

# What Makes an EAP Practitioner? Teacher Identity, Education, and Training Opportunities in the HE Sector

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# Question for you!

If a teaching colleague at a big teaching conference asked you 'What do you do?', how would you describe yourself?

I'm a(n) ....

Write it down, if you have a pen and paper!



# Background to the Study

- **Teacher Development Coordinator at the ELC in UoL**
- **Responsible for TD and CPD opportunities for own teaching team as well as externally-facing courses**
- **As teacher educator, interested in education and training opportunities available**
- **Also interested in the formation of professional identity**



# Research Questions

1. How do teachers create their professional identity?
2. Do teachers perceive a need for specific EAP teacher education or qualifications in relation to professional identity?
3. What kinds of CPD/ education opportunities are perceived as most useful and valuable for EAP teachers?

Related question for me:

- How can I improve the educational and training opportunities available to ELC teachers?



# Structure of Study

**1. Anonymous questionnaire containing 20 questions, taking on average 6 minutes to complete.**

**This was distributed to all staff via a link to Survey Monkey, with the data tracking turned off to allow anonymization.**

**2. Semi-structured interview consisting of around 10 questions covering similar topics as the questionnaire, but allowing for more open-ended responses.**

**Volunteers were sought. Interviews lasted 15-20 minutes, were voice-recorded and transcribed.**

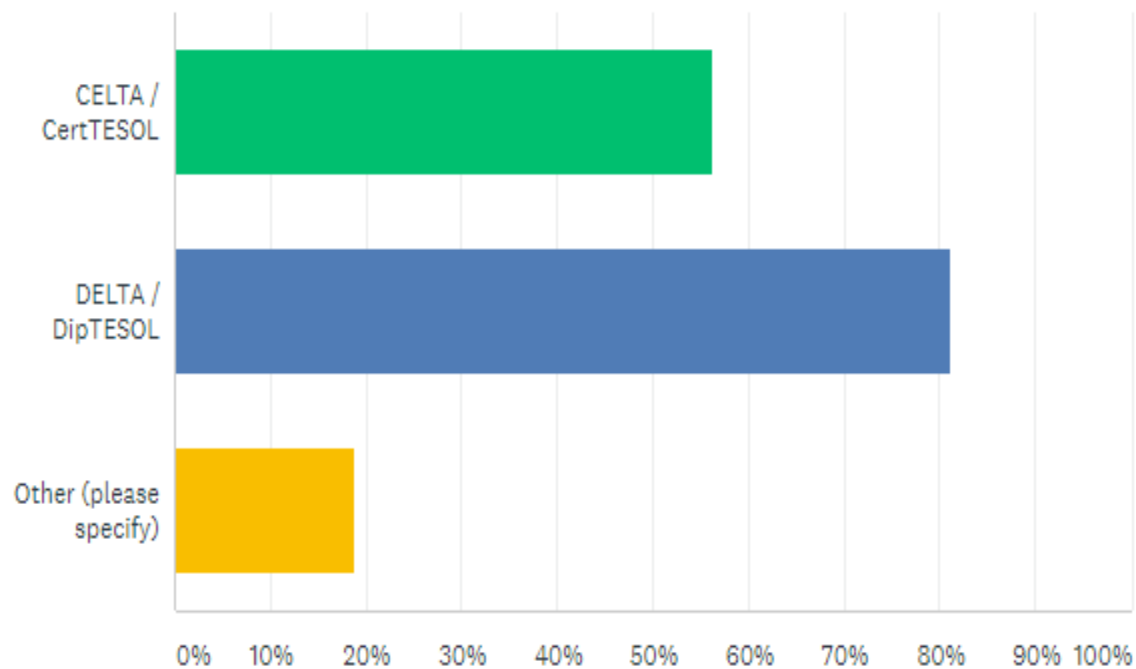
# Participants in the Study

- **General English courses, Preessional and Insessional EAP courses throughout the year.**
- **Most ELC teachers have experience of both**
- **Employed around 65-70 teachers over this past summer**
- **Questionnaire had 16 respondents – response rate of over 20%**
- **4 staff volunteered for semi-structured interviews, 2 were interviewed, both permanent staff members.**

