Training Needs of Full-time Vocational and Professional Education and Training Teachers in Hong Kong

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Background

- With the HKSAR Government's effort in rebranding and promoting vocational and professional education and training (VPET) in recent years, there has been a rapidly changing environment in the field. While there are all sorts of measures and campaigns to promote the image of VPET, to expand the articulation pathway and to enhance its quality; the need of strengthening the continuous professional development of VPET teachers, who serve as backbone of VPET, should never been overlooked.

- Mc Gill (2013) contended, "Teachers, young and old, new and established should be given the time to develop; to share and to train in order to meet the needs of an evolving audience."

- One of the major VPET provider in Hong Kong has been endeavored in providing CPD to their teachers, to keep the teachers abreast of development of VPET and refresh their knowledge and skills from time to time.

This study is intended to study:

(1) the training needs and preference of teachers; and

(2) training mode desirable to them.

Methods

- An online questionnaire survey was sent to all full-time teachers of the institute to understand their training needs and training mode in generally, a total of 287 full-time teachers completed the questionnaire.

- On the other hand, to understand teachers' preference/inclination in terms of mode of training, the participants' actual completion data of a blended learning refresher programme was examined. Following up the programme, ten participants of the programme were invited to an individual interview, to further understand their opinion on the training mode.

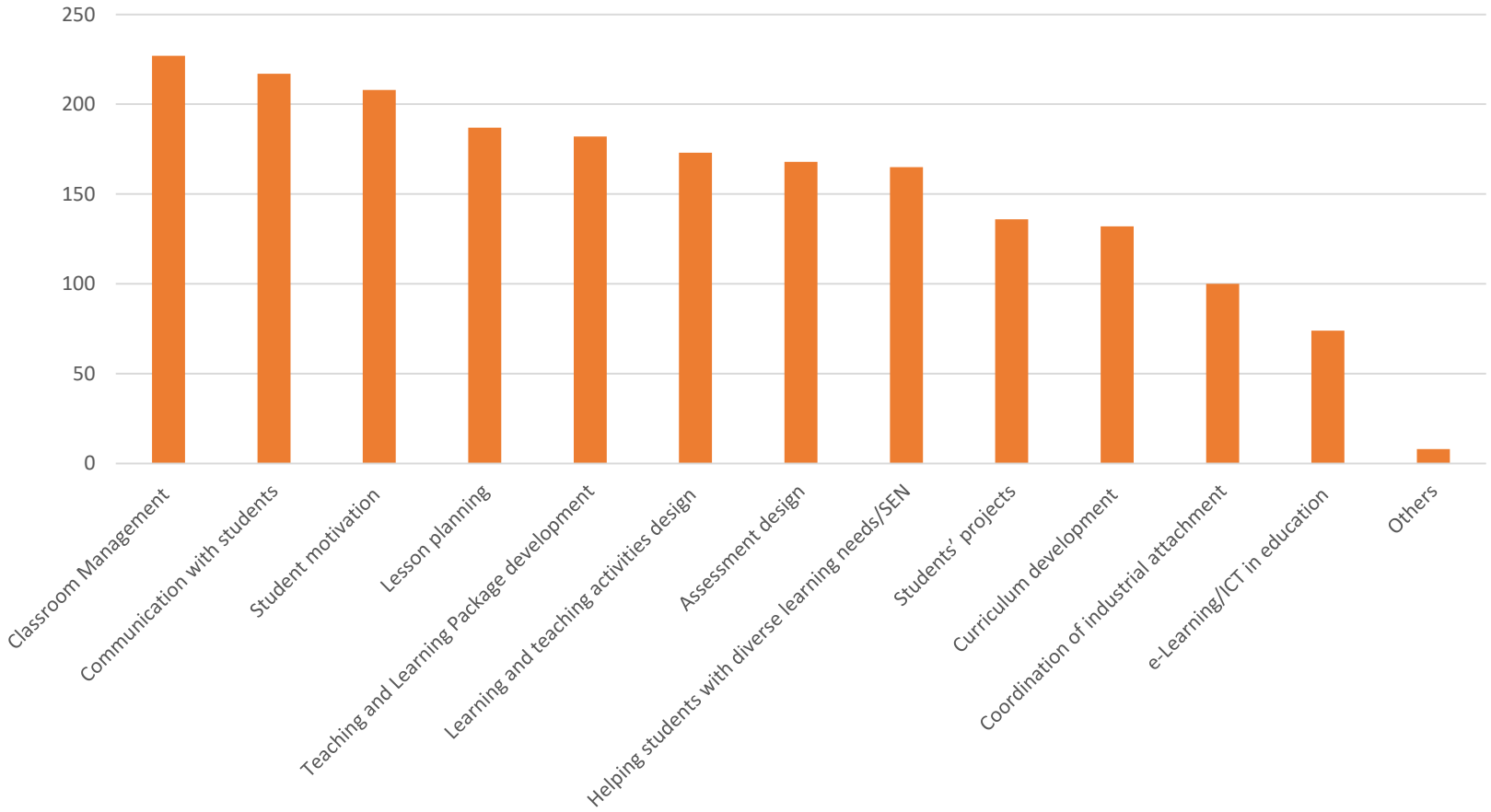
Findings from Questionnaire Survey

Online Survey on Teachers' In-service Training Needs for Advancing Skills in VPET Teaching

No. of Respondent: 287

Background

Table 1:
The areas of which teachers need to take care



[1] Respondents may choose more than one area.

Table 2: Teachers' self reflection to learning and teaching Skills in VPET - Learning and Teaching Strategies

