

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Konttinen, Miia

Title: Towards more learning-centred English-medium education : promoting the combination of backward design and community of practice in teacher training

Year: 2022

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis

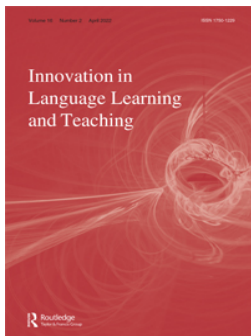
Rights: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Rights url: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Please cite the original version:

Konttinen, M. (2022). Towards more learning-centred English-medium education : promoting the combination of backward design and community of practice in teacher training. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16(4-5), 381-391.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2064469>



Towards more learning-centred English-medium education: promoting the combination of *backward design* and *community of practice* in teacher training

Miia Konttinen

To cite this article: Miia Konttinen (2022): Towards more learning-centred English-medium education: promoting the combination of *backward design* and *community of practice* in teacher training, *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, DOI: [10.1080/17501229.2022.2064469](https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2064469)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2064469>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 18 Apr 2022.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Towards more learning-centred English-medium education: promoting the combination of *backward design* and *community of practice* in teacher training

Miia Konttinen 

Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Teaching in English-medium education (EME) requires mastery of content and ability to teach in a multilingual setting, but also pedagogical expertise and didactic agility. However, there is an apparent lack of proper training of EME teachers, who are typically experts of their field, but not necessarily equipped to design and implement EME. Moreover, there is still an evident gap with respect to understanding how EME teachers turn curricula into actual teaching and students' learning. By addressing this gap, the present study provides recommendations for EME teacher training.

Approach: Finland, with its long EME traditions, was the present study's context. Data saturation, i.e. adequate data richness and thickness [Fusch, P. I., and L. R. Ness. 2015. "Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research." *The Qualitative Report* 20 (9): 1408–1416] was achieved by interviewing four teachers, each from a different English-medium master's programme, following the think aloud method. The interviews focused on curriculum implementation and the aspects guiding it.

Findings: As a result of the thematic analysis, two distinctive themes were identified. First, the curriculum implementation in EME programmes seems teacher-oriented and activity- and content-driven, whereas ideally it should be more learning-centred. Second, the EME teachers seem to be operating to a great extent very independently, hence there appears to be a lack of programme-level co-operation.

Value: As a contribution to developing EME teacher training, this study recommends promoting the combination of the *backward design* and *community of practice* via teacher training. Moreover, the study advocates teacher training that is less focused on individuals, and keener on supporting and training programme staff as collective entities.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 14 October 2020



Accepted 6 April 2022

KEYWORDS

English-medium education; teacher training; curriculum implementation; think aloud method; community of practice; backward design

1. Introduction

English-medium instruction (EMI) refers to teaching academic content in English in countries where English is not the first language (Dearden 2014) and a guiding line of thought is that students not only learn the content of a discipline, but also develop their language skills while completing their degree. Despite this simplified definition, EMI is by no means a simple concept in practice: too often, the educational and linguistic dimensions of EMI have been overlooked in the process (Dafouz and

CONTACT Miia Konttinen  miia.konttinen@jyu.fi  Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication, University of Jyväskylä, PL 35 40014, Finland

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Smit 2019). A general quality concern is that programmes often face the dilemma of turning idealistic policies and seemingly straightforward strategies into well-functioning and successful educational endeavours (Airey et al. 2017; Sarpo 2018).

Therefore, instead of focusing merely on *instruction*, Dafouz and Smit (2019) have introduced a far more holistic approach, i.e. English-medium *education* (EME): it not only embraces instruction, but also students' learning, and it better acknowledges a wide range of pedagogical approaches, instead of falsely assuming that there is only one universal way of providing EME. Furthermore, EME takes into consideration the pivotal roles of administration and management: after all, one is dealing with entire degree programmes, not only instruction occurring in classrooms (Chapple 2015).

EME indeed challenges teachers' didactic agility, and a mismatch between the curriculum and classrooms has been detected by Chapple (2015) and Airey et al. (2017), among others. All EME stakeholders should bear in mind that an expert on field-specific subtopics, even if able to teach in English, is not inherently a qualified practitioner in the field of EME (Sarpo 2018): solid insights into pedagogy and dealing with multicultural and multilingual student groups are also needed (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi 2007).

