



EVALUATION OF ECA'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS:

E-TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

May 2015

Commissioned by:

Evaluation Division
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Department of State

Prepared by:

EurekaFacts, LLC



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<http://eca.state.gov/impact/evaluation-eca>

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CT—critical thinking

ECA—Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, within the U.S. Department of State

EFL—English as a Foreign Language

ESP—English for Specific Purposes

TEFL—Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TESOL—Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TEYL—Teaching English to Young Learners

UMBC—University of Maryland, Baltimore County

UNRWA—UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

I. Introduction

Enhancing English language teaching and learning overseas is central to the mandate of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to increase understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. English language programming results in expanded educational and economic opportunities for underserved communities, builds educational capacity, and increases opportunities for collaboration and innovation among American citizens, organizations and businesses overseas.

ECA’s Office of English Language Programs conducts programming around the world to encourage English language capacity and use among audiences abroad. One of these programs is the E-Teacher Scholarship Program (E-Teacher Program), which offers English teaching professionals abroad the opportunity to participate in an innovative distance-learning program that introduces the latest methods in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Course participants—nominated and selected by U.S. embassy staff in each country—engage in a 10-week, graduate-level online professional development course led by an instructor at a U.S. university, after which they receive a certificate of completion.

In 2011, EurekaFacts, LLC, was contracted to conduct an evaluation of the E-Teacher Program in order to find out what former participants learned, how they have applied this learning, and how the program experience has affected their current careers.

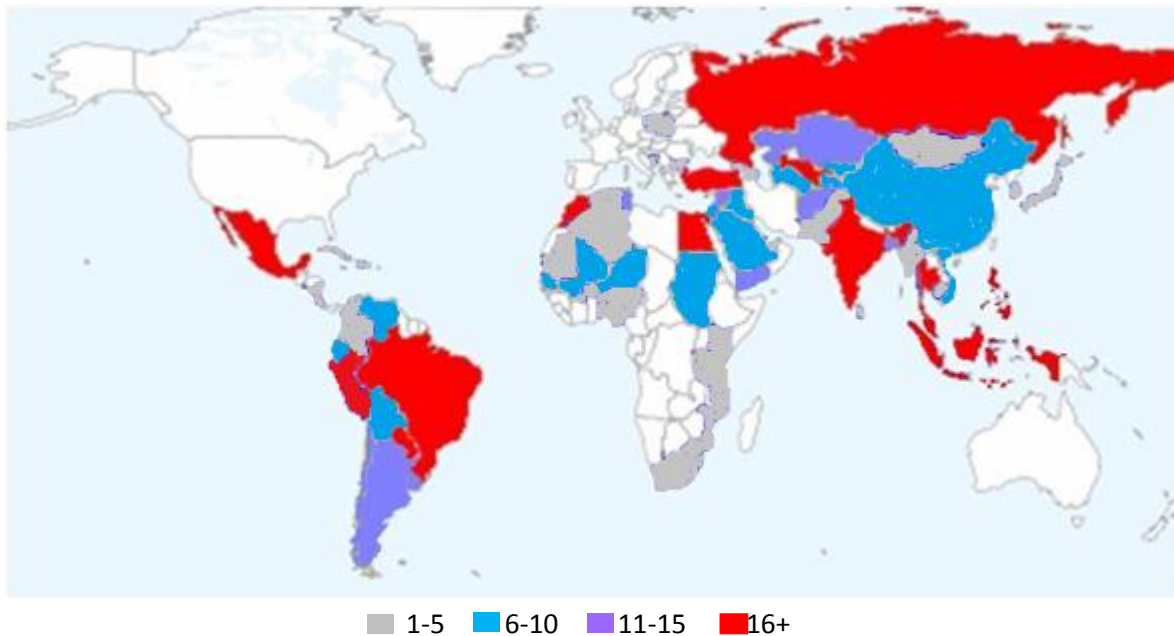
A. Program Reach

When the program was initially designed and implemented in 2004, it offered 104 scholarships, primarily to English instructors¹ in Muslim countries. Since then, the program has expanded to more than 100 countries, with as many as 1,200 English teaching professionals—including classroom instructors, teacher trainers and ministry officials—participating each year. During the participation period covered by this evaluation (2004–09), a total of 696 participants residing in 78 countries/territories around the world completed at least one course, as illustrated in Figure 1.²

¹ For the purposes of this report, the word “instructor” is used to refer to instructors of English at any level of education, including primary and secondary school teachers, university faculty and teachers of adults.

² There was no country data for 27 of the 696 E-teacher participants who completed a course. Thus, the map and country/territory count are based on the 669 participants for which data was available.

Also, the figure of 696 represents only those participants who completed a course; approximately 1,000 E-Teacher scholarships were awarded, but the remaining participants did not complete the course.

Figure 1. E-Teacher Program Participants per Country, 2004–09

B. Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness of the program in achieving key ECA and program goals and outcomes. ECA’s Evaluation Division developed the following research questions to guide the evaluation:

How does the program enhance participants’ professional knowledge, expertise and development?

- What course-specific knowledge and skills have participants gained?
- What is the participant’s “value-added” (e.g., what gaps in knowledge, skills or training did the course fill)?
- How has access to the course provided participants with opportunities they would not have otherwise?
- In terms of their own professional development, how have participants sought to expand knowledge or improve practice since completing the course?

What is the impact on participants’ English language teaching practices?

- How have participants applied what they learned in their classes?
- Has this led to changes in courses that they teach?

What is the impact on participants’ home institutions?

- How, and through what mechanisms, have they shared their new knowledge and skills with their peers?

- How have participants applied what they learned to their schools/teaching institutions or home organizations?
- Has there been any discernible impact on their students?
- What is the institutional “value-added” (e.g., what gaps in knowledge, skills or training did the course fill)?
- Has this led to any changes in institutional curricula or teaching methods?

What new U.S.-based and/or global linkages were created among participants?

- How have participants continued to engage with their peers/virtual communities?

C. Data Collection Strategy

The evaluation used a mixed-method data collection strategy that incorporated both a quantitative online survey and qualitative in-country interviews to evaluate the E-Teacher Program.

Online Survey

An online survey was administered to E-Teacher participants in the fall of 2012. The survey sample was identified through the use of alumni participant lists provided by the universities that offered E-Teacher courses between 2004 and 2009. The final sample invited to take the survey consisted of 696 participants who were identified by course records as having completed at least one E-Teacher course during this time period. A total of 367 respondents completed the survey, representing a response rate of 53 percent.

Qualitative Fieldwork

The qualitative fieldwork, conducted in 2011 and 2012, involved in-depth interviews with 22 E-Teacher participants in 4 countries: Chile, Russia, Thailand and Turkey. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and a few were conducted in-country by telephone.

In addition, depending on in-country availability, background interviews regarding the program’s purpose, objectives, administrative structure and potential impacts were conducted in-country with Ministry of Education officials, Regional English Language Officers, English Language Officers and other Post/Embassy English language programming staff.

D. Respondent Profile

E-Teacher course participants, as represented by respondents to the online survey, reflect the program’s efforts to reach a diverse group of English teaching professionals around the globe. The respondent pool represents a cross-section of all major geographical regions, with the Western Hemisphere (including Latin America and the Caribbean) representing the largest group: Western Hemisphere (31 percent), Middle East/North Africa (21 percent), South/Central

Asia (15 percent), East Asia/Pacific (15 percent), Sub-Saharan Africa (10 percent) and Europe/Eurasia (10 percent).³

At the time they took their E-Teacher course, just over half (54 percent) of the respondents had 10 or more years of professional experience, while the remaining half was divided fairly evenly between 6–10 years of experience (26 percent) and 1–5 years (19 percent).

The E-Teacher participants surveyed currently serve a wide range of professional roles, from primary/secondary school teachers to university professors/administrators to curriculum developers and ministry officials. The most common professional role for survey respondents is classroom instructor (42 percent), followed by teacher trainer (24 percent), although many respondents explained that their position involves a combination of teaching, training and/or administrative duties.⁴ In terms of the types of institutions at which they are employed, approximately half (49 percent) of the respondents reported working at a university or college,⁵ with smaller percentages employed at a primary/secondary school (16 percent), specialized English language teaching institute (12 percent), teacher training institute (5 percent) or national ministry/department of education (5 percent).⁶

As for educational background, two-thirds (65 percent) of survey respondents currently hold either a Master's (49 percent) or doctorate degree (16 percent), while less than a third (28 percent) hold a 4-year Baccalaureate degree or the equivalent.⁷ Forty percent of respondents reported that the E-Teacher course was their "first experience taking a graduate-level course."⁸ As will be discussed in Chapter VII, many course participants went on to pursue an advanced degree after participating in the E-Teacher Program.

The great majority (87 percent) of survey respondents completed only one E-Teacher course during the period covered by this evaluation (2004–09). Ten percent completed two courses, and only a few respondents completed more than two courses.

The in-country interviewees were a much more homogeneous group: nearly all of them work at universities or colleges as professors and/or administrators. A few interviewees teach at the primary and/or secondary level.

³ Figures add up to more than 100 percent due to rounding. In total, the respondent pool represents 74 of the 78 countries/territories where E-Teacher participants who completed a course during the evaluation period resided, as indicated in sec. I.A.

⁴ Many participants explained that they function both as a classroom instructor *and* a teacher trainer, most commonly because they teach in a university Teaching English as a Foreign Language program or a teacher training institute, where their students are pre-service and/or in-service teachers. In addition, many survey respondents explained that aside from teaching their own classes, they also serve administrative or supervisory roles at their institutions, such as curriculum developer, department chair, supervising teacher and/or subject/course coordinator.

⁵ This figure combines university/college settings (47 percent) and 2-year vocational/technical institutions (2 percent).

⁶ Figures do not add up to 100 percent due to a substantial percentage of respondents (13 percent) who selected the option to write in "another type of institution/organization." The great majority of the write-in responses fell into one or more of the categories listed here. In some cases, respondents indicated that they work for more than one institution.

Also, the survey question asked respondents to identify only their *current* position and institutional affiliation. However, as will be discussed in ch. V, many course participants reported job changes in the years following their E-Teacher participation; thus, the professional roles reported here do not necessarily portray an accurate picture of the distribution of professional roles among participants at the time of their course participation.

⁷ These figures reflect survey respondents' highest level of education *at the time of the survey*. The remaining 7 percent of respondents either hold a 2-year degree (1 percent) or wrote in a response to the "something else" option, most commonly falling into one of the following categories: (1) currently pursuing a Master's or doctorate degree; (2) hold a 5- or 6-year undergraduate degree; or (3) hold a postgraduate professional degree or credential, such as certification in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or the equivalent.

⁸ It is worth bearing in mind that there is some variation by country as to whether a teaching degree/credential/certification is considered a Bachelor's level or a graduate-level degree.

E. Limitations of the Evaluation

Any study that attempts to capture the impacts and outcomes of a program that includes multiple courses and universities, as well as participants from diverse cultures, regions, educational settings and professional backgrounds, is subject to limitations. In assessing the results of this evaluation effort, the following limitations should be kept in mind:

- As in all studies that seek to obtain individual-level assessments of programmatic outcomes, the information provided by participants is perceptual and may contain respondent-level biases.
- The evaluation team collected data retrospectively, asking participants to recall events and activities that may have taken place up to eight years prior.
- In-country fieldwork took place in 4 of the 78 countries/territories worldwide where participants (who completed at least 1 course) resided during the evaluation period. As a result, qualitative data is less robust for countries/territories that were not visited by the evaluation team.
- The results presented in this report reflect the experiences of the evaluation participants (survey respondents and interviewees) only and cannot be generalized to all E-Teacher Program participants.

II. A 21st Century Program: Virtual Training for Global English Teaching Professionals

In addition to offering advanced EFL content, the virtual format of the E-Teacher Program has two unique advantages: (1) it makes the courses accessible to working English teaching professionals located anywhere in the world, and (2) it allows for a unique course design that emphasizes interaction among global classmates.

A. E-Teacher Courses Fill a Void in Advanced EFL Training

E-Teacher courses cover a range of subjects, including broadly applicable pedagogical methods, such as online teaching or project-based learning;¹ advanced skills, such as assessment techniques or integrating critical thinking into the EFL curriculum; and specialized courses for teaching English to specific audiences, such as business professionals or children. As shown in Figure 2, the vast majority of participants surveyed took advanced courses (Critical Thinking or EFL Assessment) and/or specialized courses (Teaching English to Young Learners or English for Business).^{2,3}

Figure 2. E-Teacher Courses, 2004–09: Survey Respondents' Participation

E-Teacher Course	%
Critical Thinking in the EFL Curriculum (CT)	40%
Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL)	22%
EFL Assessment	21%
English for Business	16%
English for Law	5%
Building Teaching Skills through the Interactive Web (Web Skills)	4%
English for Specific Purposes Best Practices (ESP) ⁴	2%
Methods Course I: Survey of Best Practices in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL Methods)	2%
Methods Course II: Developing EFL Literacy through Project-Based Learning	1%

*Total respondents overall: n=367.

†Figures represent the percentage of respondents who completed each course; they add up to more than 100 percent because some respondents completed more than one course. (See sec. I.D.)

In fact, the most common motivation for taking an E-Teacher course (identified by 48 percent of survey respondents) is to learn more about one's area of specialization within the EFL field.

¹ In project-based learning, students master course material by conducting a long-term project in which they apply the concepts taught, often in collaboration with classmates.

² Figure 2 lists the courses by the titles that were used during the evaluation period. Since then, several of the course titles, as well as some of the specific course offerings, have changed. For a list of current course offerings, as well as descriptions of each course, see the E-Teacher Scholarship Program Web site: <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/e-teacher-scholarship-program/details>.

³ While many of the interviewees and survey respondents indicated that they had applied for the E-Teacher Program in order to take a specific course, participants do not always get to enroll in their preferred course. In some cases, if their preferred course is already full for the particular session for which they have received the scholarship, participants may be given the opportunity to enroll in a different course where space is available. Thus, the figures for survey respondents' enrollment per course do not necessarily represent participants' personal course selections in all cases.

⁴ English for Specific Purposes (ESP)—as opposed to English for General Purposes—refers to the teaching of English for use in specific contexts, such as academic or business settings.

Participants in various countries explained that these specialized courses fill a void in the EFL pedagogical training available locally.

There are some fields that are really worth[while] to take and cannot be taught at that level in [the] home country—specifically TESOL, Assessment.

—Teacher trainer, private language center, Uzbekistan (ESP)⁵

Critical thinking is a term absolutely new for Russia. [Before I took the course] I read some articles, and then I realized that certainly I was looking for the ways [to use it] in my classroom and the classrooms of my younger colleagues too.

—University administrator/teacher trainer, Russia (CT, 2009)

We have CT [critical thinking] in Thailand, but [only] in other subjects, and it's quite difficult for a student who studies English to have something like a critical thinking [course] in their study, so I [became] interested in this [E-Teacher] course to know ... how to use that in an English course.

—Vocational college instructor,⁶ Thailand (CT)

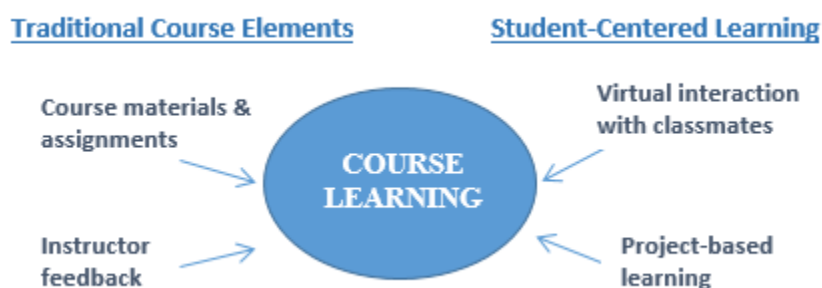
Here in Chile, teachers of English do not have a specialization in Teaching English to Young Learners. Nobody gets training. It's not part of our curriculum at the university. If you become a teacher, nobody tells you how to teach children, and it's a completely different way of teaching them.