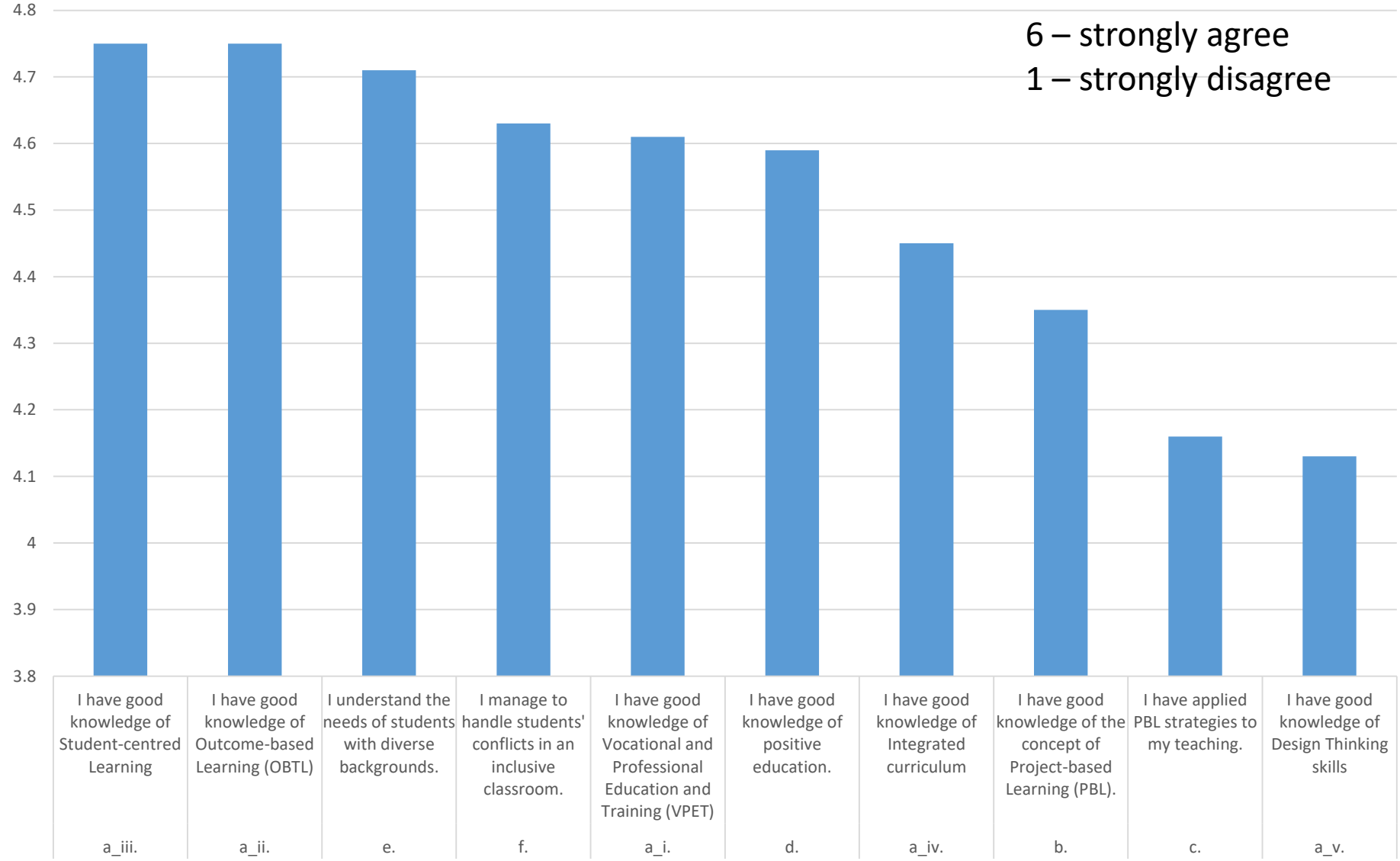


Table 3:Teachers' self reflection to learning and teaching Skills in VPET – e-Learning