Unfortunately, English-medium programmes rarely require formal qualifications for the teachers working in them, although the dilemma whether this is relevant or not has been systematically brought to the fore over the past decades. For instance, back in 2014, Dearden raised EME-related concerns in a report summarizing results from 55 countries globally and the message was rather clear: over 80% of respondents said that there are not enough qualified EME teachers and 60% noted that there are no guidelines for implementing EME (Dearden 2014). Similar challenges have also surfaced even more recently, and the need for more pedagogical training of EME teachers clearly remains (O'Dowd 2018; Farrell 2020; Yuan 2020).

However, since according to Yuan (2020) there is still a lack of understanding of *how* EME teachers actually teach and why and how they have resorted to their approaches and teaching methods, the present study will contribute to fill this gap. After all, prior to developing and implementing successful EME teacher training with a focus on pedagogy, one must first gain insights into what goes on in the programmes and classrooms.

To do so, the present study's scope was narrowed to one pivotal aspect of education: curriculum and its implementation. As the word's Latin root already indicates, curriculum can be viewed as education's 'course to be run' and as programmes' 'pathway to a destination' (McTighe and Curtis 2019, 55). This 'destination' can be viewed to be the students' learning, i.e. students meeting the set learning outcomes. In this respect, a curriculum, which is implemented with a focus on learning, results more likely in better quality of students' learning (e.g. Trautwein 2018). Moreover, according to Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe (2005) and McTighe and Curtis (2019), a curriculum and its implementation ought to ideally be approached backwards. Designing a curriculum and putting it into action should always start from the desired learning outcomes and results, which understandably ought to be at the core of all education. Then the process should move on to the evidence needed to determine whether these outcomes have been achieved. Finally, entire programmes and individual teachers can move on to planning the relevant and appropriate instruction modes and learning experiences (Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005; McTighe and Curtis 2019).

These steps taken in this particular order allow programmes, such as the EME programmes, to approach their educational responsibility from the viewpoint of the students and their learning. After all, every teacher is always at least to some extent a designer of education, never a mere instructor (see e.g. Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005). Here lies the basis of the present study's two research questions.

(RQ1) Which aspects guide the implementation of the curriculum in English-medium master's programs?

Moreover, as the present study aspired to provide insights into EME teacher training, it also aimed to answer the following RQ2:

(RQ2) How should these aspects be addressed in EME teacher training?

This paper is organized as follows: first, the materials and methods employed in this study will be introduced and after this the results obtained, i.e. the two main themes deriving from the data analysis, will be presented. The discussion entails some further insights into the results, as well as suggestions for EME teacher training and future EME research.

2. Materials and methods

To answer the two research questions, the data collection was completed during the fall of 2019 in one university in Finland. Dafouz and Smit (2019) emphasize that EME always needs to be viewed through the lenses of each context situated dynamics. However, due to the overall small scale of the Finnish EME context, the study's institutional context and the participants' anonymity need to be protected and hence only a limited amount of information can be given on the study's context. In practice, this unfortunately means that, for instance, the institution's name is not revealed and the programme names or disciplines will not be given in this paper.

However, on a general level, it should be noted that when it comes to EME teacher requirements and teacher training in Finland, universities across the country have language policies to ensure that the teaching staff have adequate language skills for teaching in English. For instance, the rector's decision of the present study context directly states that all teachers must have advanced level English skills, i.e. C1 of CEFR. Also, since 2010 the guideline has been that all new teaching staff members need to complete a *general* pedagogical training within two years of their appointment. However, this means that EME-related teacher training programmes are, according to the institution website only 'warmly recommended'. Viewing EME teacher training in this way as a 'nice-to-know' rather than a 'must-know', has unfortunately flourished within Finnish higher education for decades (e.g. Sarpo 2018).

After having established some distinctive features of this EME research context, the focus is turned now to the study participants. Prospective participants from this particular EME setting, i.e. English-medium master's programmes in one Finnish university, were singled out with the help of the purposive sampling technique. The study set out to find relatively experienced, in-service EME teachers who would be from different English-medium master's programmes and ideally also from different disciplines. Due to the overall small scale of this EME context, only 13 teachers were invited via e-mail. Of these 13, four teachers (two male and two female) volunteered to take part in the interviews.

However, since data saturation, i.e. data richness and thickness, is not dependent on numbers (Fusch and Ness 2015), this sample size was deemed adequate for studying EME in this context. One of the participants is a native speaker of English and the remaining three clearly meet the university's C1 requirement. The participants' experience of EME teaching ranged from 7 to 12 years (≈ 9) and the lifespans of their master programmes from 6 to 14 years (≈ 11). The annual intake of students was between 10 and 25 students (≈ 14) and all the programmes student cohorts are a varying mix of both Finnish and non-Finnish students. Considering the small scale of the Finnish EME context, no further background information can be given without compromising the participants' full anonymity.