# Results: Respondents' Information

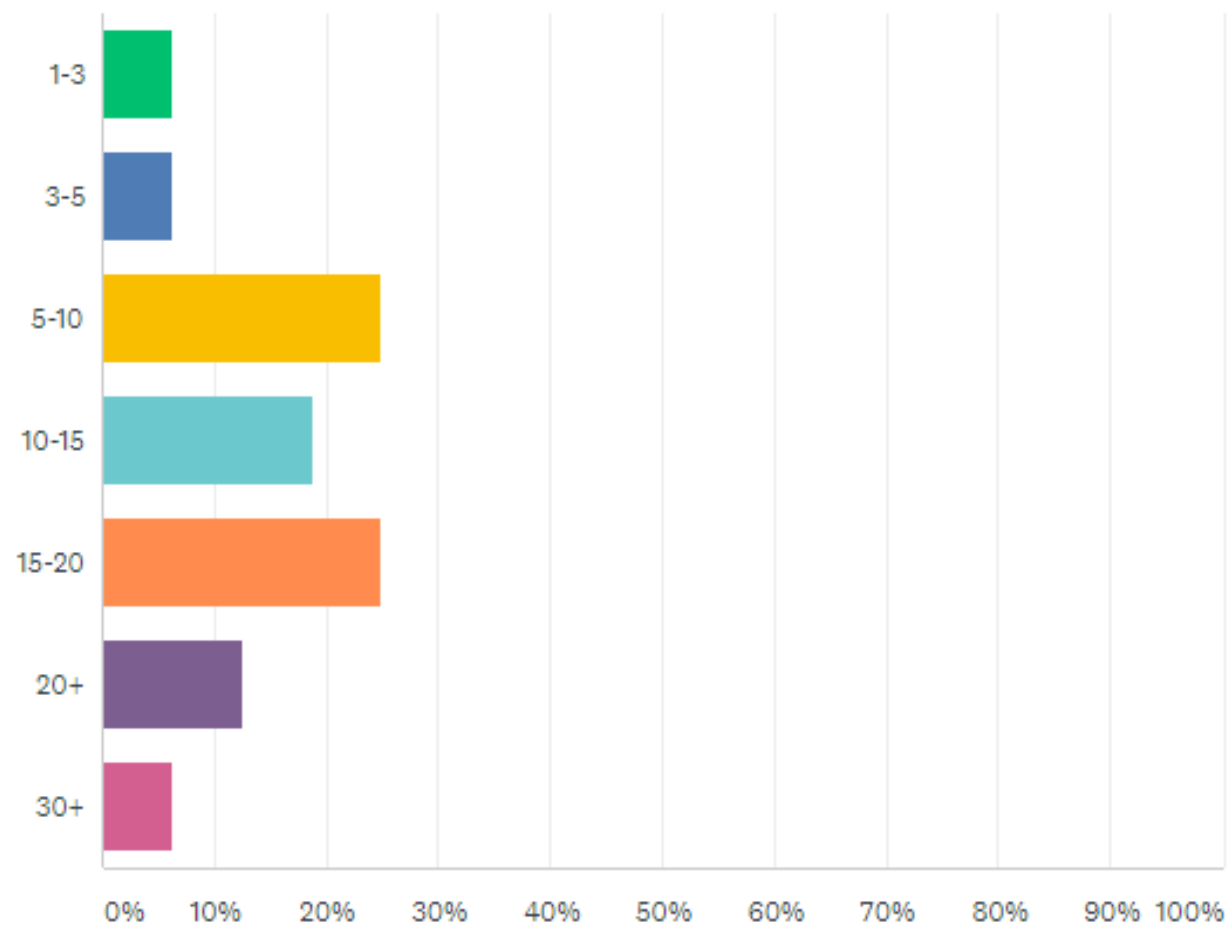
What recognised English language teaching (ELT) qualification(s) do you hold?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



# How many years' teaching experience do you have in total?

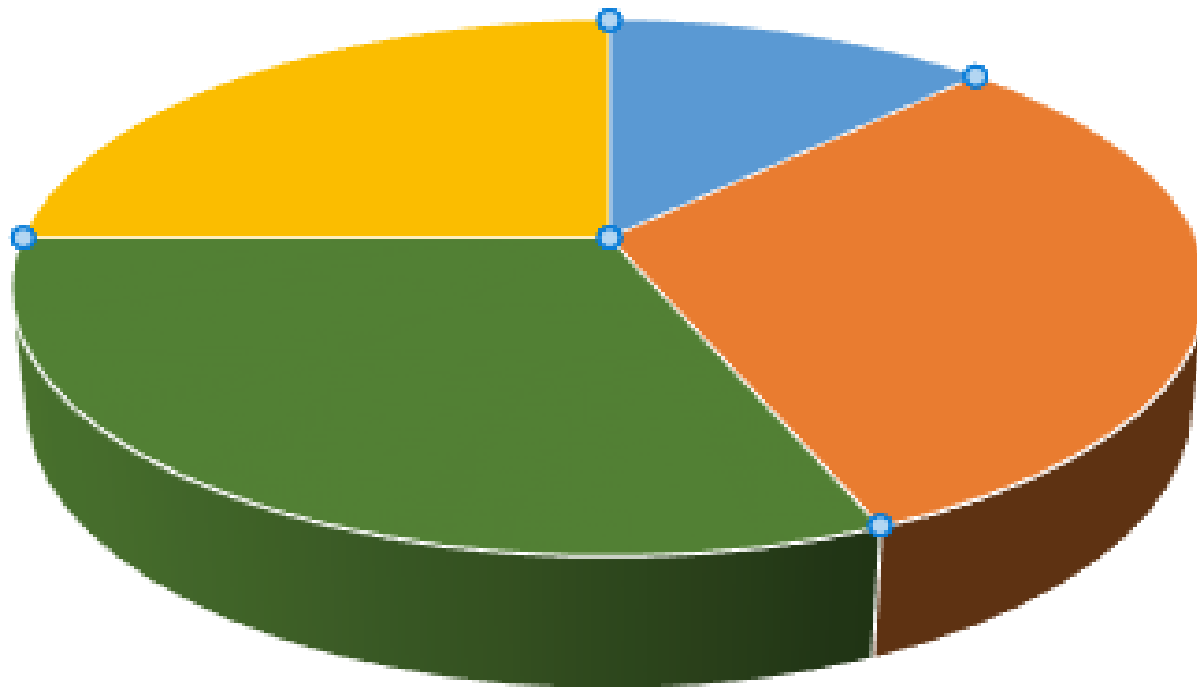
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0