—University and primary/secondary instructor, Chile (TEYL, Assessment)

B. Course Design: Active Learning and Virtual Interaction

The E-Teacher course design fully utilizes the online format by integrating elements of traditional course learning with intensive virtual interaction among global classmates and a student-centered teaching model, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Elements of E-Teacher Course That Contribute to Learning



E-Teacher courses are designed according to a student-centered model, in which course participants take primary responsibility for their own learning, while the instructor serves as a facilitator. Thus, instead of learning primarily from the instructor's lectures (as in a traditional classroom), students engage in discussions and do activities or projects independently or collaboratively to master the course concepts. For example, in some courses, students are tasked

⁵ Survey respondents were asked to identify the year in which they participated in the E-Teacher course(s), but in-country interviewees did not always provide this information. In addition, some survey respondents did not provide a response to this question. Where available, the year of participation in each course is indicated in parentheses.

⁶ Here and throughout the report, survey respondents who identified their home institution as a "2-year technical or vocational institution" are referred to as "vocational college instructors," in the interest of brevity.

with searching the Internet for appropriate teaching resources that can be shared with classmates and/or adapted for the local setting.

The online format is particularly conducive to active learning, because participants cannot get “credit” for attending a class just by showing up and listening; rather, the only way they can demonstrate their virtual “attendance” is by actively engaging with the materials and/or subject matter. Since the instructor typically is not present in the classroom (i.e., is not online 24 hours a day), participants are compelled to figure things out on their own.

Thus, the E-Teacher course design simulates the concept of student-centered teaching—which is one of the key methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) taught in the courses—by allowing participants to *experience* the method about which they are learning.

What is a Virtual Classroom?

In a virtual classroom, most activity takes place in discussion forums, which take the place of the face-to-face discussions held in traditional classrooms. These discussions take place asynchronously—meaning that participants may log on to read and post comments at different times—and typically focus on one specific topic, such as responding to a reading assignment or a question posed by the instructor. Discussion forums may involve individual students’ responses to the forum’s prompt or main question; interaction between instructor and students; and/or sub-threads in which students respond to each other’s comments.

Virtual classrooms also typically include an area for participants to “turn in” written assignments and receive feedback from the instructor, as well as smaller, semi-private forums where participants can work collaboratively on group projects.

Virtual interaction with global classmates. Each E-Teacher course includes English teaching professionals from distant corners of the world. Virtual interaction among this diverse group of classmates is a key element of the course design, which allows participants to examine teaching methods and ideas through the lens of multiple contexts.

Thus, active participation in virtual class discussions—including both posting one’s own ideas or experiences and providing feedback to classmates—is a course requirement that accounts for a substantial percentage of the course grade. In Teaching English for Young Learners, for example, 30 percent of the course grade is assigned for “participation in ... weekly discussions, including the posing of local challenges ... and helping others find solutions to their challenges,” while 40 percent is assigned for “teamwork and leadership” during a 2-week group project.⁷ A former participant in the English for Business course gave an example of the type of interactive tasks that were assigned:

There were some tasks that actually asked us students to compare business experience in, let’s say, in the United States and other countries, so on that stage, it was really very interesting to read other students’ comments because that happened to a number of them, teaching business in other countries. ...

—University professor, Russia (English for Business)

In fact, some participants observed that the online format had produced greater interaction among participants than sometimes occurs in traditional training formats, such as conferences or even face-to-face classes, where participants can sit and listen passively.

⁷ Teaching English to Young Learners Course Description. Rev. 19 Aug. 2013. E-Teacher Scholarship Program. Available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/e-teacher-scholarship-program/details#teaching>.

The course fed, contributed, facilitated a very interesting interaction among us. And I think that is a very distinctive feeling of this particular course. I can't recall a course in which I had so much interaction with others.
—University professor, Chile (Assessment)

The level of reflection you can get in a distance education class is far more than in a face-to-face class. ... You cannot hide behind someone. ... Sometimes in face-to-face classes, your body is there, but you may be somewhere else. But in a distance education class, you need to be there; ... you need to reflect. You are visible all the time. You are accountable for everything happening.
—University and primary/secondary instructor, Chile (TEYL, Assessment)

Project-based learning. All E-Teacher courses involve an independent project, in which participants apply the concepts learned to develop a set of teaching materials appropriate for the local setting. Typically participants work on this project throughout the duration of the course, each week building another component of their teaching “toolkit,” as it is called in the English for Specific Purposes course.⁸ For example, in the Critical Thinking course, participants develop materials for incorporating critical thinking into their classes, which involves several stages: (1) creating a lesson plan, (2) creating a unit plan and (3) creating an action plan. (See fig. 4.) This project-based model helps participants to take ownership of their own learning and to “connect the dots” between the pedagogical theories and the reality of their own teaching contexts. By the end of the course, participants have already done the legwork—not only creating the materials but thinking through and articulating the *justification* for these new materials—to be able to apply their new teaching practices directly to their own classroom. (See ch. IV for discussion of how E-Teacher participants applied their course learning in classrooms.)

Figure 4 illustrates how this course model applies to the three courses most commonly taken by survey respondents.⁹ First, participants learn about the key concepts by reading assigned texts; second, they deepen their understanding through class discussions and interactive activities; and then they complete an independent project. (In reality, however, these three components take place simultaneously throughout the course.)

⁸ English for Specific Purposes Course Description. Rev. 19 Aug. 2013. E-Teacher Scholarship Program. Available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/e-teacher-scholarship-program/details#teaching>.

⁹ The information provided in fig. 4 comes from the full Course Descriptions for Academic Year 2013–14 available at the E-Teacher Scholarship Program’s Web site: <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/e-teacher-scholarship-program/details#teaching>. Since the evaluation period, the titles of the Critical Thinking and Assessment courses have been changed, respectively, to: “Critical Thinking in Language Learning and Teaching” and “Assessment: Summative and Formative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching.”

Figure 4. E-Teacher Course Model: Interactive and Independent Learning

	Critical Thinking in the EFL Curriculum (CT)	Teaching English to Young Learners	EFL Assessment
Concepts and Skills Taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT concepts and patterns • How to identify resources for developing and using CT in the classroom • How to identify/analyze teaching techniques and materials for incorporating CT into teaching • How to apply CT to teaching and materials development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive development of young learners • Strategies for motivating children's language learning • Classroom management strategies • How to identify language-learning goals and to align activities to these goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of assessment • How to align assessment to behavioral objectives and course goals • How to give effective, helpful feedback to learners • Development of rubrics¹⁰ and tests • How to analyze the validity/reliability of assessments
Interactive Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly pedagogical discussions • Give feedback on classmates' final projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly discussions, including feedback to classmates • Two-week team project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly discussions • Give feedback to classmates
Independent Project	Create lesson plan and unit plan with activities that require CT, along with action plan for implementation.	Develop unit and lesson plans appropriate for young learners in local context, along with applicable resources/ materials and implementation plan.	Create an assessment tool, including: needs assessment, description of teaching context, purpose of assessment, sample items, evaluation plan and rubric/scoring method.

C. Online Format Increases Accessibility

The E-Teacher Program's format—online delivery, with free tuition—is designed to make advanced EFL training available to working English teaching professionals around the globe who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. Furthermore, the program provides professionals abroad the unique opportunity to experience a U.S. university course without leaving their country. During the evaluation period, E-Teacher courses were offered by five universities: Indiana University, University of Memphis/Nashville State Community College, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), University of Oregon and University of South Carolina. (Currently, all E-Teacher courses are offered at the University of Oregon only.)

¹⁰ Rubrics are typically scoring schemes used to objectively evaluate student work—such as writing assignments, which might otherwise be evaluated subjectively—according to specific, pre-defined criteria.

Figure 5. Online Format Increases Accessibility



Global reach. The virtual format makes the E-Teacher Program accessible to qualified educators anywhere in the world, especially those who live far from the major cities where professional development activities usually are held.

I can hardly join any conferences or seminars, which are based mostly in Ankara or Istanbul. We had very little share of those things, so for someone who's in the outlying cities teaching in my position, this was so valuable.

—Retired university professor, Turkey (TEYL)

The E-Teacher Scholarship Program could unleash hidden potentials of teachers in remote and isolated areas because of being electronic.

—Nonprofit administrator, Tajikistan (CT, 2005; English for Law, 2006)

This program is an excellent alternative for many teachers from around the world that are unable to attend prestigious universities, and especially so for Cuban teachers that have very limited access to the development of language teaching. ...

—Vocational college instructor, Cuba (CT, 2007)

It is a significant experience, as many teachers do not get the chance to benefit from this type of learning or perhaps might be working in certain contexts where they have a very limited access to knowledge of their field of teaching or networking with others.

—Curriculum consultant, business school, Bahrain (CT, 2004)

In addition, several participants noted that the free tuition had made it possible for them to participate.

This program gives me a chance to develop myself, since such [a] program is really costly.

—Instructor/Researcher, teacher training institute, Indonesia (Assessment, 2008)

It helped me a lot because we do not earn a lot, you know. ... I would have had second thoughts about paying the tuition myself.

—University professor, Turkey (CT)

Flexible schedule convenient for working professionals. The asynchronous course format¹¹ makes it possible for working English language educators to participate in the program without

¹¹ Currently, the E-Teacher Program offers one course—a new course called “Practical Applications in Listening and Speaking Skills”—in “real time,” which requires participants to participate in a video chat at a specifically scheduled time. Some of the former participants surveyed/interviewed also indicated that the course they took during the evaluation period had involved a real-time component, although the program coordinator at the University of Oregon stated that all E-Teacher courses offered at that time were asynchronous.

taking time off from work. In fact, 9 in 10 E-Teacher respondents agreed that the online format was a “convenient alternative” to in-person training and considered the flexible schedule a highly valuable aspect of the E-Teacher Program (92 percent and 89 percent, respectively).¹²

E-Teacher participants explained that the flexibility of an asynchronous online course had made it possible for them to participate in class discussions and other assignments during their free time, at home or at work, without interfering with their work schedule or family responsibilities.

[It was] really well-organized, and it was very convenient. I could do all the tasks whenever I had spare time. I could do it at work or at home any time of the day. It was very, very convenient for me.
—University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

It ... gives the teachers the chance to be trained and at the same time teaching in our schools.
—Teacher trainer, secondary school, Ecuador (CT)

It's [a] very wonderful way to learn while you are working, so I can learn and teach at the same time.
—University professor, Thailand (TEYL, 2004)

Doing these e-courses, I had enough time because I didn't have to attend classes. I won the time duration. I read my articles out of my office in my house. It gave me independence of place, of time.
—University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment)

[I]f I'm teaching here, then I have some other responsibilities, my family, for example, and it is a good [way of] using your home and then accessing something you're interested [in]. ...
—University professor, Turkey (CT)

Opportunity to study at a U.S. university. As noted above, the E-Teacher Program makes it possible for English teaching professionals around the world to virtually “attend” a U.S. university without leaving home—thus making U.S. university TEFL courses accessible to a vast pool of global professionals who are not able to physically come to the United States. In fact, nearly half (46 percent) of the survey respondents identified the opportunity to take a course from a U.S. university as one of the most important factors in their decision to apply for the program. After completing the course, the vast majority (86 percent) of respondents identified this aspect of the program as highly valuable.¹³ In particular, participants appreciated the prestige associated with the university hosting their course, as well as the opportunity to experience the U.S. educational system and to gain online access to a U.S. university library.¹⁴

The very first thing was that it's going to be an American experience. The University of Oregon, which is a very reputable one, was going to give the course ... and the instructors were going to be American, and most probably I thought they are quite well-experienced. ...
—University professor, Turkey (CT)

¹² The survey asked respondents to rate the value of each of several program components on a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating “not at all valuable” and 5 indicating “extremely valuable.” The second data point (89 percent) represents the combined total of 4 and 5 ratings.

¹³ See previous footnote for explanation of this data point.

¹⁴ However, a few survey respondents who took E-Teacher courses at UMBC and the University of South Carolina expressed disappointment that course participants were not given access to the university’s library. Thus, library access may have varied by institution during the evaluation period.

I think the E-Teacher Program provides non-native teachers of English with an excellent opportunity to experience how American students study at [the] university level. It gives teachers an insight that helps them better understand the U.S. educational system.

—Administrator, binational center, Argentina (Assessment, 2008)

It was a great chance to finish a course outside of my country in a prestigious American university.

—Ministry of Education official, Philippines (CT, 2009)

Participation in the course expanded my overall knowledge in the discipline of teaching American Literature at my university through its facility of providing online access to [the] UMBC digital library.

—University curriculum developer, Pakistan (TEYL, 2009)

In addition, the vast majority (91 percent) of respondents appreciated that the online format gave them access to experts in their field—their course instructors—which they would not have had otherwise, a core goal of the program.

Some participants also noted that despite the virtual nature of the course, they came away with a personal affiliation to a U.S. university.

The course ... gave me a sense of belonging to the University of Oregon from a distance.

—PhD student, Costa Rica (CT, 2008)

I used the library a lot, and I even looked online for some souvenirs saying “Indiana University.” I really spent some time to find something interesting which had “Indiana University” on it.

—Former university professor, Turkey (Assessment)

I became the student of this university [Indiana]. ... I felt the atmosphere there personally. ... I was following the student events there. ... If I have a chance, I would like to visit this university.

—University professor, Turkey (Assessment, CT)

D. Challenges of Online Format

Participating in an online course can present some unique and specific challenges, especially in developing countries. For participants in countries with lower bandwidth, or even limited electricity, gaining consistent and reliable Internet access can be a challenge that hinders full engagement in the course. Indeed, 40 percent of survey respondents reported experiencing technical difficulties.

The primary obstacle that I had was the Internet connection. The connection was too slow and very expensive for me. I couldn’t download nor check the site sometimes; my connection was off and on.

—University professor, Philippines (TEYL, 2007)

Sometimes it turns [out to be] difficult to take online courses in Cuba due to the lack of time for the use of the Internet. ...

—E-Teacher, Cuba (CT, 2008)¹⁵

Furthermore, of the approximately 1,000 E-Teacher scholarships awarded during the evaluation period, 696 were completed by participants. The attrition may be at least partly attributable to the challenges posed by the online format. In addition, only participants who completed a course were surveyed. It is possible that some participants were unable to complete the course due to

¹⁵ This survey respondent did not provide responses to the questions regarding profession and institutional affiliation.

technical difficulties, in which case the total percentage of course participants who experienced such difficulties could be substantially higher than 40 percent.¹⁶

In some cases, respondents found creative ways to overcome these obstacles. For example, a participant in Thailand who had an unreliable Internet connection explained how she managed to work around this problem and finish the course: “Sometimes [the Internet connection] was out of order—I couldn’t use it—but I tried to find somewhere else to turn to try to finish my homework and to read, and I just printed out all the materials.”¹⁷ In other cases, local U.S. posts arrange for participants to have free use of facilities with reliable Internet access, such as U.S.-affiliated institutions (i.e., American Corner) or even local government facilities such as post offices.¹⁸

¹⁶ Given that surveys were not sent to those who did not complete their E-Teacher course, the evaluation does not include data on the causes of attrition.

¹⁷ Secondary and vocational college instructor, Thailand (Assessment, 2008).

¹⁸ E-Teacher Program coordinator, University of Oregon.

III. Direct Benefits of Program Participation

As shown in Figure 6, program participation resulted directly in numerous benefits for E-Teacher participants: expanded knowledge of TEFL methods, a global professional network, e-learning and online skills, and increased confidence in their professional skills. While TEFL knowledge and increased confidence also could be acquired through face-to-face training programs, the other two benefits—global network and online skills—are “value-added” elements that result specifically from the program’s virtual format. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Section III.B below, the interaction with global classmates significantly contributed to participants’ learning of new teaching practices for the EFL classroom.