Interview data were collected using the think aloud method. This means that during the interviews the participants not only orally explained things, but they simultaneously worked on a given task (Van Someren, Barnard, and Sandberg 1994). According to Van Someren, Barnard, and Sandberg (1994), this method is reliable due to the following reasons. First, the think aloud method allowed the participants themselves to keep track of their own processing of this multi-layered topic during the interviews, as they were all the time able to see the things they had already written/drawn. This enabled them to constantly add things and connect things in the ways they saw adequate. Second, the setting allowed the participants to use their own wordings, as well as ways of expressing themselves (talking and writing/drawing).

In practice, the individual think aloud interviews entailed five tasks, which were given to the participants both orally and in writing. The present study will only focus on one of these tasks:

What do you do in your program in order to transfer your curriculum into actual teaching practices and classroom activities? Please orally explain and simultaneously illustrate all the aspects, steps and stakeholders involved in this process.

The concrete outcomes of the interviews were the spoken protocols, meaning the recorded speech, and the written protocols, meaning the participants' written texts, and drawings. These protocols were analyzed inductively by allowing aspects to freely derive from the data without any pre-set categories and a thematic analysis with multiple rounds was conducted (see e.g. Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka 2009). These multiple rounds ensured data saturation, that is, adequate data richness and thickness, since after four interviews no new themes arose (Fusch and Ness 2015). Gradually, as all interrelated viewpoints from the interviews were collected under suitable coding headings, two main themes were developed.

The entire data collection process was completed by adhering to the practical and ethical guidelines of the think aloud method (Van Someren, Barnard, and Sandberg 1994), and each stage of the study was conducted in conformity with the ethical standards of the author's university.

3. Results

In order to provide some insights into the analysis, a small selection of all the participants' direct quotes is offered in connection to the study results. Moreover, since successful think aloud research requires that the participants are allowed to use the wordings and expressions they are comfortable with (Van Someren, Barnard, and Sandberg 1994), all quotes almost literally express what the four teachers said/wrote during the interviews: only some unnecessary fillers and repetitions have been excluded. For reporting purposes, all four teachers were given an anonymized abbreviation (T1, T2, T3, and T4), but to further protect the participants' anonymity, their direct quotes are not linked to any background information.

3.1. Teaching- and doing-centred curriculum implementation

All four participants took a similar approach to the think aloud task: they started by presenting their courses' core assignments and modes of study, as exemplified in T4's response:

... well we have a lot of lectures and seminars, where the actual teaching takes place ... so these are like different group situations. And of course we have the thesis or other assignments. Then the students work a lot also in groups. (T4)

Moreover, all four teachers explained that they have tried to determine what core assignments and teaching modes in their programmes overlap in terms of content as well as timewise. All in all, it seems that the participants, and perhaps also their programmes, view core assignments and modes of study as the cornerstones of curriculum and pedagogical sharing (McTighe and Curtis 2019), and of course, they are indeed an integral part of curriculum implementation (Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005).

However, more critical viewpoints also emerged, as T1, for example, realized that even if they know that a colleague's course consists of eight hours of seminar work, they do not really know what that means in practice. In a similar manner, T2 contemplated the fact that even if certain assessment methods have been established, the actual assessment processes and criteria are not necessarily adequately aligned in the programme. All this indicates that the sharing of core assignments or modes of study can possibly create an illusion of teachers being up to date on the programme curriculum implementation.

Perhaps to avoid such an illusion, T3 explained a step-by-step process of how they reportedly use the modes of study as ‘ground rules’ for curriculum implementation. They start with these ‘ground rules’ before moving on to seeing the practical limitations, such as rooms and course schedule, and the courses learning goals and the approaches and activities which are needed to meet those goals.

However, T3’s step-by-step approach, which the other participants also alluded to in their responses, reveals a potentially problematic view to curriculum implementation. These reported findings indicate that curriculum implementation is steered by modes of study as well as the course physical setting and schedule, rather than by education most important factor – the educational goals and learning outcomes of the programme. Interestingly, none of these programmes reportedly initiate curriculum implementation from the viewpoint of learning outcomes, although T1, T2 and T3 admitted that they should be doing so.