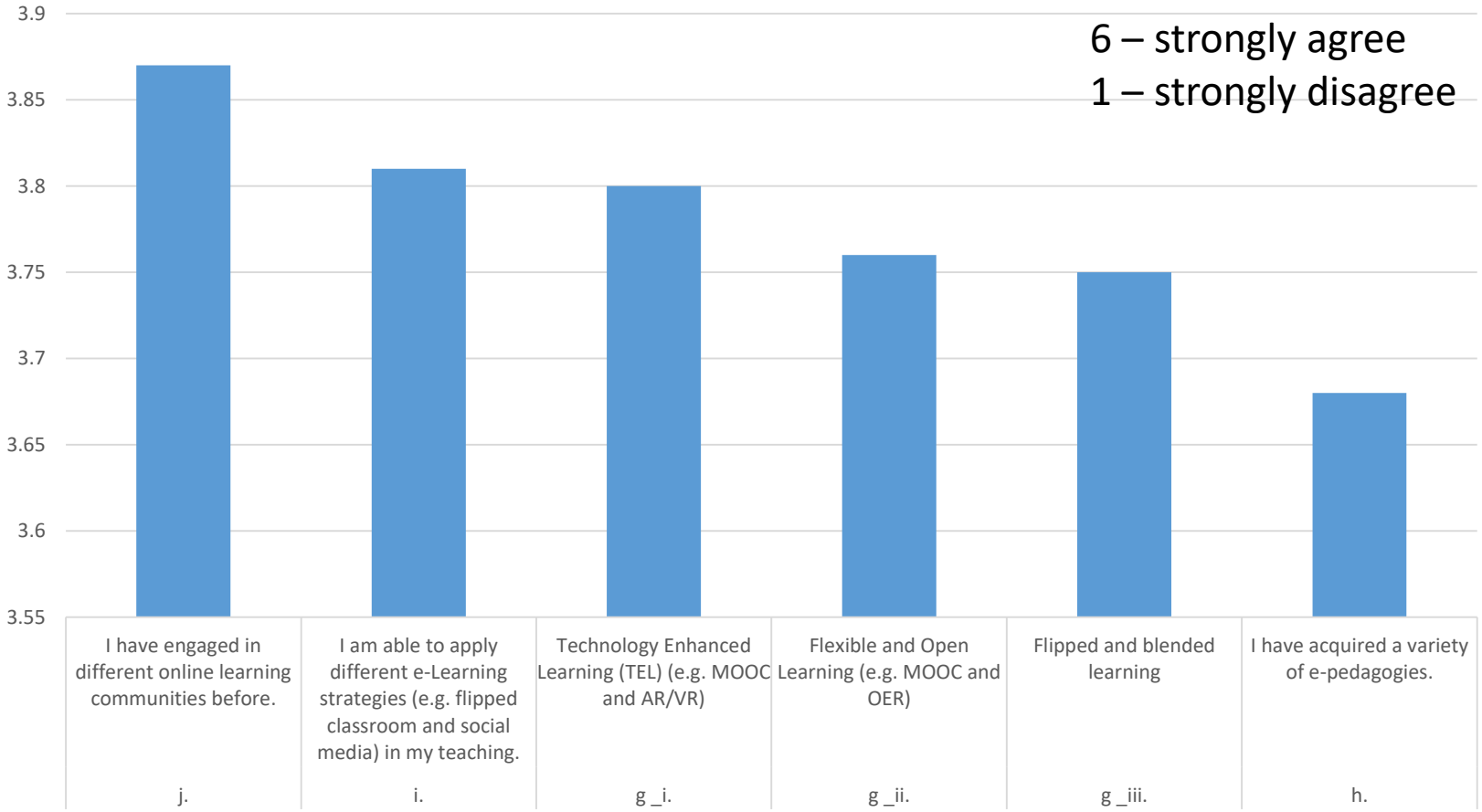


Table 4: Teachers' self reflection to learning and teaching Skills in VPET – Work-integrated Learning