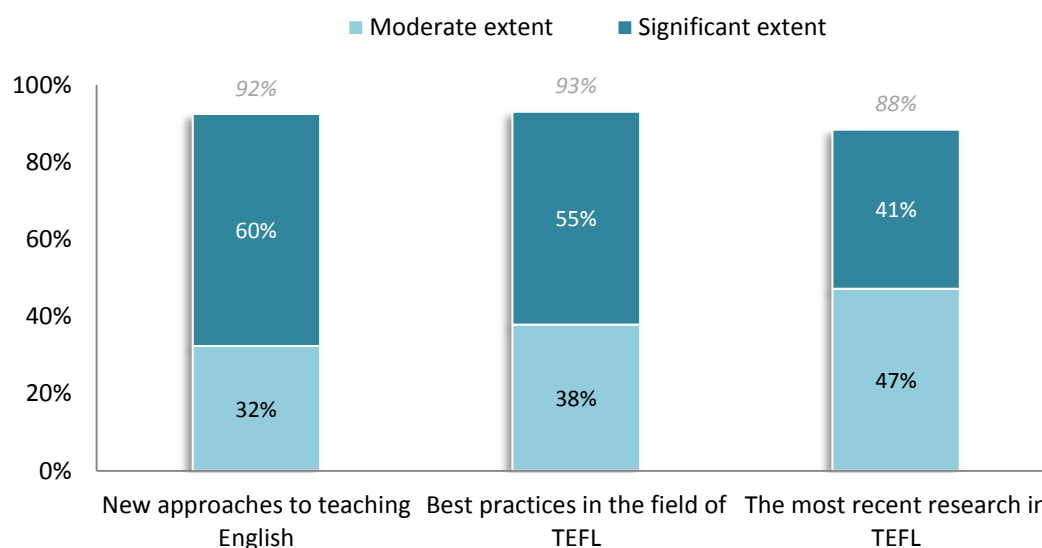
Figure 6. Direct Benefits of Program Participation



A. Course Learning: TEFL Methods and Teaching Practices

E-Teacher participants reported that their course participation substantially enhanced their TEFL knowledge, both in terms of the specific areas covered in their courses—especially Assessment, Critical Thinking and Teaching English to Young Learners—and broader trends and practices in the field. In fact, as shown in Figure 7, approximately 9 in 10 respondents reported gaining increased awareness of new approaches to teaching English, best practices in TEFL and the latest research in the field.

Figure 7. Increased Awareness of General TEFL Trends/Methods

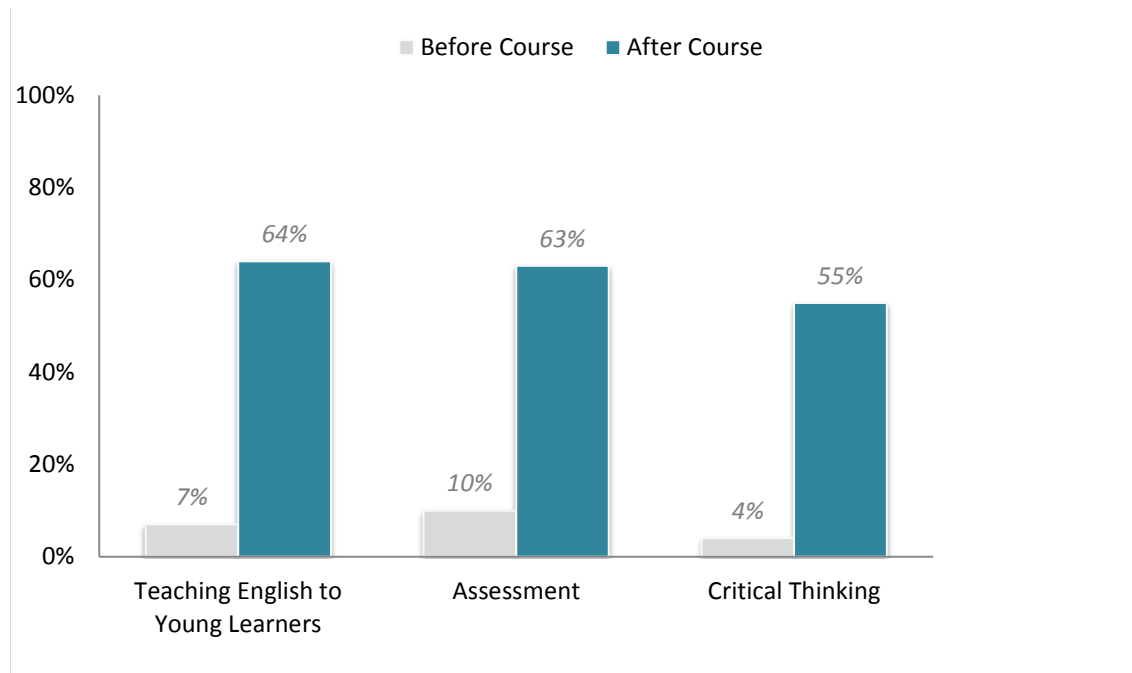


Total n= Ranges from 354 to 359

As mentioned in Chapter II, one of the key teaching methods that E-Teacher participants learned in all courses was student-centered teaching.

Theory and practice. Furthermore, as discussed in Section II.B, all courses are designed to promote both theoretical and applied knowledge and learning. Indeed, as shown in Figure 8, the majority of participants who took Teaching English to Young Learners, Assessment and Critical Thinking felt that they had attained “advanced” knowledge of theory and practice by completing the course.

Figure 8. Course Learning: Gaining Advanced Knowledge of Theory and Practice



*Total n= Ranges from 71 to 140

†Figures represent the percentages of respondents who rated their knowledge of the “general theory and practice” of their course subject as “advanced” before and after taking the course.

In this vein, a kindergarten instructor in Russia who took the Young Learners course explained that she had gained theoretical knowledge about young children’s psychological development, which helped her understand their behavior as well as how to teach them most effectively:

I just learned lots of psychological things on young kids, how to transform their energy into learning. You know, they are very physically active, and they can’t focus. So it is a teacher’s task to make as much as possible from the class, and sometimes it is very difficult, because children can’t concentrate for a long time—they start moving.

—University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

Similarly, participants who took Critical Thinking valued both learning the theoretical concepts and how to apply the methods taught to their own classes:

[The E-Teacher course] provided me with conceptual understanding of [the] critical thinking approach in language teaching and its significance as part of any curriculum of English as a Foreign Language.

—Curriculum consultant, business school, Bahrain (CT, 2004)

The E-Teacher Scholarship Program helped me to develop my ability to design courses and activities to enhance the learners' critical thinking skills.

—Teacher trainer, university, Sri Lanka (CT, 2009)

Likewise, a professor in Kazakhstan who took the English for Law course reported gaining both a greater understanding of the priorities in teaching English for Specific Purposes (theoretical knowledge), as well as new techniques that could be used in the classroom (applied knowledge): “The course gave me deep insight into teaching special English [i.e., English for Specific Purposes], armed me with new techniques and helped me to focus on the areas of greater importance, e.g., vocabulary rather than grammar.”¹

In fact, many participants felt—and/or their colleagues/supervisors perceived—that they had gained expert-level knowledge in the course subject. For example, a former participant in the Assessment course wrote, “I now have specialist knowledge of EFL/ESL² assessment. That has had an effect on my teaching and research.”³ (As will be discussed in ch. V, this new expertise often resulted in professional advancement for participants.)

Broader range of techniques for different contexts and types of learners. Participants who took the Assessment course explained that it had increased their knowledge of the broad range of available assessment techniques—including performance-based assessment,⁴ peer assessment⁵ and portfolios⁶—and which work best in different contexts. In fact, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of survey respondents who completed the Assessment course reported that after the course, they had “advanced” knowledge of the different types of language assessments (compared to only 11 percent before taking the course).

This online EFL Assessment course helped me learn and understand different dimensions of language assessment. ... The course was very informative to suit my teaching-learning process and helped me in identifying the assessment process [and to] plan and implement its procedures in my classes.

—University professor, India (Assessment, 2008)

It has helped me to understand other possibilities of assessment according to different cultural contexts.

—University administrator, Brazil (Assessment, 2009)

Similarly, former participants in the Young Learners course reported gaining a more nuanced understanding of how English language teaching can be targeted to the differing needs of specific groups of learners:

[I gained] more understanding about how age and native language are important elements to take into account when dealing with younger learners.

—University professor, Benin (TEYL, 2009)

¹ University professor/teacher trainer, Kazakhstan (English for Law, Web Skills).

² ESL: English as a Second Language.

³ Teacher trainer, university, India (Assessment, 2008).

⁴ In performance-based assessment, instructors assess students' ability to apply knowledge by performing tasks, rather than by testing their theoretical knowledge.

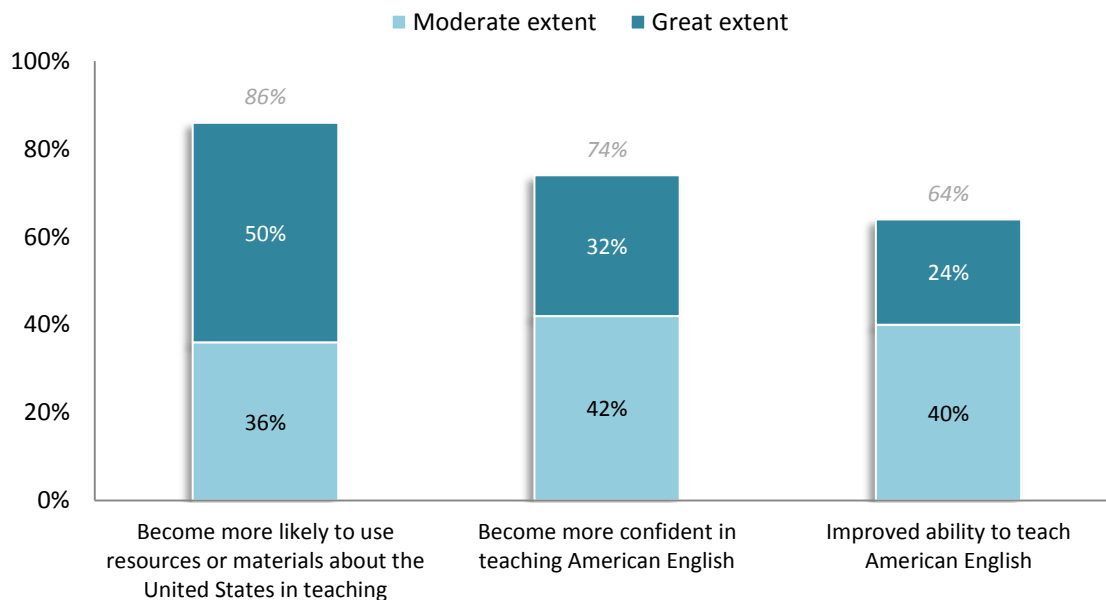
⁵ Peer assessment is an exercise in which students evaluate each other's work, usually using a rubric provided by the instructor.

⁶ Portfolios usually are used to allow instructors to evaluate a students' cumulative work or progress over a period of time rather than assessing only the final product. For example, in writing classes, a portfolio might include multiple drafts of a writing assignment so that the instructor can see how the paper improved from the first draft to the final.

It really opened my eyes and perspective of teaching English not only to young learners but also to teenagers and adults.⁷
—Vocational college instructor, Peru (TEYL, 2009)

Increased ability to teach about the United States and American English. In addition to an expanded range of TEFL methods, more than 6 in 10 survey respondents agreed that they had both gained confidence (74 percent) and increased ability (64 percent) to teach American English (e.g., terminology, expressions and slang). In addition, as shown in Figure 9, the great majority (86 percent) of respondents reported that their course experience had increased their likelihood to use materials about the United States in their teaching, 50 percent to a “great extent.”

Figure 9. Perceived Impact of Course on U.S.-Related Teaching and Learning



*Total n= Ranges from 335 to 360

B. Engagement with Global Professional Network

As noted above, one of the key benefits of participation in the E-Teacher Program is the opportunity for participants to become part of a global network of English teaching professionals, including both their classmates and their course instructor. Prior to the E-Teacher course, nearly half of the survey respondents had never (16 percent) or rarely (32 percent) communicated with professional colleagues outside of their own country. After the program, nearly all respondents (98 percent) felt more connected to the global TEFL community, the majority (52 percent) to a “great” extent. For example, a teacher trainer in Senegal wrote, “[The program] made me develop a strong network with other teachers in other countries, not to mention a strong connection with the professor.”⁸

In fact, many E-Teacher participants considered the engagement with international classmates to be a highly valuable—if not the most valuable—aspect of the course:

⁷ During the evaluation period, the E-Teacher Program offered only one course on Teaching English to Young Learners; now the program offers both the Young Learners course and a course on Teaching English to Pre-Teens and Teens.

⁸ Teacher trainer, Access Microscholarship Program, Senegal (TEYL, 2005).

The interaction between people who are so different, in terms of our practices, our beliefs, our countries ... was probably the most valuable. ... —University professor, Chile (Assessment)

The most important part of this course ... it's very international. I had many friends from other parts of the world. And they can write, they can share their own background. They write something, they make some comments, they suggest something. ... We learned from each other. —University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment)

More than one respondent commented that their course experience was their only “window to the world.”

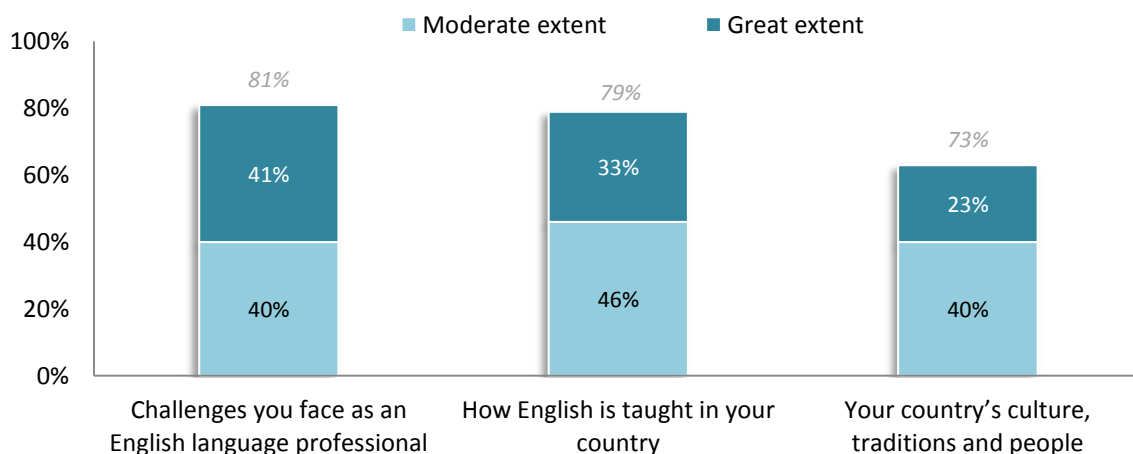
I live in a small provincial town and have few opportunities to meet colleagues, to visit cities. This course is a great opportunity to meet colleagues from all over the world. ... I've never been abroad. But these courses are some kind of a window to the world for me. —University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

It was a unique learning experience. My only window at that time to the outside world. ... [It] helped [me to] start networking with other colleagues from all over the world. ... —University curriculum developer, West Bank/Gaza (English for Business)

The intensive professional exchange among course participants—typically 20–25 classmates and 1 or more instructors/tutors—during the 10-week course both enhanced participants’ learning of international cultures and TEFL practices and led to sustained professional relationships.

Sharing cultures and professional contexts. As discussed in Chapter II, E-Teacher courses are designed so that much of the learning takes place in the virtual classroom’s discussion forums, where participants share their professional experiences and ideas as well as discuss course readings and assignments. Indeed, the majority of respondents reported sharing information about both their cultures and their professional environments, as illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10. E-Teacher Participants’ Sharing of Cultures and TEFL Practices



*Total n= Ranges from 356 to 363

Two participants in Turkey gave examples of the types of information-sharing that took place during the course:

And they [classmates] always made it their mission to give us some general idea about the system in their country ... and how it works, what is the place of a second language or foreign language in their country, how does education cover that and how many years or how many hours of language learning. ... I had to do it myself, too. I had to introduce my own context—[the] language learning context for this country.