... if we write learning outcomes for the program, how are those addressed in different courses, or are they? They should match anyway! ... What are the learning outcomes of the program and we should have courses then, you know, creating those learning outcomes. (T1)

One could also claim that these programmes are stuck at the level of these cornerstones, so instead of discussing what they want the students to *learn* while in the programme, they reportedly focus on what they and the students are *doing*. For instance, it often seemed that assessment methods (e.g. a book exam vs. an essay) were modified merely as a way to create variety in the programme.

... students sometimes give feedback that they had same kind of long essays due about at the same time ... So how could we vary the assignments more? ... Hoping that there are not just essays for every course ... Could some course at least take some other assignment? To be a bit more creative with the assignments. (T1)

In addition to core assignments and modes of study, the teachers’ own roles as researchers clearly orient the curriculum implementation. All teachers in the present study, except for T1, defined themselves as researchers in addition to being teachers, and they all reported being active with respect to making use of their own research to benefit their teaching, and in all their programmes this was seemingly typical. They and their colleagues would reportedly bring in the latest ideas from their field in the form of the most recent research findings (T2) and currently relevant and trending theories and concepts (T3). Moreover, using their networks in the field and their role as a locally and internationally active scholar were reported as pivotal benefits for the programme curriculum:

I meet a lot of colleagues around the world in different conferences, and it’s like ‘there was a nice presentation, and this person is really good for this topic’, so I invite them ad-hoc sometimes ... like international visitors ... Or sometimes I am involved in a few research projects so sometimes it’s also that we have research project situation so this can also affect this. (curriculum implementation) (T4)

However, similarly to the core assignments and modes of study, no clear reference was made by any of the participants to the learning outcomes of the courses and the programme when it comes to bringing in the newest ideas from the field and incorporating visitors and experts. In other words, the eagerness to incorporate these exciting and up-to-date aspects to teaching seemed again at times to override pedagogy. After all, interesting content and learning are not automatically linked to effective learning: students’ deep learning and abilities to apply this learning to other contexts should never be overshadowed by vast and scattered, even if new and upcoming, amounts of content knowledge (Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005; McTighe and Curtis 2019).

To sum up this first theme, Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe (2005) have brought to the fore the twin sins of instructional design and in fact all the EME programmes of the present study can be deemed, at least to some extent, to be guilty of them both. First, their curriculum implementation is reportedly quite activity focused (e.g. focus on core assignments, and modes of study), and second, the programmes came across as quite content-focused (e.g. new theories and results from the field, visiting lecturers). However, this is not adequate with respect to implementing the curriculum in a way that fosters effective and purposeful learning, since learning-centredness is thought to correlate with better quality of students’ learning (Trautwein 2018). At this moment,

lecturers seemed to mainly focus on what they are providing for the students or doing with them, rather than profoundly discussing what the students need to learn and accomplish during their studies (Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005; McTighe and Curtis 2019)

At this stage, one cannot ignore the fact that all the findings outlined here were made based on rather experienced EME teachers' reports. Moreover, the findings need to be viewed through the lens of the programmes also having long lifespans. In other words, these findings do not reflect thoughts of *inexperienced* EME teachers working on *newly* established programmes, but quite the contrary. It should, however, be noted that these programmes are by no means an exception, as very similar highlights from previous studies have been made by O'Dowd (2018).

3.2. Teachers as independent agents implementing the curriculum

The second and a clearly overarching theme in the present study connects to the teachers' role in terms of curriculum implementation, and especially T1 and T3 reported that trusting teachers' expertise is essential. First of all, the participants talked about their own reflective and active roles, as T2, for instance, explained having a clear teaching philosophy, and that they had individually spent an extensive amount of time contemplating their own understanding of what really constitutes learning, and how this understanding impacts their own courses. In a similar vein, both T1 and T3 highlighted that teachers indeed can have their own approaches to their discipline and teaching:

... if I think about my colleague, we are quite different people ... we have different ideas and perspectives ... we don't always agree, like in the classes, we might have bit of a disagreement on some issue, but that's okay. We can still work together, and it doesn't mean that other one is right, and the other one is wrong. (T1)

... overall in academic environment, people disagree, and that's fine, and necessary ... It is impossible that we (program's teachers) would all teach and think and do the same ... We need different approaches and we need different methods, and different orientations. (T3)

All in all, throughout the think aloud interviews it became apparent that all these four teachers were reportedly, both time-wise and mentally, committed to their work as teachers. For instance, T1, alongside T2, talked about spending a great deal of time, even entire holidays, developing new course materials and their courses. T1 and T3 also reported that they had experimented with different approaches to teaching such as co-teaching.