## Range of experience

EAP Experience



■ None   ■ Under 1- 4 years   ■ 5-10 years   ■ Over 10 years

If you had to choose, would you identify yourself as

**A General English teacher**

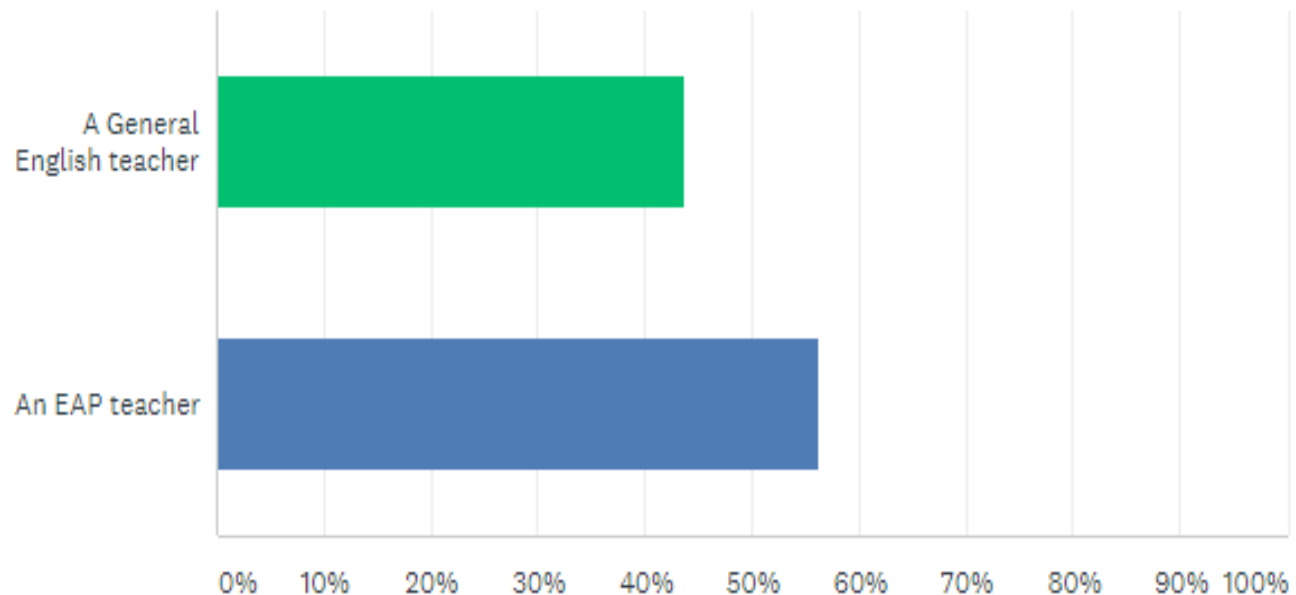
**An EAP teacher**

**‘I think nowadays I would probably say I’m an EAP teacher’**

**‘I would say that I am an EAP teacher now’**

If you had to choose, would you identify yourself as

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



# Experience & Identity

- A clear link, but not necessarily a straightforward one.
- Teachers who identified themselves as EAP teachers had anywhere between 1 year and 19 years of EAP teaching experience.
- Teachers who identified themselves as General English teachers had between 0 EAP experience and as much as 12 years of EAP experience.
- The experience criterion is applied differently by various individuals.

Identity	EAP teacher (9)	GE teacher (7)
Years of EAP teaching experience	1, 3, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 10, 19	0, 0, <1, 2, 4, 10+, 12