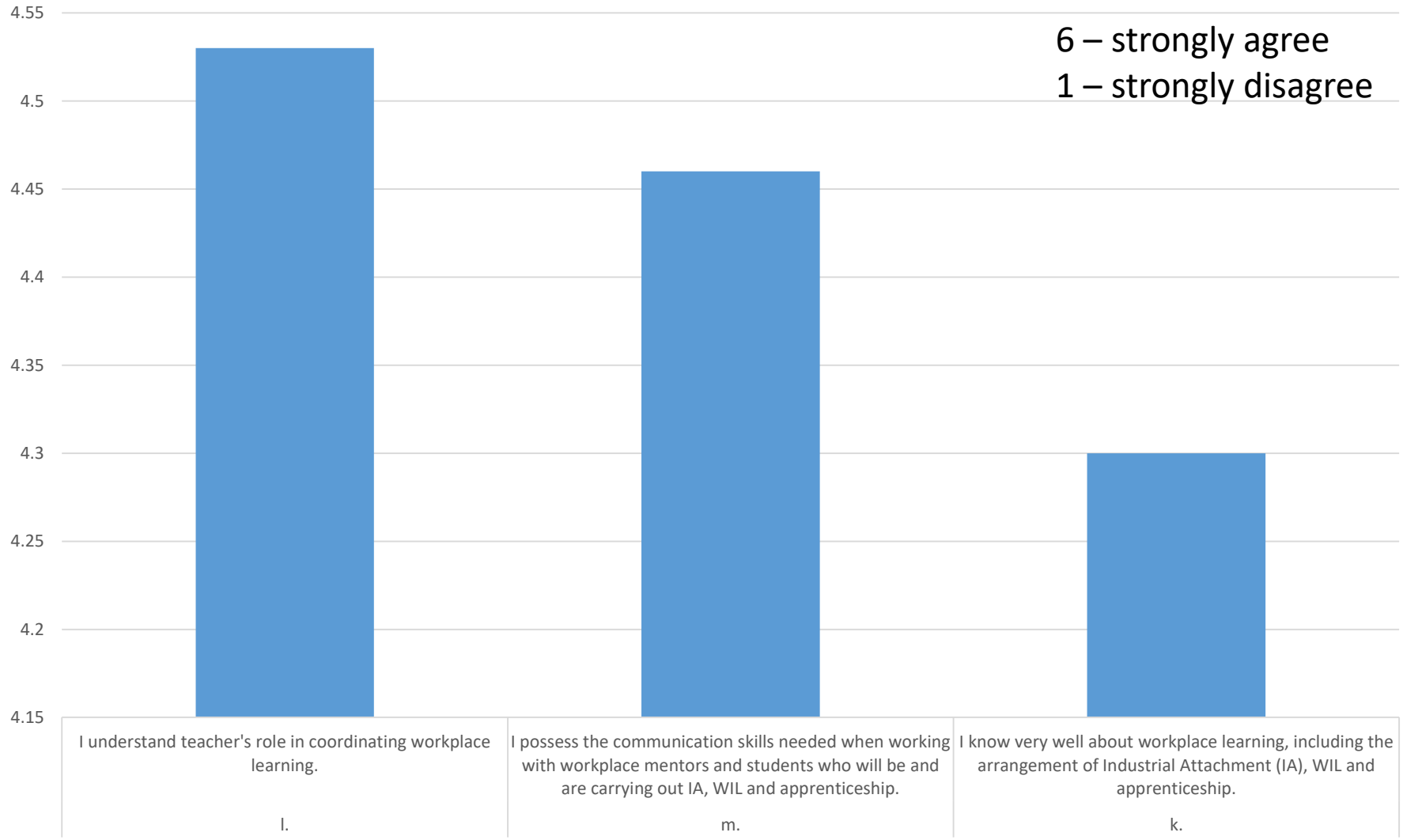


Table 5: Training Arrangement

No.	Question	Percentage (%) of participants
1	If there would be a training programme for advancing your skills in VPET teaching, how long would you consider appropriate for the whole programme? (Please consider total duration including face-to-face sessions and extended learning activities)	
	16-20 hours	62%
	21-25 hours	18%
	26-30 hours	17%
	Others	3%
2	Which of the following modes of training would best suit your needs? (You may choose more than 1 option)	
	Interactive face-to-face sessions	64%
	Lecture-based seminars	61%
	Sharing and presentation sessions	50%
	Online self-directed learning (e.g. Online video and exercise/activity)	38%
	Webinars	8%
	Others	1%
3	Do you think it would be more flexible and convenient if parts of the training could be conducted via online learning platforms like Moodle or Open edX?	
	Yes	74%
	No	26%

Table 6: Completion Rate of a Refresher Programme in Blended Learning Mode

Module	Area	Face-to-face Contact (Attendance no. (%))	Self-paced learning	
			e-Learning	Project
1	VPET Development	100%	--	--
2	VPET Teachers' Skills	97.5%	85.3%	--
3	Information and Communications Technology	97.5%	80.4%	--
4	Inclusive Classroom	100%	--	--
5	Problem-based Learning	--	68.3%	68.3%
6	Elective VPET Topic (self-arranged)	73.1%	--	--

Interview with Participants of the Refresher Programme in Blended Learning Mode (Abstract)

Teacher No.	Completed the whole programme? If not, which part(s) incomplete?	Did blended learning mode cater for your training need, as a full-time teacher? Why?
1	Yes	It is okay, as there are less face-to-face contact time. My teaching schedule is very tight, so it can save my time if there are some self-paced learning elements.
2	Yes	Simply face-to-face learning is preferred indeed. Although the facilitators briefed us about the self-paced learning, it took me sometime to figure out what and how to complete the self-paced learning parts. So I think I spent more than three hours on completing module 5.