However, there was one feature that characterized many of the positive aspects presented here, namely, according to these participants, their practices and processes were reportedly often realized only at the level of individual teachers, rarely at the programme level. For instance, when specifically asked whether these teachers had promoted, or shared any of their own good practices or processes with their colleagues, the answer was almost without an exception 'No'. T1, T2 and T3 all reported that there is an evident lack of sharing in their programme.

... interaction between teachers is the ideal way of doing this (curriculum implementation) ... But I have seen it happen many times ... that people stop sharing, and things become solidified and personified, which means that "Okay, this one person has been teaching that one course for the past ten years": nobody quite knows what's going on, nobody can take it over, and nobody can affect it ... And that's poison ... and it creates a rigid system, which starts to affect curriculum. (T3)

In relation to this, also T4 voiced a concern for their programme vulnerability, since too often courses and content are indeed so strongly connected to certain individual teachers that if, for some reason, they are not available for teaching in the programme, they inherently leave a big hole in the curriculum.

Moreover, T1, for example, questioned colleagues' enthusiasm to 'go the extra mile' in developing their teaching, and T2 similarly reported colleagues' 'reluctance to change': T2 expressed frustration about trying to initiate profound discussion among the programme teaching staff, but reported that the discussion consistently gets shut down:

... every year we get complaints (from students) about that (a teaching-related issue), but a group of professors says that 'we know it works, we are not changing it' ... and that's a problem ... we don't deal with things democratically, they are sort of done based on the hierarchy ... even if we have legitimate reasons (T2)

All participants said that their programmes are typically steered by a mindset of teaching courses almost automatically in the way that they have always been taught:

I suppose it's largely history. This is how originally we thought that 'okay this module is best to be taught as lecture, book exam ... this module is best taught in this way' ... We have a lot of basis, and of course sometimes we just do it as we have done it, and maybe update the contents a bit ... so let's say tradition, history (T4)

Therefore, this individualistic approach to teaching can also be seen as an obstacle for programme-level changes and development of teaching, and this downside unfortunately manifested itself in a range of negative aspects. All in all, these four programmes reportedly have an atmosphere of not really knowing what other teachers are doing, or thinking, in respect to the programme curriculum:

... this (curriculum implementation) is a bit difficult because there is the teacher autonomy (T1)

... across the whole program, I would like to think that we have it (a shared teaching philosophy), but we don't. (T2)

... because I don't know what they (T3's colleagues) do! I can only hope (as a head of the program), and I can only know, if negative feedback starts to come in (T3)

T1 tried to encourage teacher collaboration in their programme by organizing an orientation session, and the idea was to share and discuss what different teachers do in their own courses. However, only one teacher joined and stayed to listen to what other teachers do, whereas all the rest only joined to present their own part. In T1's opinion, this illustrates that teachers do not seem to care how their courses are linked to the programme as a whole. Moreover, T3 explained that whenever it was time to start planning and implementing a new curriculum, the discussion always reportedly boiled down to individual teachers asking 'But where is *my* course?'

They (some teachers) not at all sometimes get that this is not about your course, or your expertise, it's about what the students would need to learn as part of this curriculum, and it's not that you can bring your favorite stuff in because it might not fit with the whole thing (T3)

The pros and cons of teacher independence manifested themselves in the following ways in the present data. At best, it translates into highly motivated and engaged individual teachers who develop their own teaching and into a group of colleagues who trust each other's expertise. However, the mindset of teachers as so-called 'lone wolves' positions individual teachers in their own stagnated perspectives with their own set ways of doing things. At worst, it can even passivate the entire programme as shared development endeavours get shut down and attempts at fostering shared understanding become dead ends in the programmes. The data show signs of the programmes focus on teachers' comfort, meaning their own preferences and practices (see also Kálmán, Tynjälä, and Skaniakos 2019), which can lead to inappropriate or even arbitrary designs and activities that do not connect to the desired learning outcomes of the students (Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005).

4. Discussion

To revisit the study's research questions, the following viewpoints can be gathered related to this EME context. With respect to RQ1 (i.e. What aspects guide the implementation of the curriculum in English-medium master's programmes?), one can see that core assignments and modes of study, as well as teachers' own research, seem to guide the four programmes' curriculum implementation. Moreover, a distinctive feature of this implementation appears to be individual teachers' engaged and active, or conversely passive, roles. All in all, the programmes, on the one hand, come across as teaching-rather than learning-centred (see Trautwein 2018). On the other hand, teachers seem to be mostly, though not necessarily by their own choice, working independently, and even in hiding, i.e. by for

instance withdrawing from shared development and refusing to share their own insights. Overall, there is limited sharing of good practices and processes, even when, based on the present data, it is evident that these EME programmes indeed have a range of innovative and effective ways of thinking and doing. Nonetheless, since they are not shared, they are neither acted upon in the programme as a whole. Similar findings with respect to EME being ‘an individualized, isolated act with limited external guidance or collegial support’ have been recently reported by Yuan (2020, 313).