# Own Professional Identity

**As little as possible!**

**Teacher.** **University Teacher of English.** **TEFL**  
**teacher.**

**I prepare international**  
**students for their Masters Degrees.** **English Teacher.**

**I teach English as a Foreign Language to**  
**students who want to study at Liverpool University.**

**I teach English as a foreign language and**  
**academic skills.** **English Language Teacher.** **A**  
**lecturer.**

**Teach English to adults from other**  
**countries.** **EFL teacher.** **An English Language**  
**Teacher.**

**I teach English as a second**  
**language.** **English teacher.** **University**

**Teacher in English Language.**

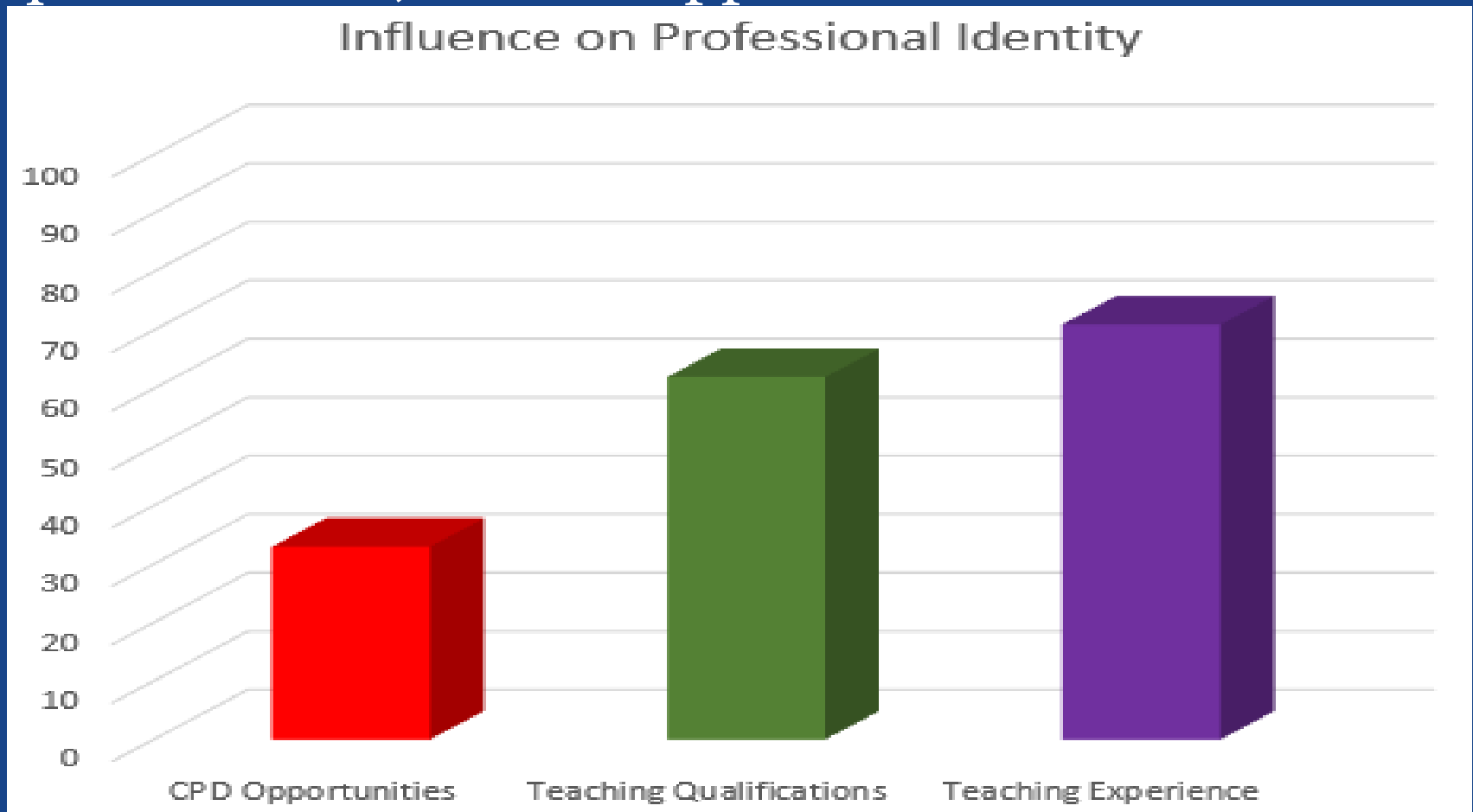
# Own Professional Identity

P.1. ' ... I call myself a university teacher now, but that's because that's the job description... when I was at XX college, I was a lecturer because that's what my contract said I was. I wouldn't call myself a lecturer here, even though I was actually teaching EFL there and I'm teaching EAP here...

P.1. 'Going back to if someone asked me 'Oh what do you do?' I would say 'I teach English for Academic Purposes at the University of Liverpool', I would kind of include that in my.. I work at the university. So I think your place of work definitely, well for me anyway, is probably part of my professional identity as well.'

P.2. 'Well, I've accumulated seven or so solid years of discipline-specific EAP teaching, so I think I can legitimately call myself an EAP teacher. I don't feel like a newbie, but there's always more to learn...'

Which influences your professional identity most:  
Teaching experience, formal teaching  
qualifications, or CPD opportunities available?



# Which influences your professional identity most?

Again, this was supported by the more fine-grained data from the interviews.

**P.2. 'I think experience. That is what you learn most through, and what legitimises your being able to say 'I'm an EAP teacher''**

**P.1 'As the years go by, I realise I feel more confident about what I do'**

**When asked what helped them to feel like an EAP teacher they said:**

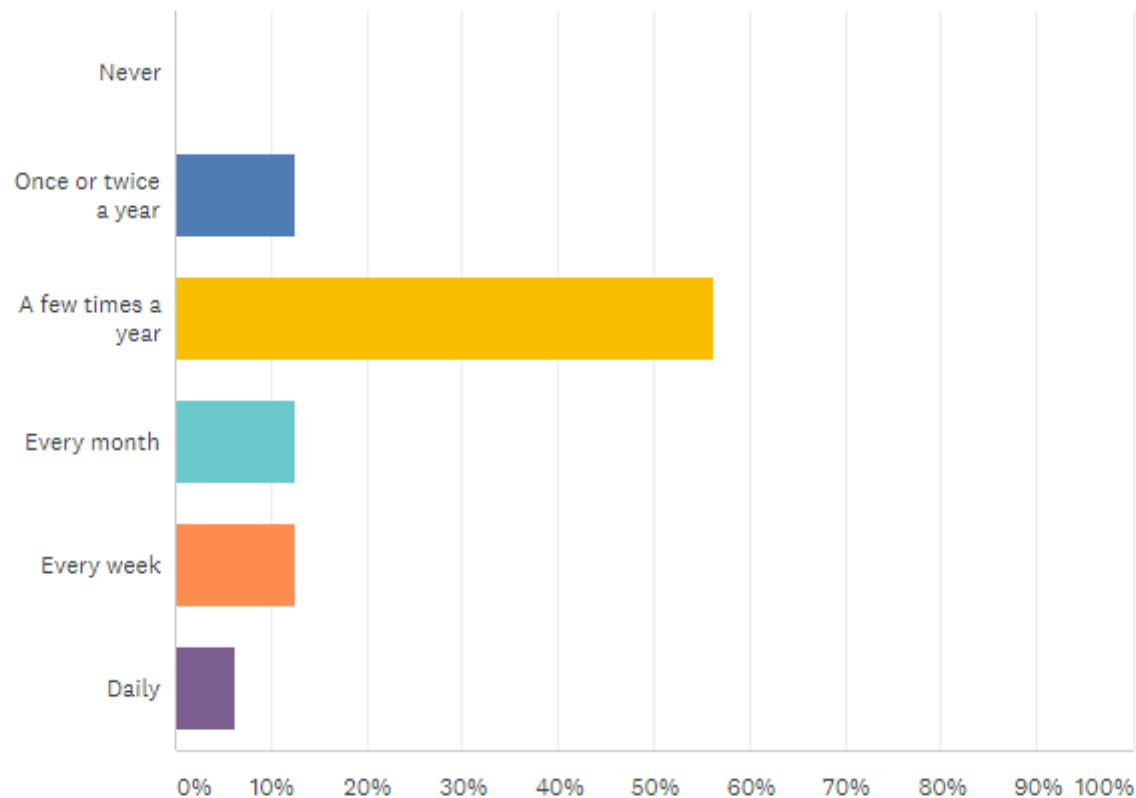
**'It was experience. It wasn't qualifications, it was just pure experience and talking to other people... Literally it took a couple of years to become more confident about it...'**