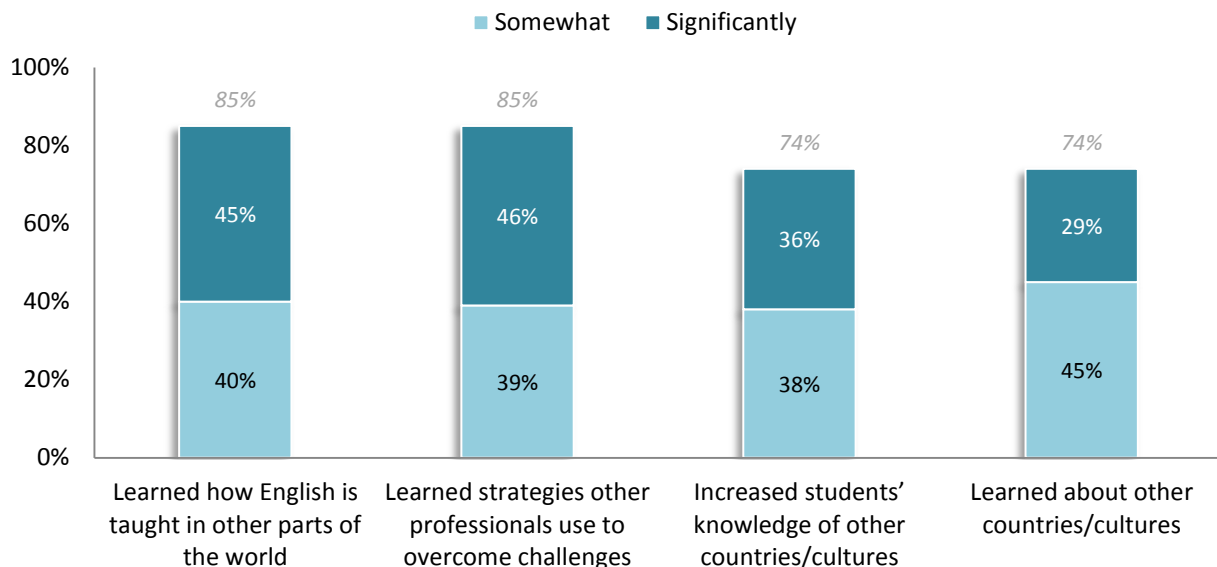
—Retired university professor, Turkey (TEYL)

We were advising some activities to each of them to improve certain language skills, for example, grammar. ... There were writings and activities [shared by classmates] to improve that.

—University professor, Turkey (CT)

Learning about international cultures and TEFL practices. The great majority of E-Teacher respondents reported that these discussions had increased their awareness of their classmates' cultural and professional contexts, as well as strategies that they use to overcome teaching challenges, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Gaining Knowledge of Global TEFL Practices and Cultures



*Total n= Ranges from 338 to 363

Many participants explained that being exposed to the different teaching strategies and practices used by their classmates around the world had helped them to expand their own toolbox of teaching strategies. For some participants, this was the main learning outcome of the course.

Many people from many countries have different ideas and share ideas. I think that it's the best part that I have learned from the course.

—Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT, 2008)

It was a great opportunity to communicate with and learn from high-level professionals. I got a great deal of new ideas and approaches.

—University professor, Russia (English for Law, 2008)

Furthermore, a teacher trainer in Russia explained how hearing from international colleagues about their strategies for overcoming challenges had improved her ability to identify and to resolve her own challenges: “The program gave me a great opportunity to be actively involved in cross-cultural communication with colleagues from all over the world, which contributed a lot to my ... understanding of problems and ways to solve them.”⁹ In some cases, participants were inspired by their colleagues’ experiences to make changes at home, as articulated by an English instructor in Chile:

I have learned that even if I don't have the ... approval of my boss, my head of department or anything, I can do things. And I don't think I would have been able to do that if I hadn't seen so many brave teachers teaching in very underprivileged countries, making such effort, making it happen. I mean, they've been wonderful examples for me. And so now if they say, "No, you cannot enter that room, you can't do that," I say, "Don't worry, I'll find a window."

–University and primary/secondary instructor, Chile (TEYL, Assessment)

Many E-Teacher participants appreciated the opportunity to learn about other cultures as part of their course experience. For example, an English instructor in Kazakhstan wrote, “The E-business course was my first step towards better English teaching, appreciating other cultures and collaborating with peers all over the world.”¹⁰ In addition, some participants indicated that this intercultural learning had given them a new perspective on their own country, culture and teaching environment, which in turn had helped them to improve their teaching, as explained by a former participant in Russia:

With [E-Teacher] courses, you're with teachers from all over the world. I saw different cultures and what [an] impact it has on teaching. ... Different languages and cultures are really closely connected. ... [This intercultural experience] makes our communication and our teaching more productive and more successful.

–University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

In fact, as shown in Figure 11, three-quarters (74 percent) of survey respondents felt that their E-Teacher experience had helped them to increase their students’ knowledge of other countries and cultures (either “significantly” or “somewhat”).

Ongoing engagement with global network. Many participants reported that they found the professional exchange during the online course to be inspiring and were eager to continue to participate in a global community of practice. Participants reported sustaining global professional networks by recreating their course communities as e-groups (via social networking sites such as Facebook or Yahoo); by joining pre-existing broader online TEFL networks, some of which were established by course instructors; and/or by staying in touch informally via email.

[I stayed in touch with] all of them. We started a different e-group, and we're talking to each other.

–University professor, Turkey (CT)

We [stayed in touch] through [a] Facebook special Web site created by [the instructor].

–Secondary school curriculum developer, Peru (TEYL, 2008)

⁹ Teacher trainer, university, Russia (CT, 2008).

¹⁰ Instructor, English language institute, Kazakhstan (English for Business, 2007).

I'm grateful to [my instructor] for having been a catalyst, and mostly [for] the professional parallel-to-course discussions we've had during and after the course.

–Teacher trainer, Access Microscholarship Program, Senegal (TEYL, 2005)

A participant in Russia explained the importance of these ongoing contacts in feeding English instructors' need for professional support and encouragement:

I still correspond with a teacher from Georgia and another teacher from Azerbaijan. We tell each other about our students, our problems, our experiences, our failures and our successes. ... We share some ideas, thoughts, we give each other advice. ... We just support each other. It's very important. ... We just enrich each other.

–University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

In a few cases, E-Teacher participants have met their new colleagues in person, usually at international conferences.

Once last year, [my former classmates and I] met at TESOL¹¹ [in Boston] together—six of us. I had a presentation, and two of them had their presentations [that we went to].

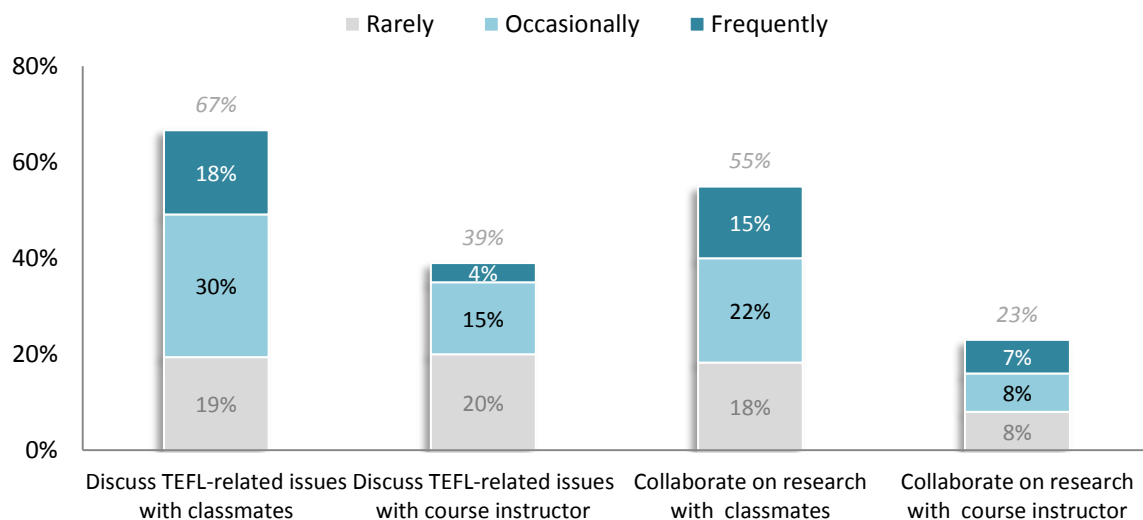
–University professor, Turkey (CT)

We built up good relationships with my instructor, and I even visited her in the States after the TESOL conference.

–Intensive English coordinator, secondary school, Turkmenistan (CT, 2004)

Overall, as shown in Figure 12, two-thirds (67 percent) of survey respondents have continued to discuss teaching issues with their former classmates, and 4 in 10 (39 percent) have done so with their instructors.

Figure 12. Ongoing Engagement with E-Teacher Classmates and Instructors



*Total n= Ranges from 350 to 360.

¹¹ The TESOL International Association is a U.S.-based association for TESOL/TEFL professionals worldwide. Every year, TESOL International holds an annual convention in a different U.S. city.

Furthermore, the majority (55 percent) of E-Teacher survey respondents reported having collaborated on research with former classmates, and nearly a quarter (23 percent) with their course instructor. Most often, they mentioned collaborating on conference presentations or publication opportunities.

[I] participated in a presentation at the TESOL convention with the E-Teacher staff.

–Vocational college instructor, Kuwait (TEYL)

My E-Teacher instructor helped me ready a proposal to participate in the TESOL Annual Convention as a presenter.

–Instructor, binational center, Colombia (CT, 2008)

Following the suggestion of the E-Teacher course instructor, a course mate and myself presented a conference [talk] at the Global Legal Skills Conference IV, Georgetown University in June 2009. And a year later we presented another conference [talk] at the 2nd EULETA [European Legal English Teachers' Association] Legal English Conference, Bucerius Law School, Hamburg, Germany. Tremendous experience!!!!

–Subject coordinator, university, Venezuela (English for Law, 2008)

We exchange ideas, help each other in research papers, e.g., writing surveys or questionnaires if required, and submitting papers to be published in and edited [in a] book by colleagues.

–University professor/teacher trainer, Iraq (CT, 2009)

She [my instructor] was the one who encouraged me to share my experience and write an article for Forum magazine.¹²

–Intensive English coordinator, secondary school, Turkmenistan (CT, 2004)

In addition, several reported collaborating with former classmates in other ways. For example, an English instructor in Thailand collaborated with a former classmate in Japan to establish an online intercultural exchange in English between some of their students,¹³ and another participant in Thailand reported sharing teaching materials with former classmates: “We have the Yahoo group, and we share lesson plans and many teaching tools together. ... We exchange research ..., and they can adapt [it] to use with their class.”¹⁴

C. E-Learning and Online Skills

Engaging in a 10-week online course enables E-Teacher participants to learn how an e-course works and gives them opportunities to practice their skills at using an online learning platform (such as Blackboard).¹⁵ A secondary school teacher in Israel explained why this is a critical skill area for course participants: “The fact that [the courses] are online makes the teachers experience learning online, and then it would make it easier for the teacher to teach online.”¹⁶ In fact, one third (33 percent) of survey respondents reported that participating in an online course was one of their primary motivations for applying to the E-Teacher Program. For example, a university

¹² *English Teaching Forum* is a quarterly TEFL journal published by ECA.

¹³ Secondary school teacher/administrator, Thailand (TEYL, 2007).

¹⁴ Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT).

¹⁵ According to a program coordinator at the University of Oregon, E-Teacher courses may use Blackboard, Survey Monkey or other platforms depending on the needs and technology available to participants in each individual class.

¹⁶ Secondary school teacher, Israel (Assessment, 2008; CT, 2009; Web Skills, 2009).

administrator in Russia commented, “That was my main objective—to participate in a distance learning course.”¹⁷

Given that most survey respondents (85 percent) had never taken an online course before, they had a steep learning curve. Indeed, nearly all the respondents (95 percent) indicated that the E-Teacher course had increased their understanding of online learning to either a “great extent” (71 percent) or a “moderate extent” (24 percent).

This online course was my first online course which I ever had taken. Before taking this course, I didn’t have any idea about online courses and Blackboard.

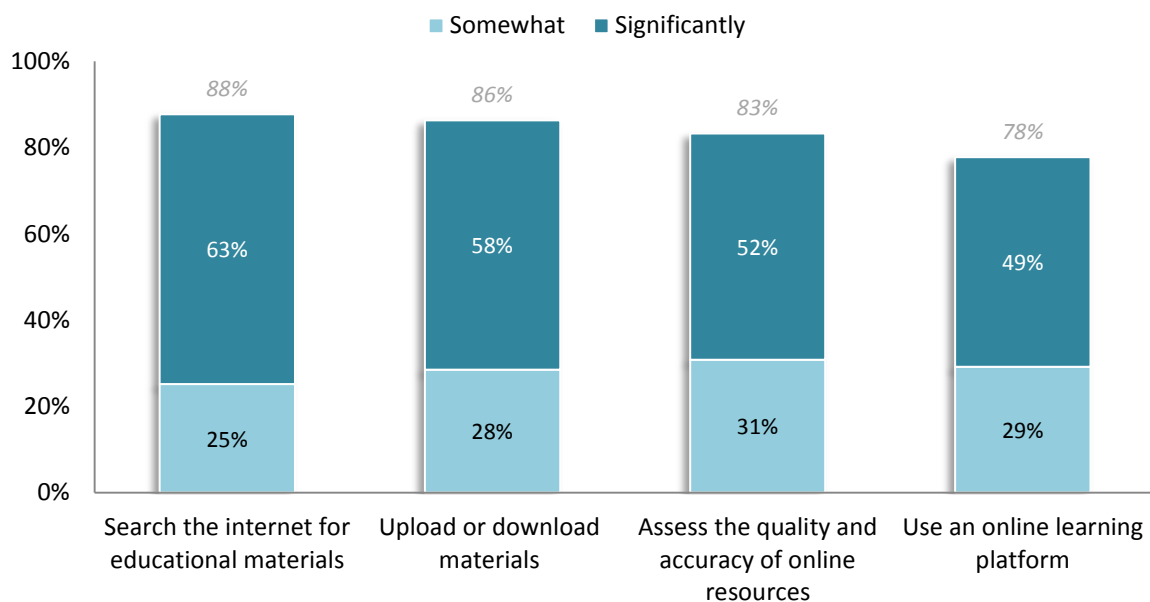
–University professor, Kyrgyzstan (CT, 2008)

I also learnt more about [the] online course format, which is quite new in my country.

–University professor, Turkey (CT, 2007)

Their course experience substantially increased participants’ skills in both using e-learning platforms and working with online resources. As shown in Figure 13, half (49 percent) of the survey respondents felt that the E-Teacher course had “significantly” increased their ability to use an e-learning platform, and more than half saw significant increases in their ability to search for educational materials online (63 percent), to upload or download materials (58 percent) and to assess the quality of online resources (52 percent).