Based on these results related to RQ1 and to answer RQ2 (i.e. How should these aspects be addressed in EME teacher training?), the present study has the following three take-home messages for stakeholders of EME teacher training. The study promotes EME teacher training that:

- (1) activates the use of backward design (see 4.1)
- (2) helps EME programmes to become communities of practice (see 4.2)
- (3) supports programmes in combining these two approaches when working with their curriculum (see 4.3)

4.1. Training EME teachers who approach teaching from the viewpoint of learning outcomes: activating the use of backward design

If one wishes to train EME teachers, who are first and foremost learning-centred, and not only teaching-centred and activity- and content-focused, teachers need to be trained to view themselves as designers of education, rather than as mere instructors. This is the study’s first take-home message, which in practice means that teacher training is advised to draw on the ideas of the backward design. Therefore, contrary to, for instance, T3’s step-by-step outline of curriculum implementation, and in contrast to content- and activity-focused teaching, described by T1, T2 and T4, the backward design, as noted already earlier, literally approaches curriculum and its implementation backwards (see Wiggins, Wiggins, and McTighe 2005; McTighe and Curtis 2019).

Moreover, according to Farrell (2020), reflecting on the (theoretical) foundation of teaching and learning is integral for English-medium education, and therefore, the use of the backward design could also contribute to this reflection and hence to the programme’s curriculum and its implementation. Adopting the design in practice may require teachers to leave their comfort zone and abandon their rooted ways (McTighe and Curtis 2019), and indeed, the present study’s findings also demonstrate this typical tendency of teachers to alter, or even completely ignore, some parts of the design. However, in order to support this deliberate approach, EME teacher training needs to activate teachers’ reflective practice, i.e. it must encourage and activate them to critically analyze their own philosophies and principles and above all how these turn into actual teaching practices and actions with the students (e.g. Farrell 2020). Farrell’s (2020) advice, EME teacher training could function as an initial forum for teachers’ reflections, as participants could via dialogue question and enhance each other’s understanding of their own teaching philosophy and practice. This could simultaneously demonstrate to participants the usefulness of teachers’ collaboration and shared reflection, and thus encourage them to promote this collegial approach and sense of community among their own programme colleagues. This will be addressed in more detail in the next subsection.

On a more practical level, EME teacher training could entail sessions or even an entire module, which would have the backward design at its core, i.e. during the training EME teachers could look at their own courses, or even entire programmes, and revise them with the help of the backward design. EME teacher training could introduce the three parts of the design (i.e. setting the desired learning outcomes, determining the needed evidence and designing appropriate instruction modes and learning experiences) in the right order and it would thus inherently force the participants to stick to this order. In this way, learning and its outcomes would become the first step, and the pitfalls of becoming too teaching-centred or content-driven could perhaps be better avoided in this facilitated designing done as part of the training.

4.2. Training EME teachers who share and do things together: turning EME programmes into communities of practice

The second take-home message for EME teacher training is connected to teachers viewing working in the programme as a shared endeavour. The present study, together with other studies, has revealed that teachers are typically working and developing their teaching alone. What is more, this is somewhat particularly alarming in the context of EME, since according to Yuan (2020), EME is bound to evoke negative feelings of uncertainty and it can cause teachers' own insecurities to surface. In addition, as noted by a teacher in Chen and Peng (2019), not feeling alone and receiving peer support are crucial to teaching in EME. Hence, the present study, similarly to Yuan's (2020) suggestions, proposes *community of practice* (CoP) (e.g. Wenger 2011) as a core concept to be promoted for EME via teacher training.

In brief, CoP is defined as a group of practitioners who share a domain of interest and thus interact in joint discussions and activities regularly, though not necessarily daily, to further develop in respect to that interest. A CoP, through more or less conscious interaction, comes to share a repertoire of practices, meaning they together solve problems, reuse assets, coordinate and document, and in this way the practitioners involved 'learn with and from each other' (Wenger 2011, 1–4). Practitioners can participate in a range of ways, but the bottom line is that they participate: newcomers can learn from more experienced members, but also experienced members can gain fresh insights in return. Hence, a collective process of learning is created, and it results in knowledge being owned by the community, not just individuals (Wenger 2011). A CoP can also offer a valuable forum for experimenting and being creative and a space for transferring best practices (e.g. Roberts 2006).