# Questions relating to CPD & teacher education

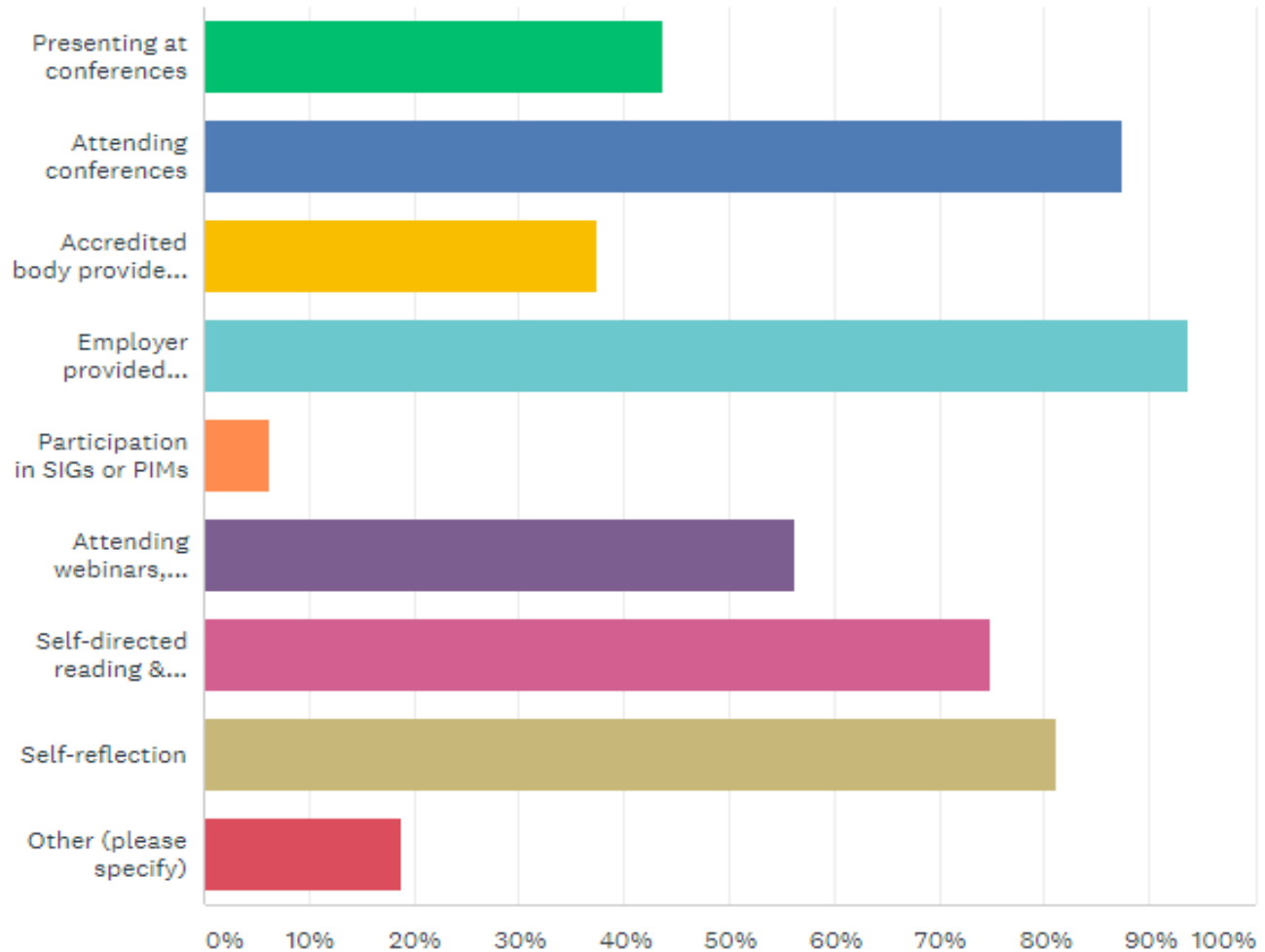
How often do you undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD)?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



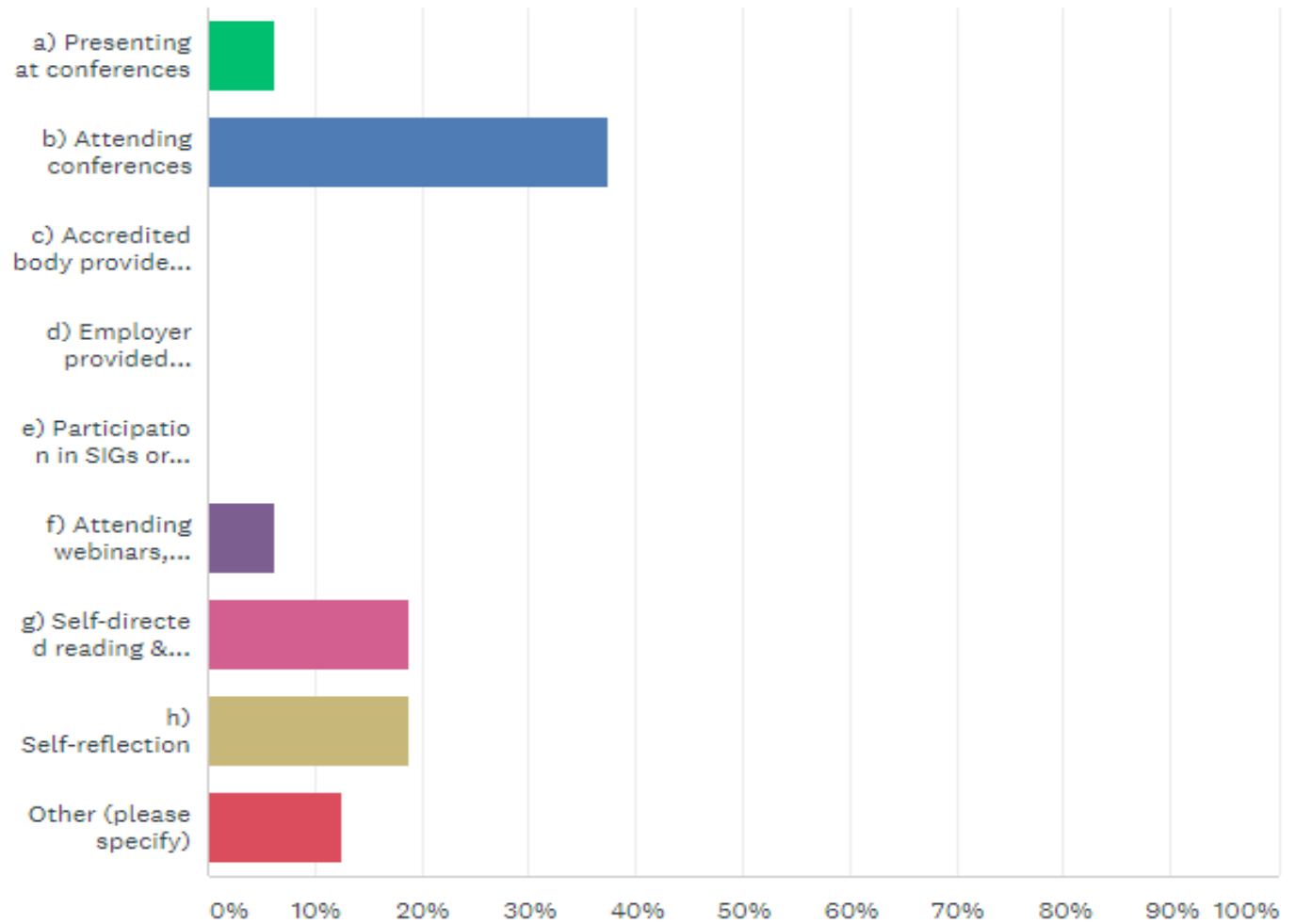
# What kinds of CPD do you engage with? Choose all that apply