Figure 13. E-Teacher Course Increases Participants’ Online Skills



Total n= Ranges from 360 to 366

In this vein, a college instructor in Thailand noted that the opportunity to use Blackboard was very useful because this platform was not used at local universities, while a professor in Turkey explained how she had learned to upload files by participating in the course:

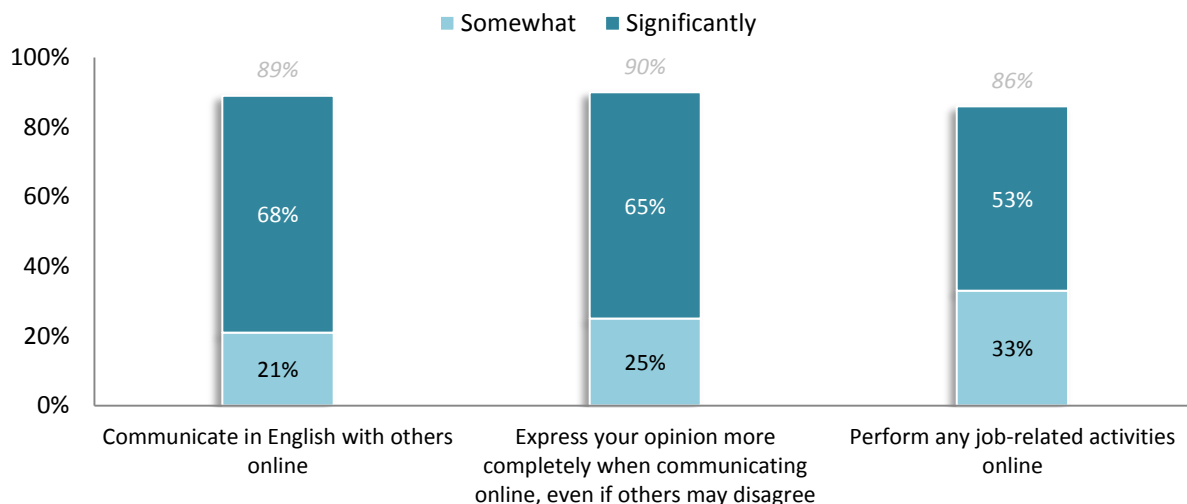
¹⁷ University administrator, Russia (CT).

The Blackboard that we use is very interesting. If I learn online [here in Thailand], there is no Blackboard like this, like [the] Critical Thinking [course] at Oregon and Maryland.¹⁸ ... So it's very interesting that I can use that.
 –Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT)

I sent my first assignment to the email address of my teacher. He checked my account. My assignment wasn't there. He told me, "Why didn't you send your assignment? You didn't upload your assignment?" I realized that I wrongly sent this assignment to his email address. He checked his email address and then sent it back to me, and I uploaded that assignment.
 –University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment)

In addition to improving their skills, the vast majority of E-survey respondents reported increased *confidence* in their ability to perform activities online and to communicate online (see fig. 14), thus increasing the likelihood that they would feel comfortable using online technologies and resources in their own teaching. Indeed, a professor in Albania wrote, “It was an exciting learning experience that provided me with a new attitude to the use of Web resources in class.”¹⁹

Figure 14. Increased Confidence in Online Communication and Activities



Total n= Ranges from 361 to 366

Several participants commented on how the experience helped them to overcome their initial trepidation with online course participation or communication in English:

I learned a lot, and I got rid of the fear of taking an online course.
 –Instructor, English language institute, Argentina (English for Law, 2006)

¹⁸ The interviewee took another E-Teacher course (TESOL Methods) outside of the evaluation period, so it is likely that he took the Critical Thinking course through the University of Oregon and the other course through the University of Maryland.

¹⁹ Teacher trainer, university, Albania (English for Law, 2009).

I was really afraid of group work. I was afraid that ... I might fail to understand their ideas properly and to prove them wrong. So I did a lot of correspondence with my group mates on this project. ... It was very challenging, but it was a great help.

—University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

I think [program participation] would be very important regarding self-esteem and confidence, because I remember myself thinking, “How shall I begin my first post? Should I say ‘greetings’ or ‘hello’ [or] ‘dear’—which one would be more appropriate?” [So I] checked with others, because it [was] my first time in such an environment.

—University instructor, Turkey (CT, 2008–09)

I really benefited from the online experience. It gave me confidence as a participant, as well as an understanding [of] how to design and organize an online course.

—Teacher trainer, university, Sri Lanka (CT, 2009)

Taking a course online is difficult at first, but many instructions are provided. When you say technology, when you say Internet, you are a little bit tense ... but step by step, you learn. You become the master of that program.

—University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment)

Using Online Learning Methods and Resources in EFL Classes. E-Teacher participants applied their new online skills—often in creative ways—to enhance their own teaching as well as their students’ learning experience. In fact, 60 percent of survey respondents reported incorporating more online resources into their teaching after taking the E-Teacher course. For example, a professor in Turkey used her university’s internal Web system to assign readings, to which students would provide written responses electronically: “In the classroom, it’s not possible to listen to all the students and have them reflect—30 students or so. But through the virtual environment, they can share and develop their writing skills.”²⁰ In addition, as mentioned earlier, some instructors have used e-learning to connect students with English learners in other countries, thus simultaneously increasing their language ability and their intercultural understanding, as in the case of a university professor in Indonesia: “[I] introduce e-learning to my students, connect my students with English learners around the world.”²¹

Some participants reported that using online resources had increased their students’ interest in learning English and/or had contributed to their learning.

I’d never used a blog before, but after [the course], I tried using blogs in my writing class, and it was quite helpful because the students in all the classes were able to give some feedback on their friends’ writing. ... Doing things on cyberspace was different and enthusiastic for some of the students who were not very much interested in the classroom.

—University professor, Turkey (CT)

[The E-Teacher course] did help me to use the computer in my classroom, so much so that the students started taking their own laptops to the classroom, and in that way everybody profited from the classes MUCH MORE (even me). Now I always use the computer in all my classes (together with my students); we surf the Internet a lot.

—Instructor, English language institute, Argentina (English for Law, 2006)

²⁰ University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment).

²¹ University professor, Indonesia (TEYL, 2007).

The students have been more interested in working with projects based on online resources, which have shown their capacities in doing something different with what they are learning.

–Trainer, teacher training institute, Venezuela (Assessment, 2009)

In addition to incorporating online elements into face-to-face classes, a few participants reported that they had gone on to teach their own online courses:

[The E-Teacher course] helped me organize teaching materials in a more efficient way at a distance course in my university.

–University administrator, Russia (Web Skills)

[The E-Teacher course] has helped me to teach through the Moodle platform.

–University administrator/curriculum developer, Brazil (Assessment, 2009)

Furthermore, a participant in Kazakhstan who took the course in Web Skills reported applying his new skills in his role as a tutor for students taking online courses:

[I] am an online tutor myself. I know the kind of problems my students may come across when taking a distance course, and [I] help them to overcome them. ... [The program helped me] acquire various skills necessary in my everyday activity.

–Teacher trainer, university, Kazakhstan (English for Law, 2008; Web Skills²²)

D. Increased Confidence

The word “confidence” came up repeatedly in E-Teacher participants’ comments about the impacts of course participation on their professional lives. Their enhanced pedagogical knowledge and skills coupled with increased awareness of English teaching around the globe led to participants gaining increased confidence in their teaching abilities and other professional duties, as well as a sense of empowerment or motivation to take new initiatives in their classrooms, institutions or beyond.

This program intensifies my confidence in myself as a professional teacher of English.

–Primary school administrator, Lebanon (TEYL, 2007)

It helped me grow as a teacher and as a person. It gave me confidence to help other teachers working in the field.

–Instructor, English language institute, Paraguay (TEYL)

I became more confident to express my thoughts and to give new ideas in my institution.

–Vocational college instructor, Peru (TEYL, 2009)

As a person, I gained confidence. As a professional, I was empowered to do things differently that I wasn’t sure that I was going to be able to do.

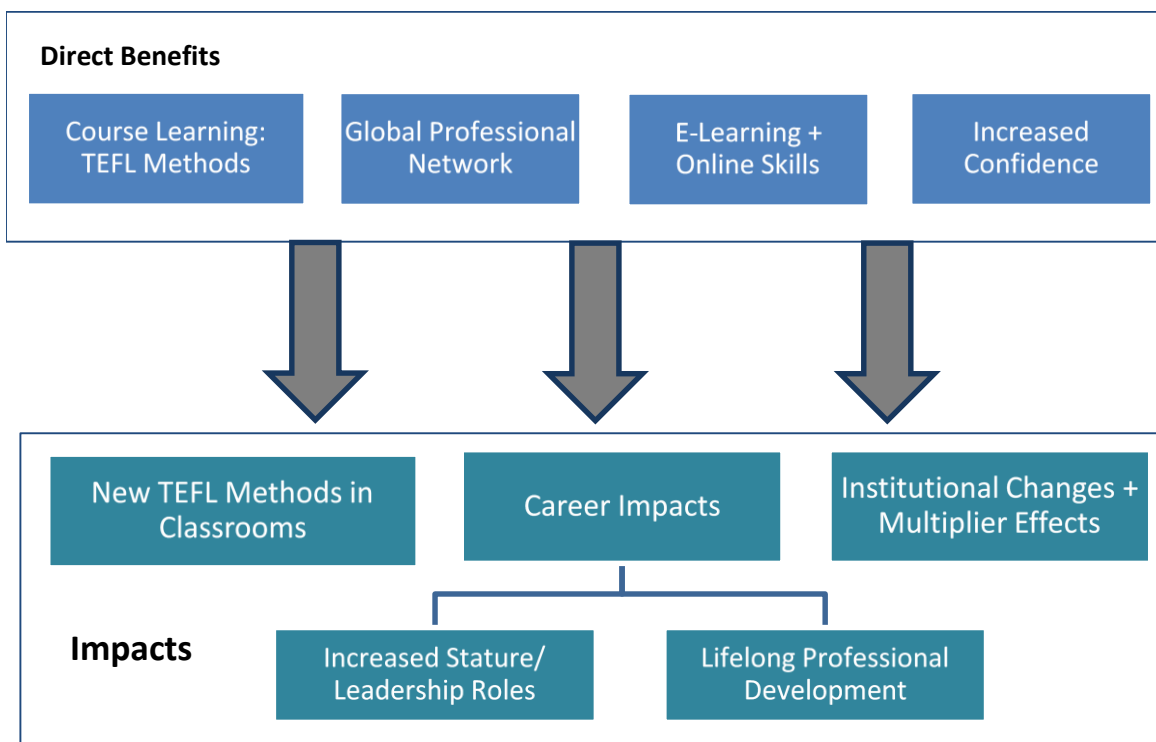
–University and primary/secondary instructor, Chile (TEYL, Assessment)

E. Program Benefits Lead to Multiple Impacts

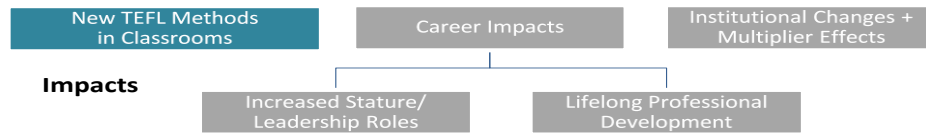
As illustrated in Figure 15, E-Teacher participants’ new knowledge and skills together with their global professional network and increased confidence led to impacts on their classrooms, institutions and careers.

²² This respondent did not indicate in which year he took the Web Skills course.

Figure 15. Program Benefits Lead to Impacts on Participant Classrooms, Institutions and Careers



IV. Impacts: Application of TEFL Methods in Participants' Classrooms



Program participation made a major impact on course participants' teaching practices. In fact, nearly all the survey respondents (93 percent) felt that they had become "more effective" teachers overall as a result of the E-Teacher Program, two-thirds (64 percent) of them to a "great extent." Furthermore, many participants reported that their improved teaching methods or practices had made a direct impact on their students, such as improved conversation skills, increased confidence or greater interest in learning English.

Before taking the course, I was doing good in the English for Business field, but after taking it, I really feel [that] I improved all the areas and became a much better instructor.

—Administrator/instructor, English language institute, Peru (English for Business, 2009)

[The E-Teacher] program provided me an opportunity to enhance my skills and become [a] more effective teacher, and [to] make my students more successful learners.

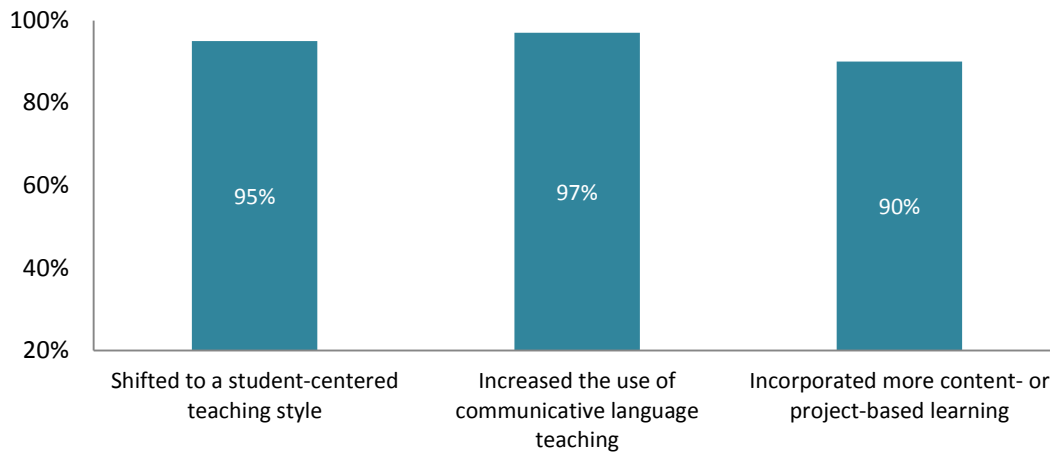
—University professor, India (Assessment, 2008)

In particular, participants have implemented student-centered teaching methods, critical thinking skills and new assessment practices.

A. Student-Centered Teaching

The biggest shift for E-Teacher participants involved changing from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one. In fact, after experiencing the student-centered teaching model in their E-Teacher course(s), 95 percent of survey respondents reported shifting to a student-centered teaching style. In addition, as shown in Figure 16, at least 90 percent of respondents increased their use of two other practices that contribute to a student-centered learning environment: communicative language teaching¹ and project-based learning.

¹ Communicative language teaching is a method that focuses on enabling students to use the language to communicate in real-life contexts, rather than just learning grammatical structures or memorizing vocabulary.

Figure 16. E-Teacher Participants Shift to Student-Centered Teaching Practices

*Total n= Ranges from 330 to 337

Former course participants in countries where the teacher-centered model is very ingrained, such as Russia, indicated that this represented an important shift from prevailing teaching practices.

Here in Russia we have a teacher-oriented model—you are a central part in the classroom. But [through my course I learned that] in the US, the teacher facilitates the process, and it is the student who plays the main part. So that helped me to come down in my practice and change it a bit more. I gave more opportunities to my students to think, to share.

—University administrator, Russia (CT)

Furthermore, participants in Russia and Thailand explained that the E-Teacher courses had taught participants to emphasize the importance of speaking English without worrying about making mistakes—again representing a major shift in teaching practices:

In Thai culture, many students are very shy to do anything, speak, think, and [they] worry about a mistake... My [E-Teacher] professor told me, “Don’t worry, you have to spread out your ideas.” [So] I told my students, “Don’t worry about a mistake. This class is [to learn to] communicate in English, so if you don’t speak, it’s not communicative at all. I would like to hear your voice.”

—Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT)

I became more tolerant when they make mistakes. Nowadays there is a tendency to concentrate more on the communicative goal and [to] evaluate whether it was achieved, even if there were some mistakes.

—University administrator, Russia (CT)

In terms of communicative language teaching, participants reported using a wide variety of activities to engage their students in conversation in English in simulated real-life contexts, ranging from debates to drama to interviews.

Every week I interview the students [in Business English and English for Tourism Industry courses]. I could call it a naturally occurring conversation because I just want them to talk naturally.

—University professor, Thailand (Assessment)

[I am] using drama in teaching ... and [teaching] students to debate.

—Secondary school teacher, Israel (TESOL Methods)

[The E-Teacher course led me to begin] monitoring and moderating discussions.

–Trainer, teacher training institute, India (Assessment, 2008)

Participants reported that more interaction in the classroom had increased students' confidence in speaking English, which resulted in improved skills. In fact, 82 percent of survey respondents believed that the E-Teacher course had helped them to improve their students' conversation skills (either "significantly" or "somewhat"), as shown in Figure 17 below.