When it comes to introducing CoP via EME teacher training, one should not ignore the impact of CoP on a rhetorical level (Roberts 2006): simply introducing this concept in EME teacher training and encouraging the participants to adopt it for their own programme discourse might already have a positive impact on them and their colleagues' participation and contributions. In this sense, empowering EME teachers in teacher training, and explaining why they and their colleagues will benefit from taking the space and time to participate and collaborate, can be of utmost importance. After all, if teacher training does not openly question the status quo of teachers thriving, but above all also struggling, alone, what or who will?

Moreover, if considering the aforementioned switch from teaching-centred to learning-centred teaching, it should be noted that such switches in teachers' thinking or anything related to broadening their mindsets or re-establishing their professional identities and philosophies (Trautwein 2018) is often more easily and successfully done within communities, not alone (Moate 2011). One must bear in mind that when it comes to EME, teachers may indeed internally struggle with a range of different identities: they may be figuring out their own transformation from an expert on the field to a teacher of their field. They may also need to reflect on their teacher identity in English (vs. their native language). As noted earlier, sharing all these thoughts and reflections during the teacher training can help teachers become aware of their approaches, and only after that can they develop their own, as well as shared, teaching practices (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi 2007). Therefore, one could view the ideas of CoP to perfectly accompany the use of backward design in EME programmes.

4.3. Combining the backward design and ideas of CoP: taking a collective approach to EME teacher training

The third, and perhaps most pivotal, take-home message is that EME teacher training should ideally bring these two approaches together, i.e. the *backward design* and the ideas of *community of practice* could be seen as a combination to be promoted via teacher training. After all, designing education holistically, and with a focus on learning, is surely more easily and successfully done together with colleagues. On a metaphorical level, one could compare this to teachers trying to put a puzzle together but only with a few pieces, and they would all for some reason refuse to put the pieces together to form the puzzle in its entirety. On the other hand, the ideas of CoP can perhaps be implemented in

programmes more effortlessly if individual teachers profoundly understand that the curriculum with its learning outcomes is indeed the common ground which they can built on with their colleagues. In other words, the *backward design* and *community of practice* could feed each other and thus be better transformed from abstract ideas to programmes' daily life and teachers' work in practice.

To take things even further, based on the things highlighted by the four EME teachers, one may wonder whether also teacher training itself should be, at least to some extent, steered away from an individualistic approach to teaching. What if teachers from the same programme would participate in teacher training as a team? Perhaps EME programmes would benefit more from training that would involve, in one way or another, the entire teaching staff, or at least some smaller teacher teams (e.g. teachers teaching the same course or teachers of courses that the student cohort takes in a consecutive order). They could thus use it as a facilitated forum to work on their shared backward design and they could function as a CoP in this supportive and somewhat structured environment where they would have the time and space to learn from and with each other. Could such collective teacher training have a stronger impact on curriculum implementation, if compared to teacher training solely focusing on individuals? After all, as seen in the present study data, active and eager individuals can only do so much when it comes to the teaching and quality of the programme.

4.4. Concluding remarks

Studies globally have for years reported that scholars are often quite reluctant to become EME teachers. The insights gained from this study may be of assistance when considering how EME could be made more appealing to scholars and teachers globally. Perhaps EME could be more inviting if there was a more pedagogic shift in the discourse surrounding it. What if being an EME teacher would be more tightly connected to students' learning, rather than EME teachers' own language skills? And what if this shift would also be more clearly visible in EME teacher training? Would all this lower the mental threshold of becoming an EME teacher? These are merely tentative speculations, but readers are, nevertheless, strongly encouraged to reflect on how, if at all, these themes can be transferred to their educational context or future research.

Considerably more work will need to be done to determine how this pedagogic shift in discourse would translate into EME practice. For instance, more research is undisputedly needed to discover in more detail why the backward design is not followed in the EME programmes. Moreover, further studies are required to learn more about the reasons behind teachers ending up as 'lone-wolves'. All in all, piloting in practice EME teacher training that combines the study's recommendations, i.e. the combination of backward design and ideas of CoP, could be viewed as a fruitful next step.