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



# Which type of CPD do you find most useful?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



# Quotes

**P.1. 'I quite like face-to-face. That's why I do conferences because I think sometimes it's not necessarily the presentation that you attend that's important, it's the discussion, the networking that is quite useful.'**

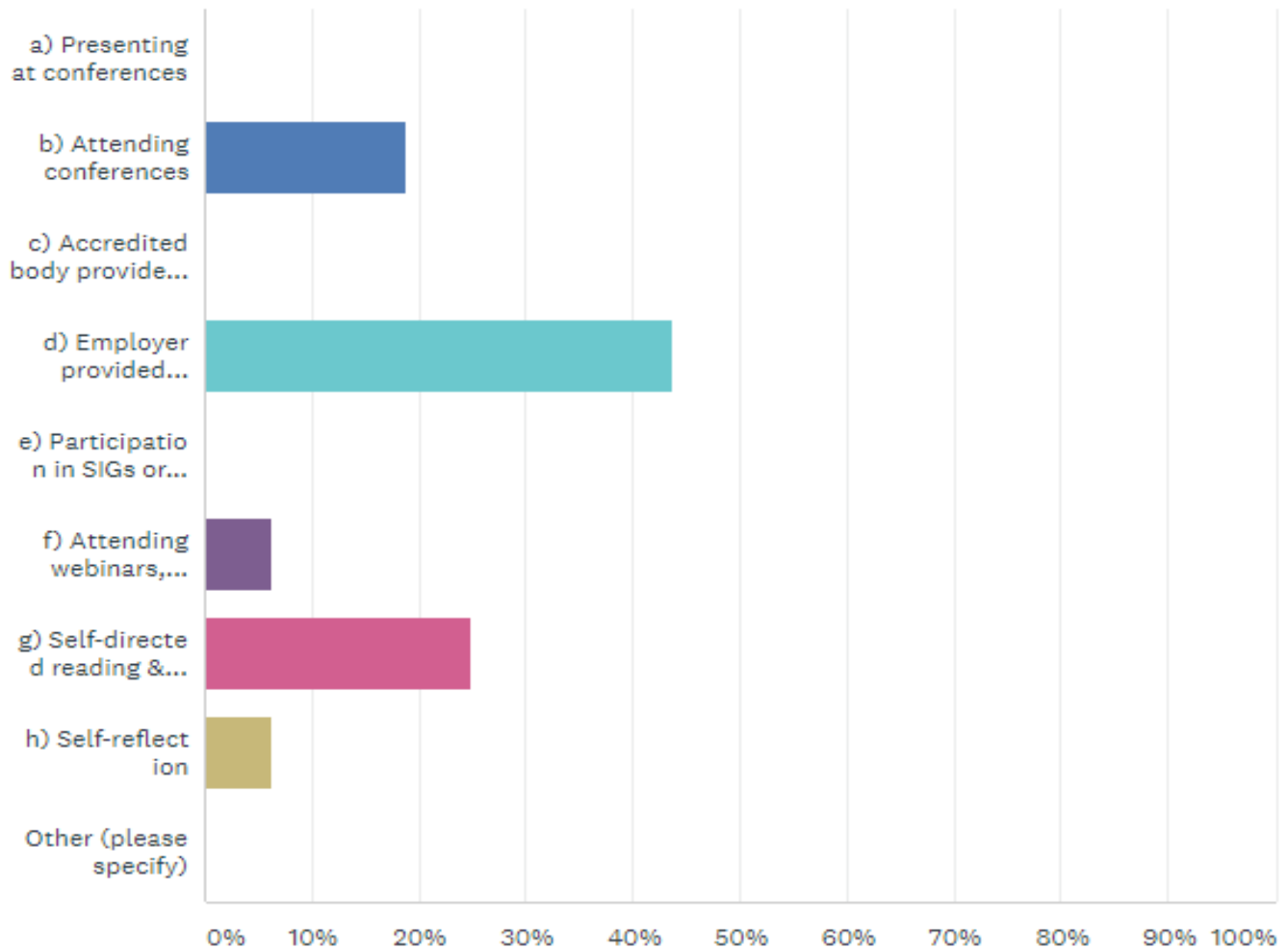
**Comment from online survey:**

**'However, I have found many employer-provided CPD sessions extremely disappointing, either in being poorly delivered or in never being effectively followed up.'**

**P.2. 'I think I've enjoyed the peer-delivered workshops because they, not always, but quite often, have practical things that you can use right away.'**