Another way that E-Teacher participants have promoted a greater role for students in the classroom is project-based learning. For example, an English instructor in Thailand explained how her new teaching approach integrates a communicative approach with project-based learning:

My idea is like a communicative approach, so ... I say, "Where do you want to work? Make your own business card. Introduce yourself to your friend; what is your company doing?" [Do] not focus on correctness. Next one, you have to respond by phone. I didn't teach in front of [the] class, but what I have to do is learning by doing. Anyone who asks more questions gets more points.

–Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT)

Often E-Teacher participants assign group projects for students to work on collaboratively:

[My teaching approach involves] collaborative learning, project-based learning, always manipulating the language so they can come up with a product of their own. For example, let's talk about the little kids. ... They end up making a book of their own at the end, for example. That could be one of the products.

–University and primary/secondary instructor, Chile (TEYL, Assessment)

I incorporated more collaborative learning [in]to my class activities. More group work and thinking independently. ...

–E-Teacher, Cuba (CT, 2008)²

Many participants pointed out that shifting to a student-centered model had improved their communication and relationships with students. For example, some former participants noted that their E-Teacher course experience had motivated them to provide more feedback to students.

The E-Teacher Program ... improved my communication between me and my students.

–Curriculum developer, Afghanistan (CT, 2005)

I began to give my students as constructive and detailed feedback as [my E-Teacher instructor] gave to me, because it was really very pleasant to read such feedback, and it makes you see the instructor is interested in your success, your progress.

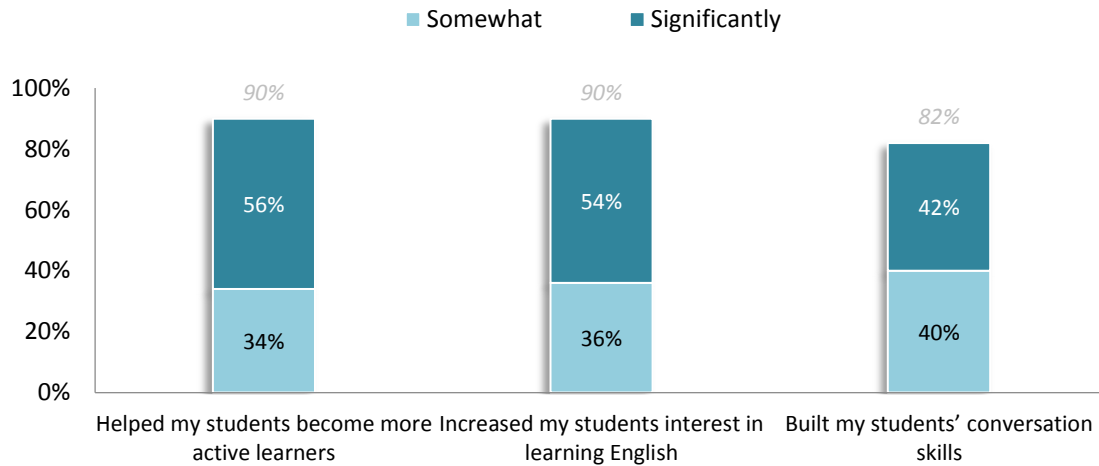
–University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

[The E-Teacher course led me to begin] giving specific and constructive feedback [and] being sensitive to learner needs.

–Trainer, teacher training institute, India (Assessment, 2008)

Furthermore, 90 percent of survey respondents felt that their use of interactive and student-focused teaching techniques had helped their students become more active learners and had increased their interest in learning English, as shown in Figure 17.

² This survey respondent did not provide information on his/her professional role or institutional affiliation.

Figure 17. Students Become More Active Learners of English: Participant Perceptions

*Total n= Ranges from 336 to 339.

E-Teacher participants mentioned various ways in which they had motivated and engaged their students in English, including music and computer-assisted language learning.³

As an E-Teacher participant, I found myself having [a] variety of teaching strategies that I use and making my learners more interested and active in learning English.

—Primary school teacher, South Africa (TEYL, 2007)

The first thing I have to do, and every English teacher has to do, is motivate them to love English first, to feel familiar with English. If we teach them a lot, but they don't love [it], they will still think English is a monster. Before, they didn't listen to English music. But after I teach them for one term, they love to listen, and they sing a song in English.

—Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT)

[I] encouraged students to learn by themselves more than before. This is another part I look after, [the] self-accessed language learning center.

—Vocational college instructor, Thailand (CT)

B. Incorporating Critical Thinking Skills into EFL Classes

As with student-centered teaching, incorporating critical thinking into EFL classes represented a major shift—and in some cases a challenge—for E-Teacher participants in many countries. A university instructor in Turkey explained that during the Critical Thinking course, many of her classmates expressed concern that it would be “difficult for them to implement [because] it was not [their] way of culture, or it was not appropriate to ... their big-sized classes.”⁴ Nonetheless, many former participants in the Critical Thinking course, in Turkey and elsewhere, were highly motivated to incorporate critical thinking into their teaching and found ways to work within the system, usually by implementing changes on a small scale in their own classes.

³ Computer-assisted language learning typically refers to interactive self-study computer programs available on CD-ROM and DVD, as well as Web-based learning resources.

⁴ University instructor, Turkey (CT, 2008–09).

You cannot change the basic things here, quite difficult. Everything is preset and pre-decided. So in the room I was given, I tried to educate or to use the applications I've learned in the CT [Critical Thinking] course. ... I explicitly told [the students] this is CT. We talked about some prejudices against the way people think, some taboo subjects, and when I suggested [to] them to look from a different perspective, most of them changed their way of looking. For most of them, it was informative and enlightening.
—University professor, Turkey (CT)

I used the knowledge I gained in that course while I'm developing my syllabus, because it was based on critical thinking, and each week the lecturer ... wanted us to ask the rationale behind those activities or the plan or those stages, and while developing my syllabus, now I feel that I surely use [it].
—University instructor, Turkey (CT, 2008–09)

Critical thinking became very, very important to me personally because I tried to reinvent myself as a teacher. ... I tried to understand why I teach my students, and I chose tasks that encouraged students to evaluate critically and become more purposeful, [tasks that] should contribute to their development.
—University administrator, Russia (CT)

The [E-Teacher] Program helped me look at the lesson planning differently and critically, taking into account its redesigning, including the critical thinking elements.
—University professor, Kazakhstan (CT, 2008)

Participants who implemented critical thinking into their teaching reported that the new approach had produced positive results for students. For example, a professor in Turkey noted that critical thinking had improved her relationship with students, while a TEFL program administrator in Chile observed that students in her department had demonstrated improved performance on tests due to the analytical abilities they had acquired from critical thinking activities in their classes.

I've been a popular teacher. I've got a really good relationship with my students. After dealing with CT [critical thinking], I would walk in and talk about my teaching strategy values, so it contributed to my teaching a lot. ... I really value my students thinking critically. I don't want them to memorize from books, recite them; I want real discussion with understanding, so indirectly they talk about this with other students and my colleagues.
—University professor/administrator, Turkey (CT, 2004)

When they have to take a test, they know not only to recall or use explicitly what they learned, but are able to analyze, to evaluate something.
—University administrator, Chile (CT)

C. New Assessment Practices

As noted in Section III.A, E-Teacher participants who took the Assessment course gained knowledge of a broad range of assessment techniques, as well as how to determine the best method(s) for different purposes and how to align students' tasks/assignments with assessment. Thus, many participants reported applying new techniques in their own classes, often with positive results. For example, a primary school teacher in Yemen wrote, “[I use a] variety of test types with my students, implementing and adapting what I have [learned] ... to my own classes, and [I] find good results in my teaching.”⁵

⁵ Primary school teacher, Yemen (Assessment, 2009).

In particular, some participants in Thailand and Turkey implemented scoring rubrics to assess their students' speaking skills or assignments. For example, a university instructor in Thailand reported using a rubric "in order to assess [students] accurately and to be fair with them."⁶ Similarly, a secondary school teacher in Thailand noted that the concept of a rubric was "especially" useful for her, as she had figured out how to use it to assess her students' speaking skills.⁷ A TEFL professor in Turkey mentioned that she had already developed a rubric for assessing her students' skills prior to participating in the E-Teacher Program, but that the Assessment course had helped her to feel confident that she was "doing the right thing."⁸

Other E-Teacher participants discussed a variety of other assessment techniques that they had implemented, such as peer assessment and portfolios, as well as designing tasks to align with assessment. A few participants specifically mentioned that these new techniques had been inspired by suggestions from former classmates. For example, an EFL professor in Chile picked up the idea of peer assessment from an E-Teacher classmate in Korea:

In the first stages of any task, you have them assessing each other, giving you some sort of grade or evaluation. ... Just due to the fact that your classmate is assessing you, you had to do your job. ... It also gives students an awareness of the work they are doing, and all sorts of benefits. I started doing that as a bit of practice.

–University professor, Chile (Assessment)

We give an in-class participation mark to the students each week. How we should do that, and while assessing students, what kind of things should we consider? These were included in the course items, and they helped me in the classroom.

–University professor/testing officer, Turkey (Assessment)

Suggestions made by colleagues of the course ... were integrated into my class techniques/assessment.

–University professor, Paraguay (Assessment, 2008; ESP, 2009)

[After the course, I began to] design and develop tasks to accommodate both formative and summative types of assessment.

–Trainer, teacher training institute, India (Assessment, 2008)

As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, E-Teacher participants not only have implemented changes in their own classrooms, but also have impacted English teaching practices at the institutional level and beyond.

⁶ University instructor, Thailand (Assessment).

⁷ Secondary and vocational college instructor, Thailand (Assessment).

⁸ University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment).

V. Impacts: Participants Attain Increased Stature and Leadership Roles



Program participation had a major impact on many E-Teacher participants' careers, including increased stature and/or responsibility within their home institutions, as well as new job opportunities.

A. Increased Stature and Influence within Institution

After completing their course, many participants reported that they were looked to as experts in their course content. Their increased stature coupled with increased confidence (as described in sec. III.D) both made participants more likely to assert new ideas and increased the likelihood that those ideas would influence others. For instance, a university professor in Turkey explained, "It's hard to make changes, but when you learn something new and you prove that you learned it and it's the correct information, it is easier."¹

Many course participants, as well as their colleagues and employers, viewed the E-Teacher course completion certificate as an important credential that indicated increased stature and expertise. In fact, two-thirds (66 percent) of survey respondents considered the certificate "extremely" valuable. Some participants proudly displayed it with their university diplomas and/or showed it to others to demonstrate their accomplishment.

I was the first at the university to have such a certificate. But that is important in Russia, and it is important for me because it's a kind of record of your achievement. You can show it to other people. Some of them say, "Oh, I also want to have one like this. It's really great. I want to have it on the wall with all my colleagues to see how good I was."

—University and kindergarten instructor, Russia (TEYL, English for Law)

A teacher should certify that after a certain period of work, we improved our qualifications by attending some courses or special programs. So it's really very important. When I brought the certificate to the university, I showed it to my boss. ... He was really happy that I had the certificate. It means also a very important formal aspect.

—University administrator, Russia (CT)

I took my certificate in my file of academic studies and diplomas, so I'm very proud of that. ... I show it to everyone. The value of that is not less than my other diplomas that we value.

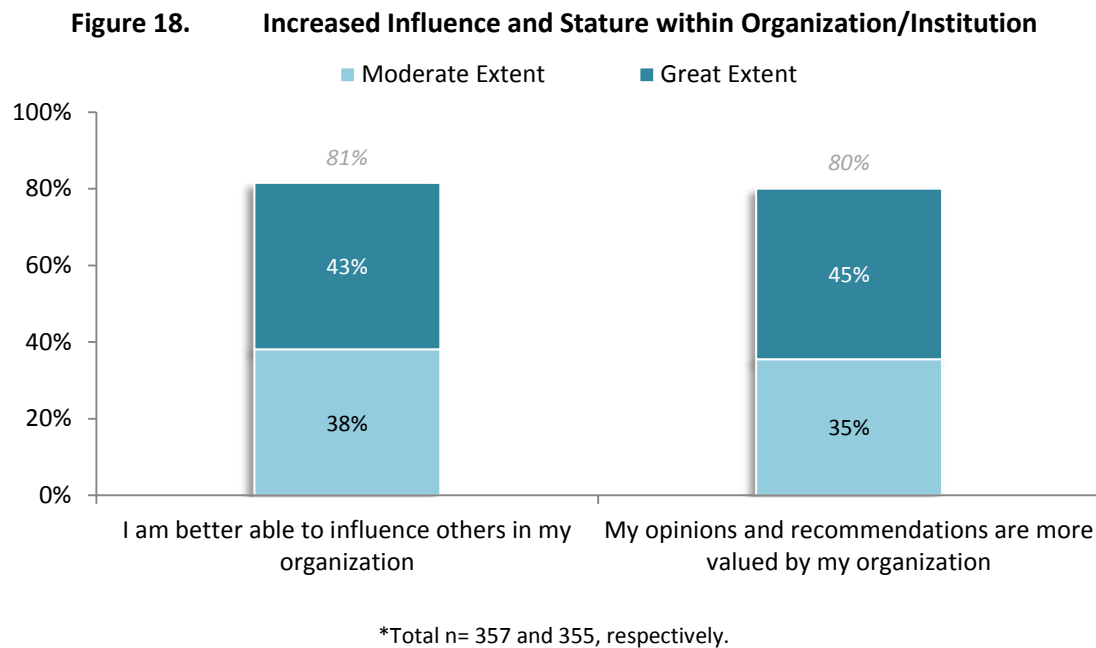
—University professor/administrator, Turkey (CT, 2004)

[Once you have the certificate,] they consider you [to] have more knowledge than others, so those testing leaders, if they need people, you will be the first one to be chosen.

—University professor/testing officer, Turkey (Assessment)

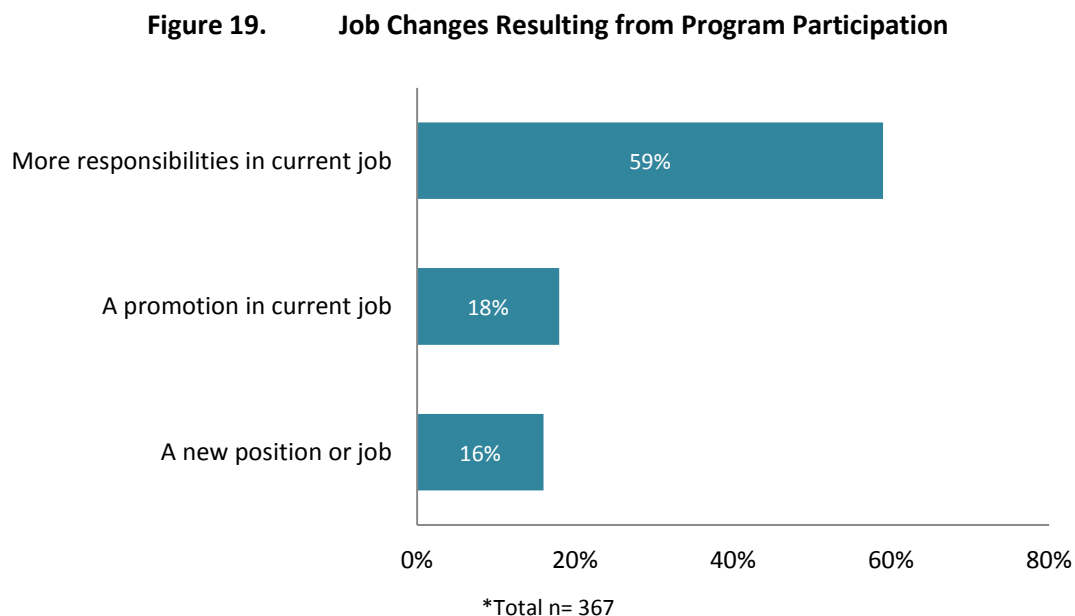
¹ University professor/testing officer, Turkey (Assessment).

As shown in Figure 18, 8 in 10 survey respondents reported that as a result of their E-Teacher participation, they had greater influence within their organization/institution, which also placed higher value on their opinions and recommendations.