In respect to EME in general, many dimensions of it have remained untouched within the scope of the present study. Quite interestingly, the issue of language, despite this context being *English-medium education* for *multilingual* student cohorts in a *Finnish* university, did not once surface in the interviews. One cannot help but ponder whether this in some way indicates that other themes related to curriculum implementation were deemed more prevalent by the participants: EME indeed goes, similarly to all other education, way beyond the issues of content and language. This is not to say that language of instruction is by any means unimportant, but this lack of language as part of these participants' reports, is thought-provoking and I am tempted to suggest that this should also somehow be reflected in EME teacher training.

Finally, as noted in the beginning, we are globally dealing with *English-medium education*, not merely *instruction*. Therefore, the fresh and above all holistic recommendations emerged from this study for EME teacher training can be a helpful mirror for EME stakeholders worldwide, who are keen on developing and improving teaching, and above all students' learning, in their own contexts.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the teachers, who participated in the interviews.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Miia Konttinen (PhD) has a decade-long career in English-medium education (EME). She has taught academic English to EME students, co-developed a screening system of EME program applicants and participated in developing EME teacher training. Her research also relates to EME: her doctoral research examined EME from the viewpoint of students, and lately she has focused on the role of EME teachers. She is currently completing a master's degree in management and leadership at the Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics.

ORCID

Konttinen Miia  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9994-3214>

References

- Airey, J., K. M. Lauridsen, A. Räsänen, L. Salö, and V. Schwach. 2017. "The Expansion of English-Medium Instruction in the Nordic Countries: Can Top-Down University Language Policies Encourage Bottom-Up Disciplinary Literacy Goals?" *Higher Education* 73 (4): 561–576.
- Chapple, J. 2015. "Teaching in English is Not Necessarily the Teaching of English." *International Education Studies* 8 (3): 1–13.
- Chen, Y., and J. Peng. 2019. "Continuing Professional Development of EMI Teachers: A Chinese Case Study." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 45 (2): 219–222.
- Dafouz, E., and U. Smit. 2019. *ROAD-MAPPING English Medium Education in the Internationalised University*. Cham: Palgrave Pivot.
- Dearden, J. 2014. *English as a Medium of Instruction—a Growing Global Phenomenon*. Oxford: British Council.
- Farrell, T. S. 2020. "Professional Development Through Reflective Practice for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) Teachers." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23 (3): 277–286.
- Fusch, P. I., and L. R. Ness. 2015. "Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research." *The Qualitative Report* 20 (9): 1408–1416.
- Kálmán, O., P. Tynjälä, and T. Skaniakos. 2019. "Patterns of University Teachers' Approaches to Teaching, Professional Development and Perceived Departmental Cultures." *Teaching in Higher Education*, 25(5), 1–20.
- McTighe, J., and G. Curtis. 2019. *Leading Modern Learning: A Blueprint for Vision-Driven Schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Moate, J. M. 2011. "The Impact of Foreign Language Mediated Teaching on Teachers' Sense of Professional Integrity in the CLIL Classroom." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 34 (3): 333–346.
- O'Dowd, R. 2018. "The Training and Accreditation of Teachers for English Medium Instruction: An Overview of Practice in European Universities." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21 (5): 553–563.
- Postareff, L., S. Lindblom-Ylänne, and A. Nevgi. 2007. "The Effect of Pedagogical Training on Teaching in Higher Education." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23: 557–571.
- Roberts, J. 2006. "Limits to Communities of Practice." *Journal of Management Studies* 43 (3): 623–639.
- Saaranen-Kauppinen, A., and A. Puusniekka. 2009. "Menetelmäopetuksen tietovaranto KvaliMOTV. Kvalitatiivisten menetelmien verkko-oppikirja [Methodology Teaching Resource. An Online Textbook of Qualitative Methods]." Yhteiskuntatieteellisen tietoarkiston julkaisuja.
- Sarpo, V. 2018. "Architecture of Dissonance: A Study on the Strategic Management Process of Higher Education Internationalization. JYU Dissertations, (40)." PhD Diss. University of Jyväskylä.
- Trautwein, C. 2018. "Academics' Identity Development as Teachers." *Teaching in Higher Education* 23 (8): 995–1010.
- Van Someren, M. W., Y. F. Barnard, and J. A. C. Sandberg. 1994. *The Think Aloud Method: A Practical Approach to Modelling Cognitive*. London: Academic Press.
- Wenger, E. 2011. Communities of practice: A brief introduction.
- Wiggins, G., G. P. Wiggins, and J. McTighe. 2005. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Merrill Education/ASCD College Textbook Series.
- Yuan, R. 2020. "Promoting EMI Teacher Development in EFL Higher Education Contexts: A Teacher Educator's Reflections." *RELC Journal* 51 (2): 309–317.