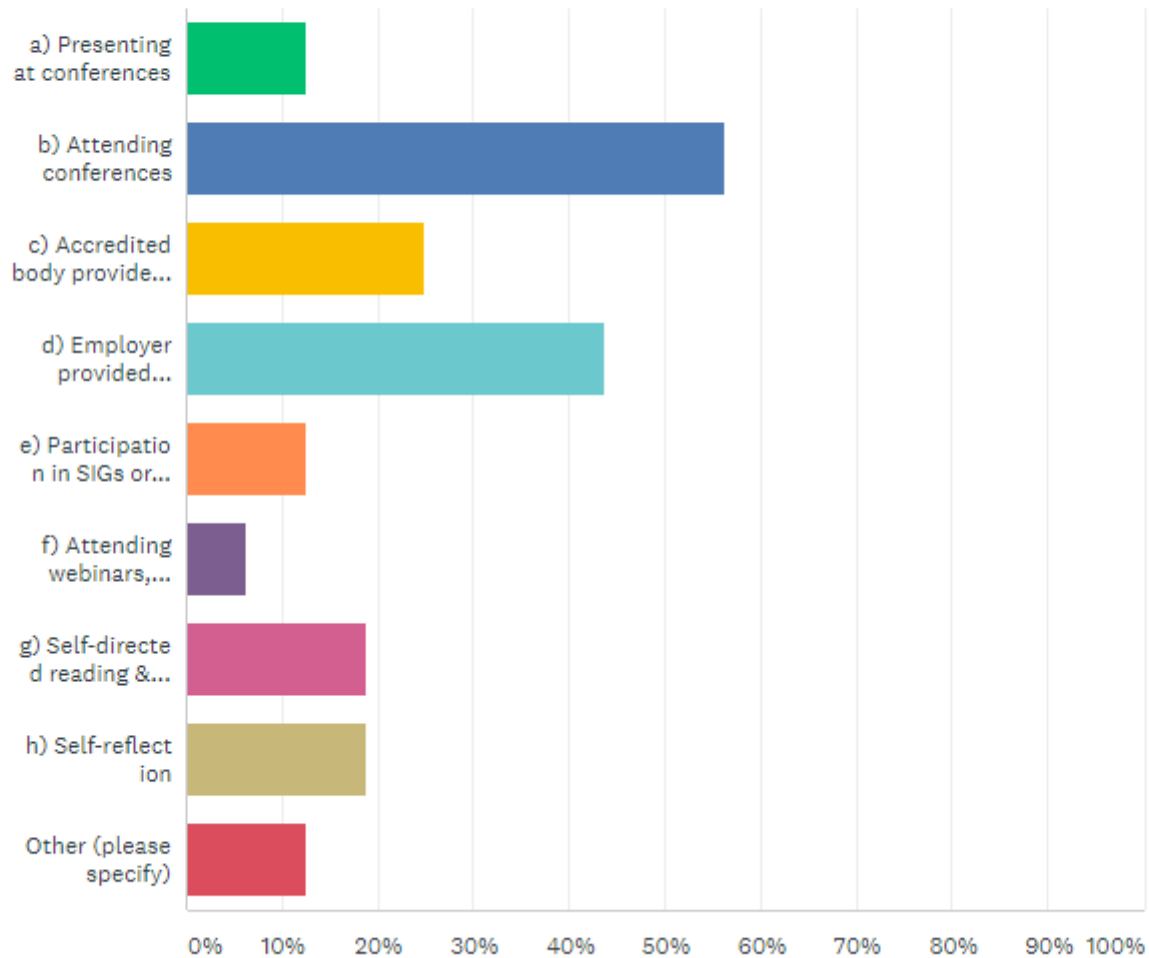
# Which type of CPD do you find easiest to engage with?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



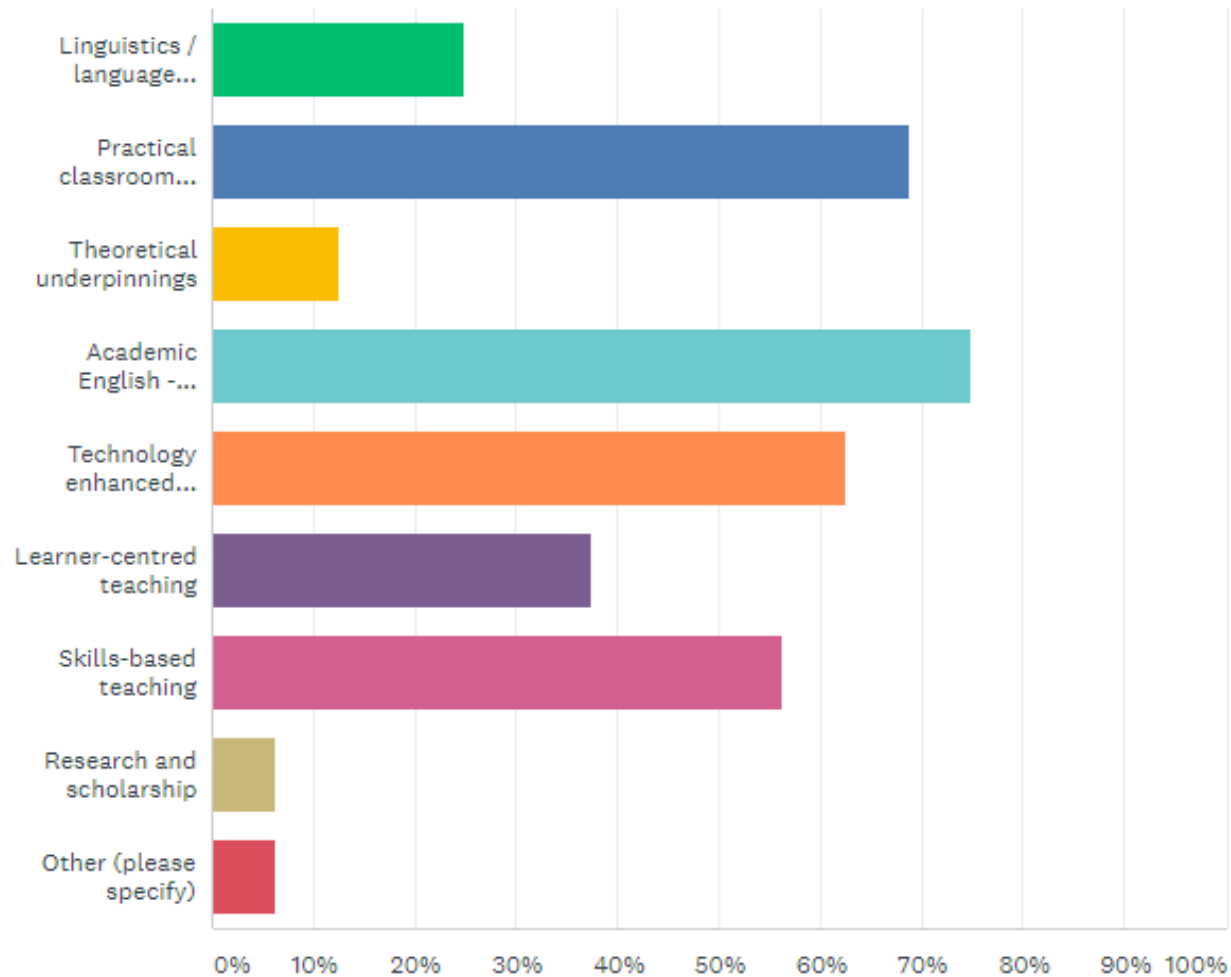
# Which type(s) of CPD would you like to have more opportunities to engage with?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



