more formal feedback should be provided on training quality whether it be centralised or in-house. Formal feedback loops can offer valuable insights from ground-level implementers of the cascade model, i.e., the teachers. Such insights can guide iterative refinements, making the training more relevant and effective.

This study endeavored to scrutinize the effectiveness and challenges of the cascade model in training teachers for the School-Based Assessment (SBA) in Malaysia through a semi-structured interviews of teachers in 14 schools in Sarawak. For suggestions of further research, the authors suggest a number future direction.

Firstly, immediate post-training outcomes might not provide the complete picture. Longitudinal studies, spanning several years, can shed light on the lasting impacts of the cascade model on teaching practices, highlighting its sustained effectiveness or areas of concern. Secondly, while our current focus remains on teachers, the broader educational ecosystem involves students, parents, and administrative staff. Understanding their perceptions of the model can provide a more comprehensive view, ensuring that the model's impacts are beneficial for all involved.

Internationally and nationally, the education sector remains dynamic, and as such, the evolution of models like the cascade is inevitable. It's imperative to keep questioning, refining, and adapting to ensure that the teachers, the pillars of this sector, receive the best training possible.

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