B. Job Changes: Increased Responsibility and Leadership Roles

The majority (59 percent) of survey respondents reported that their E-Teacher participation *had led directly* to increased responsibilities in their job, and 18 percent reported that they had received promotions.



The most common type of job change identified by participants involved increased leadership roles, such as becoming a “coordinator” of other instructors or advising institutional leaders on curriculum.

[I] have become Coordinator for various courses and [have] taught at the graduate level.

–University curriculum developer, West Bank/Gaza (English for Business)

Taking the course widened my knowledge of assessment. This allowed me to participate actively in the decisions made at an institutional level on how students are assessed. I have also participated [in] creating the curricula for the institution.

–Administrator, English language institute, Peru (Assessment, 2007)

I took the lead in a Ministerial Committee that discussed the introduction of a new series of English language [texts] in general education. I worked as a consultant and programme coordinator for this project.

–Ministry of Education official, Sudan (TEYL, 2007)

Some participants—especially those who took the Assessment course—described a shift in job focus as a result of their new expertise.

[The E-Teacher course] opened the way for me as a beginning teacher to take a special interest in assessment.

–College instructor, Egypt (Assessment, 2007)

[The E-Teacher course led directly to me doing] more work on assessment.

–Vocational college administrator, Thailand (Assessment, 2008)

In addition, as shown in Figure 19 above, many survey respondents either earned a promotion (18 percent) or obtained a new job (16 percent) as a result of their E-Teacher course. For example, a secondary school teacher in Thailand explained that after submitting a formal report on her E-Teacher course to the Ministry of Education, she was promoted to an administrative position at her school: “They accepted my report to give me a bigger position in teaching. ... Now I am the Deputy Director in Academic Affairs ... and I take care of the International Education and Resource Network (IERN) project.”² In terms of new jobs, a former classroom instructor in India reported attaining a new position with an e-learning company after completing an E-Teacher course: “I could effectively move from the role of an English lecturer to that of an ELA [English Language Arts] curriculum developer/instructional designer, designing and reviewing lesson plans and assessment sheets for e-learning purposes.”³

A few participants in Peru noted that their E-Teacher course had led to new consulting, business or freelance opportunities.

I was able to use my new skills to improve as a private tutor for chief executives at all the most important firms in my city, which led me to a much higher status.

–Instructor, English language institute, Peru (English for Business, 2006)

[The E-Teacher course] led me to do some freelance work on other areas related to the topic.

–Curriculum developer, English language institute, Peru (Assessment, 2009)

² Secondary school administrator, Thailand (TEYL, 2007).

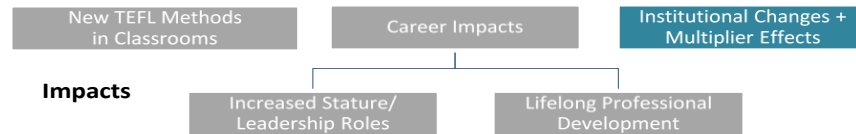
³ Curriculum developer, e-learning company, India (English for Business, 2006).

In addition, a teacher trainer in Kazakhstan was named president of her regional English language teachers' association following her participation in the Critical Thinking course.⁴

Clearly, former course participants' higher status and increased leadership roles—both in their institutions and within the broader professional community—facilitated their ability to make changes within their institutions and to multiply the effects of their new pedagogical knowledge, as will be discussed in Chapter VI.

⁴ Teacher trainer, university, Kazakhstan (CT, 2006).

VI. Impacts: Institutional Changes and Multiplier Effects

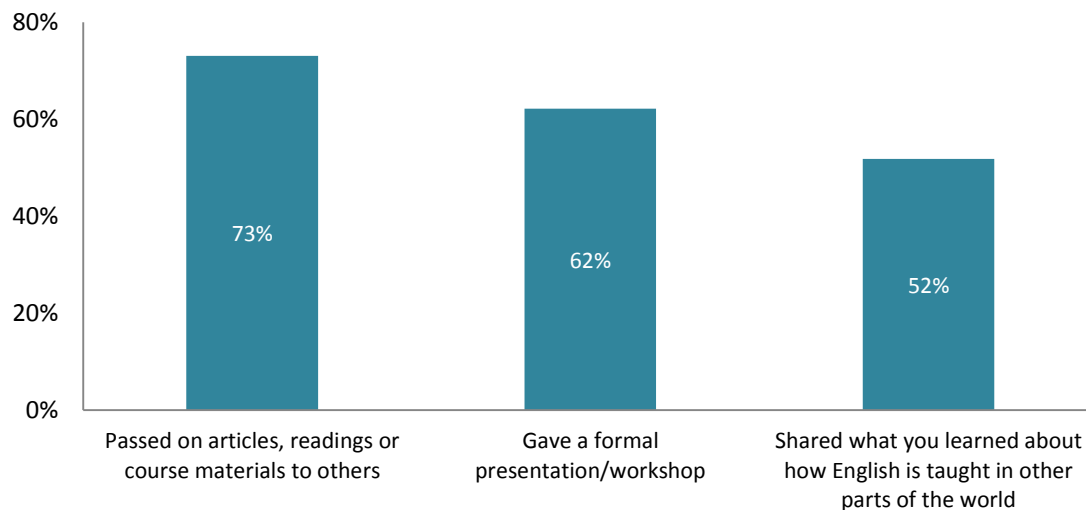


After completing an E-Teacher course, participants were eager to share their new teaching practices and knowledge with their colleagues both within and beyond their home institutions. In many cases, they implemented institution-wide changes to teaching practices, curricula or English language programs; some participants even were able to multiply their new knowledge at a national level.

A. Sharing New Knowledge and Teaching Methods with Colleagues

As shown in Figure 20, the majority of respondents shared their learning with colleagues at their home institution in various ways, most commonly by sharing course readings or materials (73 percent) and/or giving formal presentations or workshops (62 percent).

Figure 20. Knowledge-Sharing with Home Institution Colleagues



*Total n=367

In some cases, participants reported sharing their learning with colleagues on a weekly basis throughout the duration of the course. Some of them explained that they had participated in the course as a representative of their department, so that the responsibility for sharing their knowledge and materials with colleagues was an expectation as they went into the course.

[Taking the course] was like an assignment for me as well, because ... I attended the course and also I informed my colleagues about what's going on in the course. ... I shared the articles with them. ... They were expecting that information because we want to do the teams in the right way.

—University testing officer, Turkey (Assessment)

When I studied online, [the] next week I had to report [to] the English section meeting ... so they learned after me. They learn from me.

–Secondary school administrator, Thailand (TEYL, 2007)

More commonly, participants gave formal workshops and/or shared materials with colleagues after completing the course.

I got all the materials and did one workshop, a general summary, and then I told my colleagues, “Here are the materials that I downloaded, and I have the whole file of this material. Here are the materials which you can find [on the] Internet.” I’m responsible for my teachers and want them to know as much as I know.

–University professor/administrator, Russia (Assessment, 2009)

Some participants reported giving multiple workshops or multi-day seminars, or providing ongoing training to their colleagues.

I conducted two 6-day seminars on Critical Thinking through Reading, one in 2009, the other in 2011. There were 20 participants in each seminar, and I got very positive feedback from them.

–Instructor, private language center, Uzbekistan (CT, 2008)

[I] conducted many meetings and workshops for my co-teachers.

–Primary school teacher, Yemen (Assessment, 2009)

I have been using my knowledge and experience in CT [critical thinking] in my classroom since the completion of the course. I am also leading the trainings and discussions [for the school].

–Intensive English coordinator, secondary school, Turkmenistan (CT, 2004)

In addition, many course participants reported sharing information informally and encouraging their colleagues to implement the new teaching practices and techniques they learned in their E-Teacher courses. For example, a participant in the Assessment course wrote, “[I] share with colleagues what I learned and make teachers aware of different forms of assessment they can implement.”¹ Given that many participants are administrators, teacher trainers or supervisors, this informal sharing or “recommending” new methods likely has a substantial influence on other instructors.

In fact, many participants mentioned that knowledge-sharing had led directly to other instructors applying the methods, as in the following example from an English instructor in Burkina Faso:

I have had the opportunity to share my E-Teacher course content with my colleagues in a seminar; I presented on “Content-based learning as a way to motivate English learners in Burkina Faso.” Since then, my colleagues all try to apply content- or task-based learning.

–Classroom instructor, Ministry of Education, Burkina Faso (TEYL, 2008)

In some cases, colleagues asked E-teacher participants about their new teaching methods because they heard positive buzz about it from students in E-teacher classes. For example, a university professor in Turkey commented, “Indirectly the other colleagues hear from students that in my

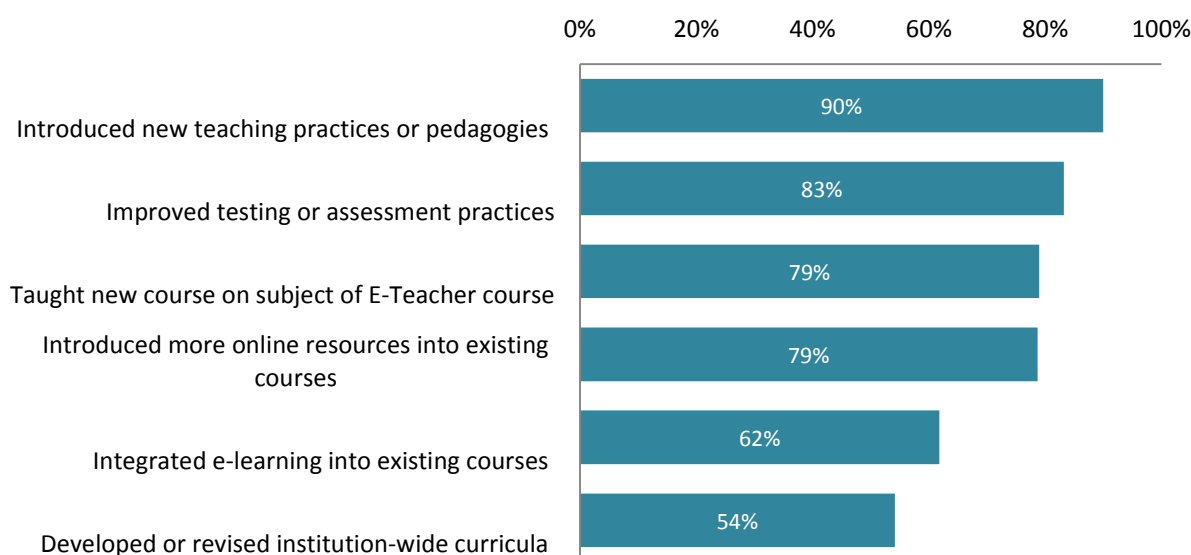
¹ Administrator, English language institute, Peru (Assessment, 2007).

classroom critical thinking takes an important role to play. ... So they heard it indirectly, and suddenly they were asking questions.”²

B. Changing Institutional Practices and Curricula

The vast majority of survey respondents reported that their E-Teacher course participation *had directly led* them to make multiple changes at their institutions: introducing new teaching/pedagogical practices (90 percent), improving testing and assessment (83 percent); teaching new courses on the subject of their E-Teacher course (79 percent); and introducing more online resources (79 percent) and/or e-learning (62 percent) into existing courses. In addition, more than half (54 percent) of respondents made changes to their institution’s English language curriculum.

Figure 21. Institutional Changes by E-Teacher Participants



*Total n= Ranges from 344 to 359

The most common change in pedagogical practices mentioned by participants was the incorporation of critical thinking practices into English language learning. Various respondents who had taken the Critical Thinking course found ways to integrate this approach at their institutions. For example, teacher trainers incorporated critical thinking into their training courses, and English instructors convinced colleagues to do so in their classes.

I worked with my teachers to help them increase the use of critical thinking strategies in their classes, with remarkable results in their practice.

—Instructor/trainer/curriculum developer, English language institute, Paraguay (CT, 2009)

[I have trained teachers to] introduce “why” questions to raise students’ critical thinking skills.

—Teacher trainer, educational nonprofit, Yemen (Assessment, 2006; CT, 2007)

² University professor/administrator, Turkey (CT, 2004).

[I] integrated activities and tasks that would develop the critical thinking skills of tutors and in turn the learners when teaching literature in the L2 [second language] classroom.

–Teacher trainer, university, Sri Lanka (CT, 2009)

[I] persuaded fellow teachers to allow students to use their critical thinking in the learning process.

–Instructor, English language institute, Indonesia (CT, 2009)

In terms of assessment, several instructors and administrators who took the E-Teacher assessment course applied what they had learned both to improve testing practices and to broaden the range of assessment techniques used at their institution.

[The course] has helped me to propose new projects and to totally revise the assessment system at the binational center ... while I was coordinating it. ...

–University administrator/curriculum developer, Brazil (Assessment, 2009)

I was able to help improve the assessment practices of my other co-teachers and pre-service teachers as well. Together with other teachers, we were able to develop diagnostic tests and rubrics for performance assessments.

–University professor, Philippines (Assessment, 2006)

We used all the information while doing our jobs. ... While preparing a question or a test, we discussed whether this is right or wrong and whether this is applicable or not. ... We didn't make big changes, but we made changes in our testing unit.

–University testing officer, Turkey (Assessment)

As for online learning, several participants found ways to recreate the dynamic Web-based discussions and collaborative learning they had experienced in their E-Teacher course for teacher trainees at their own institutions.

I also organized [the teacher trainees] into Web search groups and made arrangements with the school Internet administrators or cyber cafes (sometimes putting in my own money). Groups reporting were very instructive and brought in a lot of learning and sharing.

–Teacher trainer, Access Microscholarship Program, Senegal (TEYL, 2005)

I encourage trainees to start online discussions and create Web-based groups and blogs.

–Teacher trainer/administrator, Ministry of Education, Egypt (CT, 2009)

Access learners at [my college] started using Facebook technology to discuss learning issues with their teachers and friends.

–Teacher trainer, university/Embassy Access Program, India (Assessment, 2008)

Curriculum changes ranged from redesigning an entire curriculum to revising a single course syllabus to adding new courses on the subject of their E-Teacher course, often introducing the subject into the curriculum for the first time.

The English teaching program curriculum was redesigned, and courses for teaching young learners were introduced.

–University curriculum developer, Chile (TEYL, 2009)

A similar E-Teacher course was organized among all our schools. ...

–University curriculum developer, Tajikistan (CT, 2009)

Currently I teach a new online subject [course]: How to teach English through technology.

–Teacher trainer, university, Albania (English for Law, 2006)

[Participation in the E-Teacher course directly led me to] incorporate a young learners course in the Master's program and also as an optional course in the BA program.

–Teacher trainer, university, Mexico (TEYL, 2009)

Since I completed the course on project-based learning, I included the course for the first time in the graduate program.

–Trainer, teacher training institute, Turkey (TEYL, 2008; Project-Based Learning, 2009)

Several teacher trainers who took the Critical Thinking or Assessment course reported revising course syllabi to integrate these methods into TEFL training courses:

[The E-Teacher course led me to introduce] more activities in the curriculum which were focused on language testing and assessment.

–Teacher trainer, university, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Assessment, 2006)

Those materials I learned from this [Critical Thinking] course help me to develop [a] new effective syllabus for the course "Special Course on Methods of Teaching English" at my university.

–University professor, Kyrgyzstan (CT, 2008)

Additionally, a curriculum developer in Bahrain integrated critical thinking into secondary school curricula: "During the revision of our secondary EFL curricula, critical thinking was emphasized as one of the theoretical components. ..."³

Furthermore, administrators at primary and secondary schools around the world who took Teaching English for Young Learners reported making school-wide curricular changes based on the course content:

I integrated the PYP [Primary Years] Programme of the IB [International Baccalaureate] with the content of the course. There's quite a lot that can be applicable.

–Curriculum developer, secondary school, Peru (TEYL, 2008)

It led me to assist in the revision of the curriculum development process and supporting in developing English language materials for Key stage 1 first year (6 year olds).