# What topics or themes for CPD most interest you? Choose up to three.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0

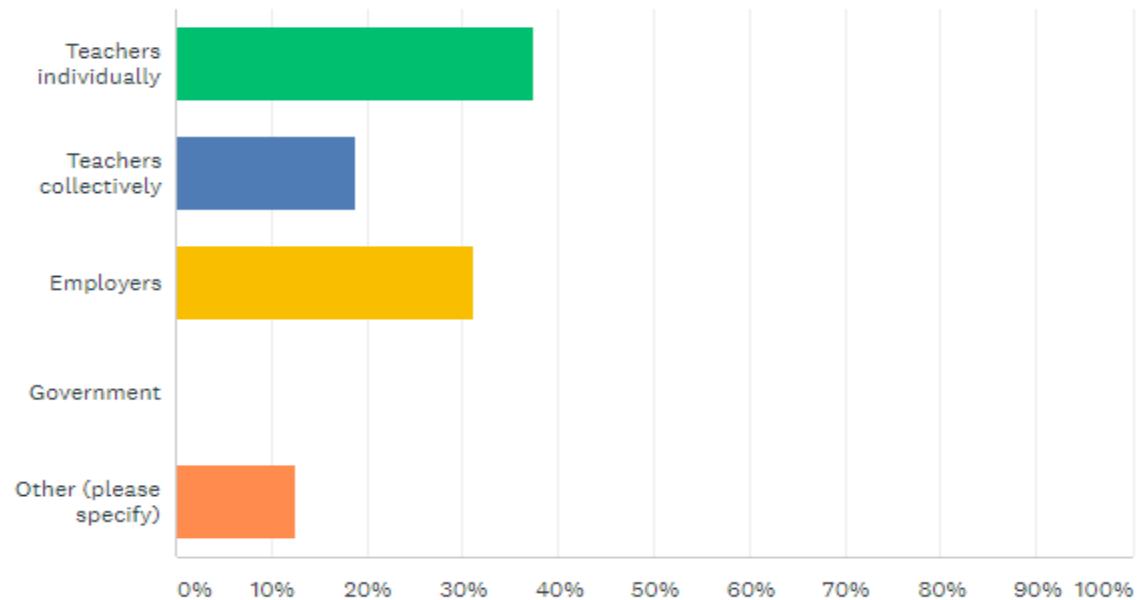


# Who is responsible for CPD?

## Poll

Who is primarily responsible for CPD, in your opinion?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0





# How do teachers create their professional identity?

**Answer:** The evidence from this small-scale study seems to suggest that the most important influence on teacher identity is experience, but that there are a number of other factors at play, including professional qualifications, CPD/education opportunities and place of work.

## **More questions:**

**Relationship between job title/description and professional identity?**

**Variation in how much experience is needed for teachers to consider themselves 'EAP teachers'?**

**Socio-political factors affecting teachers' professional identity?**

Do teachers perceive a need for specific EAP teacher education or qualifications in relation to professional identity?

**Answer:** Unclear.

‘Academic English – specific techniques’ was the most popular of the options given for CPD and teacher education themes, so this may point to a perception of need.

However, the majority of the respondents felt that experience was the defining factor in creating their professional identity, so perhaps both formal qualifications and more informal CPD opportunities are less important in this regard. Also not one of the respondents identified as having any EAP specific qualification

**More questions:**

Comparing numbers of teachers who would like more EAP specific education/ qualifications with uptake of such?

Employer perception of need?

# What kinds of CPD/ education opportunities are perceived as most useful and valuable for EAP teachers?

## Answer:

Attending conferences was seen as both the most useful, and the one teachers would most like to have more opportunities to engage with.

Employer-provided CPD was seen as the easiest to engage with, but not rated highly in terms of usefulness.

Teachers value a wide variety of types of CPD but worthwhile canvassing specific groups of teachers for a more directed approach, particularly with regards to the topics /themes teachers would like more of.

## More questions:

- Specific issues /problems with employer-provided CPD?
- Low participation in SIGs/PIMs?

# How can I improve the educational and training opportunities available to ELC teachers?

- **Continue to ask the teachers themselves what they need, want and would value in terms of professional development opportunities**
- **Encourage the use of teaching portfolios to evidence experience, qualifications and CPD**
- **Identify some of the issues and problems perceived by teachers with regard to employer-provided CPD and work to overcome these**
- **Explore the possibility of team-led or team-directed CPD which would allow the teaching teams working in different areas to collectively decide which specific topics or themes they wanted to focus on**
- **Advocate for teachers in terms of contracts, status, opportunities, expectations**

# Questions for you!

**1) Look back at your own identity which you wrote down at the beginning.**

**What do you think are the factors which affect your choice to identify yourself that way?**

**2) Interview Participant 1 said:**

**‘...Maybe I’m generalising here, but I think a lot of teachers think of EAP as the next step up.’**

**Do you agree? How does this affect the formation of identity for EAP teachers?**

**3) Can you suggest any more ways in which I could improve the CPD opportunities for our team? Or further research questions to follow up on?**

# Bibliography

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# Thank you

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