3	Yes	Blended learning should be the trend of the training. I also provided videos and exercises on Moodle to my students. I also like the diversity provided, face-to-face, watch video… the mix made the programme less boring. But the project is really too heavy workload.
4	Yes	Blended learning with e-Learning, which save the workshop time is a good arrangement. The self-arranged workshop could also give flexibility to our interested area and date of attending it.
5	Yes	Although the facilitators encouraged us to watch the videos before the face-to-face workshop, I really did not have time or not really used to the mode. So I watched the videos at the very last minute to meet the completion requirement.
6	Yes	Yes, the blended learning mode could cater for my training need. I have no problem. The good thing is I could save the transport time of Module 5.
7	No / Project	I have no particular opinion towards blended learning mode. But the problem is I have to learn the concept of “project-based learning” and do a project all by myself. The workload is heavy and I did not have enough time to find out all by myself.
8	No /Project and e-Learning	The traditional face-to-face workshop will be preferred. I am not familiar with e-Learning and so have low motivation to complete it, and the fact is we are very busy. I prefer a set schedule for workshops and no self-arranged parts.
9	No / Self-arranged face-to-face module	I am fine with the blended modules, but for the self-arranged face-to-face module, I did not have time to check out often.
10	No / Self-arranged face-to-face module and project	If the programme content are all face-to-face workshop arranged for us, I would be more confident to complete it. As we are very busy about teaching and student activities, I did not have much time to arrange my learning. The project is also heavy workload.