–Principal, international preschool, Maldives (TEYL)⁴

These participations led me to focus on communication using speaking and writing skills, so I give extra time to run reading, spelling and speaking contests. ...

–Primary school administrator, Syria (TEYL)

In Algeria, a university curriculum developer used his course knowledge to develop course materials that could accommodate different kinds of learners: "I have learnt how to develop a syllabus design and use material I have modified to answer the needs of specific learners."⁵

³ Curriculum consultant, business school, Bahrain (CT, 2004).

⁴ Web sites for international preschools in Maldives indicate that they provide education for children between 3 and 6 years of age.

⁵ University curriculum developer, Algeria (English for Business, 2008).

In addition to curricular changes, a few E-Teacher participants in administrative positions were motivated by their course experience to increase professional development opportunities for staff at their institutions. For example, an administrator at a Bolivian institution established the practice of sending “the best teacher to TESOL every year,”⁶ while another in Egypt was inspired by the E-Teacher discussion boards to initiate “reflection sessions and discussion groups [for colleagues to] discuss challenges and find solutions.”⁷

C. Multiplier Effects and National Impacts

In addition to sharing their new knowledge and effecting changes at their own institutions, many participants multiplied the effects of their course experience by sharing their new expertise with TEFL professionals in the broader community, such as at national conferences.

I have been invited at my school and other local institutions to conduct a few workshops on how to implement critical thinking strategies in our teaching practices. I firmly believe that has made a difference in the way my peers view our profession.

—Instructor, binational center, Colombia (CT, 2008)

The online CT [Critical Thinking] course helped me design and conduct workshops in the English Language Teachers' Association as well as [the] Central Asia conference in Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan).

—Teacher trainer, university, Kazakhstan (CT, 2006)

I presented a paper on critical thinking at the IATEFL [International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language] conference [in Chile].⁸ That helped me show my colleagues what I had learned in that course. And ... they were pleased to hear about that as well, because that's not an area very well-known here in Chile.

—University administrator, Chile (CT)

[The E-Teacher course led me to] introduce the concept of critical thinking to many organizations.

—University professor, Sudan (CT, 2009)

Among those respondents employed by their country's ministry of education, changes implemented by former participants may lead to even greater national impacts. For example, a Ministry official in Sudan who took the Young Learners course reported that he subsequently “spread the culture of TEYL [Teaching English to Young Learners] among academics, educationalists and practitioners,”⁹ and an official in Bahrain reported integrating critical thinking into lesson plans.¹⁰

Most notably, a high-level education official in Jordan who took the Critical Thinking course in 2005 subsequently implemented student-centered teaching into the educational system of all 172 primary and secondary schools run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the country:

The E-Teacher [course] was cascaded to all the English language teachers/UNRWA schools in Jordan (172 schools) at the time, and I was leading on that as my capacity of being school supervisor at the time; all the ideas, strategies and thoughts learned from E-Teacher were

⁶ Teacher trainer, English language institute, Bolivia (TEYL, Assessment).

⁷ Administrator, educational nonprofit, Egypt (CT, 2004).

⁸ IATEFL has a local chapter in Chile, as well as in many other countries around the world.

⁹ Curriculum developer, Ministry of Education, Sudan (TEYL, 2007).

¹⁰ Curriculum developer, Ministry of Education, Bahrain (CT, 2007).

employed in the educational reform that UNRWA was implementing, and I took the part of planning how to change the focus of teaching to become student-centered.

–Emergency education officer, Jordan (CT, 2005)

In addition, a program administrator in Tajikistan was motivated by her E-Teacher experiences to create a Web site to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources among English language teachers throughout the country:

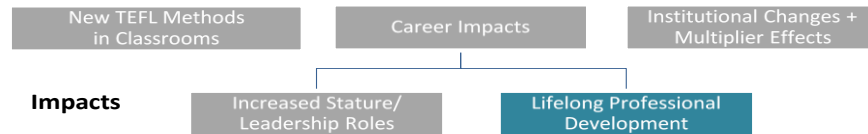
As a teacher using online resources and interacting with colleagues from other countries, I also developed a Web site ... to organize English clubs in different parts of Tajikistan. I continuously created lesson plans and shared with colleagues both in and outside of my home country.

–Nonprofit administrator, Tajikistan (CT, 2005; English for Law, 2006)

Furthermore, some participants who work as teacher trainers for in-service and/or pre-service teachers pointed out that changes they have implemented in the TEFL courses that they teach will be replicated by their students in their own classrooms throughout the country. In this vein, a university professor in Israel explained, “[The E-Teacher course led me to] arise the students’ interest and involve them to a greater degree. These novice teachers (my students) implemented their newly acquired teaching practices and pedagogies in their classrooms. ...”¹¹

¹¹ University professor/administrator, Israel (TEYL, 2009).

VII. Impacts: Participation Spurs Lifelong Professional Development



Participants attributed high influence to their course experience in kick-starting them onto a path of lifelong learning. In fact, three-quarters (75 percent) of survey respondents credited the course to a “great extent” in making them more motivated to engage in professional development. For example, participants reported taking more training courses, participating in professional associations and conferences, publishing in professional journals and seeking career advancement opportunities, as well as pursuing graduate study.

As an E-Teacher scholar, I have proved to myself that an eager teacher will do everything in order to improve her craft. That continuous education of the teacher is like the usual process of breathing.
 –Secondary school teacher, Philippines (TEYL, 2009)

Thanks to the E-Teacher Scholarship Program, I got involved with the local and national teacher associations. I took part in the local ELT [English language teaching] teacher development activities. I gave many presentations and workshops on the issue of assessment for learning. Now, I think my career is on the right way.
 –Secondary school teacher, Morocco (Assessment, 2008)

What I value the most about my experience after the E-Teacher course is that it made [me] realize the need to continue updating in the field, [to] be more demanding on yourself, and keep your interest in helping your students at all times. ... After taking the E-Teacher course, I ended up enrolling [in] the TESOL International Association, to keep on learning.
 –Instructor, binational center, Colombia (CT, 2008)

Professional development courses. One common way in which E-Teacher participants have pursued further professional development is by taking more online courses or trainings (such as additional E-Teacher courses); one-third (32 percent) of respondents have done so. For example, an education official in Jordan reported taking “another online course with Liverpool University and the University of Oregon.”¹ Among this group, nearly all respondents (97 percent) rated their initial E-Teacher course experience as “extremely” or “very” valuable in preparing them for additional online programs.

[The E-Teacher course] was the first “long” online course [that I had taken], which helped me greatly in my other online courses.
 –University professor, Russia (Assessment, 2007)

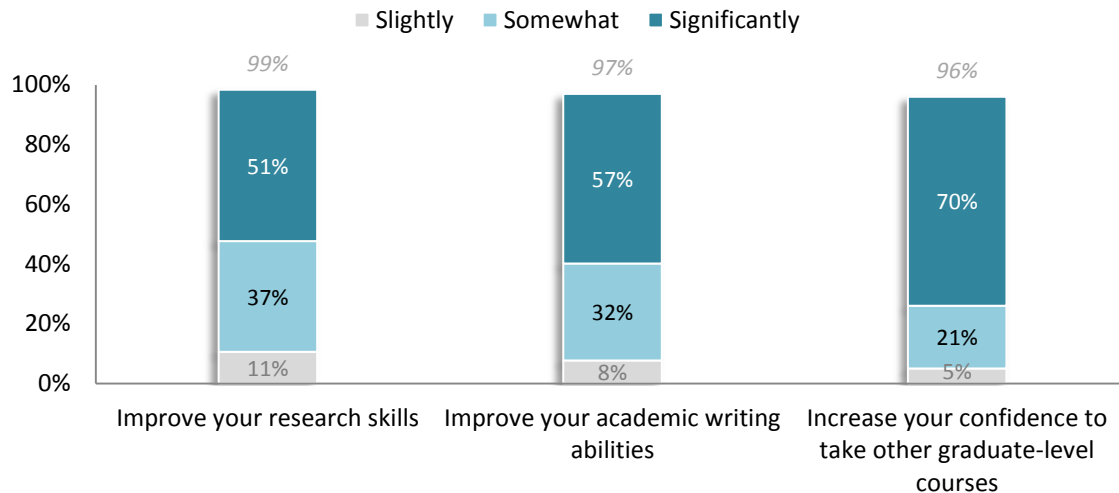
We had to practice for the first time. That’s why it was also valuable in that respect. For example, I went to [another institution]. It was easier for me to adapt myself there; it was flawless for me then.
 –University instructor, Turkey (CT, 2008–09)

Pursuing graduate degrees. Although the majority (60 percent) of survey respondents had taken graduate-level courses prior to their E-Teacher participation—and many already had a graduate

¹ Emergency education officer, Jordan (CT, 2005).

degree (Master's or PhD)²—nonetheless, 70 percent of them reported that the E-Teacher course had *significantly* “increased [their] confidence to take other graduate-level courses in their field.” Furthermore, as shown in Figure 22, nearly all the respondents felt that the course had improved their research and academic writing skills, the majority to a significant extent.

Figure 22. Enhanced Academic Skills and Confidence for Further Graduate Study



*Total n= Ranges from 359 to 367

Several participants cited these skills as among the most valuable or useful aspects of the course experience. For example, a secondary school administrator in Thailand cited the E-Teacher course as critical to helping her succeed with the student-related research for which she is currently responsible:

I thought that if I didn't have the opportunity to join this program, maybe I could not have made the research about studying of the students. I have the final how-to-do, how to make it. This course made it easier.
 –Secondary school administrator, Thailand (TEYL, 2007)

In addition, several participants credited the program with improving their written English and/or other academic skills:

It was a very valuable professional experience testing [my] personal abilities in many aspects, especially in updating writing skills and written communication in English. ...
 –Ministry of Education official, Russia (CT, 2009)

I found that experience very useful in ... practicing academic English.
 –University professor/teacher trainer, Kazakhstan (English for Law, 2008; Web Skills)³

It was a great experience for me and contributed much to my academic development.
 –University professor, Turkey (CT, 2007)

² As explained in ch. I, two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents reported that they currently held a graduate degree (Master's or PhD) at the time of the survey. However, the evaluation did not collect data on participants' highest degree at the time of program participation. Based on the frequency with which E-Teachers mentioned having pursued such degrees after their course participation, it is likely that the figure would have been lower prior to the E-Teacher Program.

³ This respondent did not indicate in which year s/he took the second course.

These skills primed participants for graduate study. Indeed, many—primarily those who did not have a graduate degree before participating in the program—were inspired by their course experience to pursue a Master’s or PhD, or even both in some cases. Several participants specifically mentioned pursuing graduate study in the United States or other English-speaking countries, including the United Kingdom and Australia, where their improved academic English skills would be particularly useful. In fact, some respondents noted that their E-Teacher participation had resulted directly in either a scholarship or acceptance to such a program.

It inspired me to continue my studies in the field, and since then I completed [my] MA in Applied English Linguistics and started [my] PhD.
–PhD student, Uzbekistan (TEYL, 2009)

[The course] put me on an academic track. After that course, I decided to get an MA degree, and in the following year I tried to get a PhD degree, and I’m still studying on it.
–University professor, Turkey (CT)

The E-Teacher Scholarship Program has been a life-changing experience. ... Despite my experience, [I] had not been eligible for the scholarships for a first degree or a Master’s Degree. However, after completion of the E-Teacher Scholarship and obtaining an A in all modules, the Maldivian Government was convinced that I was eligible for a Master’s degree. ... Therefore in 2006 I completed my MA in Education Management and Planning in [the] United Kingdom.
–Principal, international preschool, Maldives (TEYL)

[As a direct result of my E-Teacher participation,] I got the Fulbright Scholarship and attended SIU/Carbondale.
–Teacher trainer, university, Niger (CT, 2009)

I won [the] Edmund Muskie Graduate Fellowship to study Educational Technology at the University of Hartford in 2009. [I] received my M.Ed. in Educational Technology in 2011.
–Nonprofit administrator, Tajikistan (CT, 2005; English for Law, 2006)

[As a direct result of my E-Teacher participation, I won a] scholarship in Australia for 2 years.
–Ministry of Education official, Philippines (CT, 2009)

In addition, some participants who were already pursuing graduate degrees reported that their E-Teacher course had influenced their decision of what area to specialize in or to focus on for their thesis.

I really benefited from the online experience. ... Following this course, I was given additional training and conducted my MA research thesis on “Teaching literature online using desktop videoconferencing.”
–Teacher trainer, university, Sri Lanka (CT, 2009)

[The course was] instrumental in my decision of actually going into an assessment-related area for my PhD, because that was the first time I was forced to articulate what I thought about evaluation in a formal way, interacting with peers in an educational setting.
–University professor, Chile (Assessment)

It has helped me to propose negotiations before setting up assessment criteria, instruments, and so it has helped me to develop my doctorate project in assessment associated [related] to interculturalism.
–University administrator/curriculum developer, Brazil (Assessment, 2009)

Other career opportunities. In addition to graduate study, some participants reported other professional opportunities that had emerged as a result of their course participation. For example, two former Critical Thinking course participants in Turkey recounted how the course had led them to become experts in the subject, which eventually resulted in prestigious publications:

At the moment I am about to write a book about critical thinking ... with a British co-writer, and we're going to write the book for a British company, so I'm working on it. That [E-Teacher course] was a very nice initial step to deal with critical thinking.

—University professor/administrator, Turkey (CT, 2004)

I have an article with my college. It was the, you know, comparison of critical thinking skills and in-classroom questioning of the other students. It was published in [the] European Journal of Future Education ... in 2008.

—University professor, Turkey (CT, Assessment)

VIII. Conclusions

Participation in an E-Teacher course provides English teaching professionals around the world with advanced TEFL training and a global network of colleagues. The course experience both motivates and equips participants to improve their own English teaching practices as well as to initiate changes within their institutions or in the broader TEFL profession, sometimes impacting English teaching nationwide.

By offering online, asynchronous graduate-level courses for free, and including regionally diverse students in each class, the E-Teacher Program represents a unique professional development opportunity for many English teaching professionals. Participants reported gaining increased confidence, enhanced e-learning/online skills and expanded knowledge of pedagogical approaches, as well as expertise in the specific area of TEFL covered in their course. In turn, their newly acquired expertise and confidence often led participants to gain increased stature and/or to take on leadership roles at their home institutions, which empowered them to make changes at the institutional level. Furthermore, course participation greatly motivated most participants (75 percent of those surveyed) to pursue further professional development, such as graduate degrees, more training courses and/or involvement in TEFL associations.

After completing their E-Teacher course(s), participants were eager to apply their new pedagogical methods in their own classes, to share what they learned with others and to find ways to multiply the impact of their course learning beyond their own classrooms. In particular, nearly all surveyed participants reported shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered teaching style, which in some countries represented a major shift from prevailing teaching practices. The great majority of survey respondents reported that this shift had improved their students' conversation skills, increased their interest in learning English and helped them become more active learners. In Jordan, an education official "cascaded" student-centered learning into all the 172 schools within his purview.

In addition, many participants who took the courses in Critical Thinking, Assessment or Teaching English to Young Learners were profoundly impacted by what they learned and subsequently implemented a wide range of new techniques in their own classes or at an institutional level. For example, participants who teach in TEFL teacher training programs have instituted new courses on the subject of their E-Teacher course or have integrated the subject matter into the curricula of TEFL training courses. Furthermore, the majority of survey respondents reported incorporating online elements into their teaching environments after their E-Teacher course(s), often as a way to facilitate greater interaction among students, to increase cross-cultural interactions among English learners in different countries or to facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas among teaching professionals.

E-Teacher participants repeatedly emphasized that the opportunity to form a global community of practice was one of the greatest benefits of program participation. Many participants have sustained relationships with their online classmates and instructors, sometimes resulting in collaborations on research, teaching materials or conference presentations. Most importantly, years after their course participation, participants stressed that the ongoing exchange of ideas and experiences with global colleagues was a source of great support, as articulated by an

interviewee in Russia: “We just support each other. It’s very important. ... We just enrich each other.”