Discussion:
Training needs and preference of teachers

Teaching Strategies

- In terms of duties, it is found that some non-teaching directly related areas including classroom management, communication with students and student motivation occupied the highest number of the teachers.
- Other areas such as lesson planning, and teaching and learning package development also engage about half of the interviewed teachers.
- Hence it is believed that training on these soft skills and teaching skills would help majority of teachers to enhance the work efficiency and effectiveness.

Work-integrated Learning (WIL)

- “During the past century the initial model of work-integrated learning has evolved into a multiplicity of variations and been transferred and implemented across a vast array of disciplines, institutions and workplaces.” (Calway & Murphy, 2011)

- Work-integrated learning is not new in education, however it has been made a common programme element in the VPET institute studied until recent years. Not many teachers are involved (35%) but when asked about their knowledge and skills in it, teachers ranked quite high (4.75) for themselves, reflecting a comparatively high competency and confidence in it.

E-Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning

- “The rapid growth of ICT and network connection has resulted in the implementation of new learning enhancements in the educational world, such as e-Learning, blended learning and mobile learning.” (Ravindran and Bacon, 2015)

- King (2016) reported that Hong Kong is well-paced to adopt e-learning in a big way, yet e-learning in the city lags behind other advanced economies in the region.

- King (2016) urged that “e-learning is a critical tool for quality leaning in today’s world. In placing the needs and desires of students at the heart of the education experience, educators and parents have to keep up with the times.”

E-Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning (con't)

- E-learning has been adopted in the VPET institute for over a decade, and technology enhanced learning has been an initiative in recent years.

- Findings reflected not many teachers are ready to use e-Learning approach in teaching: only about a quarter of the teachers (26%) are using e-Learning. A comparatively lower confidence and inadequate skills to use e-Learning in teaching is reflected (3.77).

- Findings also revealed that teachers had a comparatively lower motivation to learn via e-Learning. Compared with the face-to-face contact, the completion rate of e-Learning self-paced learning is lower.

- There is a discrepancy between the required and actual competency of teachers skills in e-Learning. A training need is identified.

Training Mode

- Senffner and Kepler (2015) suggested that one of the driving force for using blended learning is the desire to decrease face-to-face training.

- Lau (2017) found that part-time teachers were facing stronger time pressure than the full-time teachers, and preferred CPD programmes in blended mode.

- However, the findings of this study on full-time teachers does not support Snffner and Kepler's view, and differ from that of the part-time teachers.

- For full-time teachers, if the face-to-face sessions and lecture-based seminars are arranged, they could usually attend in their working hours, and there is less pressure on time. Therefore, face-to-face contact is still the preferred mode for full-time teachers.

- The completion rate of e-Learning and self-arranged face-to-face workshop were also comparatively lower, and the findings of teacher individual interviews explained that teachers are too busy to arrange their own training.

Conclusion

- This study echoed with Senffner and Kepler's (2015) conclusion that the choosing the right delivery modality which is most effective for audience and training purpose, and the given organization's resources would the key of success.

- Teacher training adopting the blended learning mode would offer a desirable learning experience for teachers, nevertheless it may take longer time for full-time teachers to enhance their acceptance and readiness for the mode. In terms of training area, e-Learning/technology enhanced learning (TEL) pedagogies would be suggested to enhance teachers' competency and confidence in the area.

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