

Impact Study

How has the OTA Moderated Mediation course helped English language teachers apply their learning to their teaching?



Background

Oxford Teachers' Academy (OTA) offers a series of professional development courses for practicing English language teachers. The OTA was established in 2005, with new courses developed on an ongoing basis. Since 2020, courses have been delivered in online 'moderated' and 'tutored' formats. OTA courses are endorsed by the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE). Teachers who complete OTA courses and provide sufficient evidence of learning are certified by the OUDCE.

To better understand how well the OTA online courses at Oxford University Press (OUP) can support teachers in applying their learning in the classroom, we undertook an impact study on the OTA Moderated Mediation course which has six modules running over six weeks. The impact study looked to evaluate the impact of the structure and delivery of the course.

Research question

“To what extent and how has completing the OTA Moderated Mediation course enabled English language teachers to consistently apply what they have learned in their teaching?”

Methodology

Oxford Impact is OUP's approach to evaluating the impact that our educational products and services have on teaching and learning. At the heart of Oxford Impact is the Oxford Impact Framework: a rigorous process for evaluating impact, developed with the National Foundation for Educational Research and supported by the Oxford University Department of Education. An impact study is research that investigates a particular change a product or service has on the group of people it is intended to help or benefit.



In 2022, and upon completion of the OTA Moderated Mediation course, 20 English language teachers from public language schools in Spain took part in the impact study, which consisted of two parts: an online survey (with all 20 teachers); and in-depth interviews (with 6 of those teachers). The teachers interviewed were asked to consider the **structure and format of the OTA course to identify elements they perceived to have had the most positive impact.**

Key findings

The majority of teachers were positive about the impact of the course on their consistent application of learning in the classroom.



Key course elements with the most positive impact on teachers were:

- the input given by peers and tutors
- the input resources used
- the assignments set
- the opportunities to reflect on how the learning applied to their own context.

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The course provided a **wide range of situations to work with** which helped to make sociocultural mediation easy to apply in the classroom.

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Everything covered on the OTA was useful if only to underline that I was on the right path.

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The course has **helped me explain to students how to summarize, how to transform text into smaller chunks, rephrase/paraphrase.** I knew this before but I'm more aware now of the importance of this in mediation activities.

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What was the impact of the course on teachers' understanding of the concept of mediation?

The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the course had increased their understanding of what mediation is, why they should apply it, different ways of incorporating it in the classroom, and the practical implications of teaching mediation skills. Teachers said that the course increased their confidence in using mediation in their teaching.

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I discovered that **mediation can be easy to teach and motivating** – this is my takeaway from the course.

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The ‘What is mediation?’ module **improved basic understanding and explained how to pass advice** on to students.

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The course has **improved my understanding and I now feel more confident** to design my own materials.

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How did the course impact teachers' knowledge of strategies and activities for applying mediation in the classroom?

The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the course had expanded their knowledge of strategies and activities for addressing mediation in the classroom. The majority of those interviewed were able to apply their learning in the classroom after attending the course and perceived **improvement in planning and designing mediation** tasks, in **increasing the range of activities** they could draw upon and in **increasing their confidence** to adapt activities for different groups of students.



Which elements of the course had the most impact on teachers' application of their learning?

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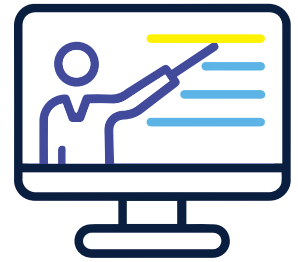
The **tutor feedback**, especially the individual feedback, **was very helpful...** You can apply what you have learnt, or think you have learnt, and get specific feedback to hone your thinking/understanding.

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Tutor input

In OTA courses, expert tutors guide teachers' learning and respond to questions and comments throughout the course. Inputs are text-based or in audio and video formats.

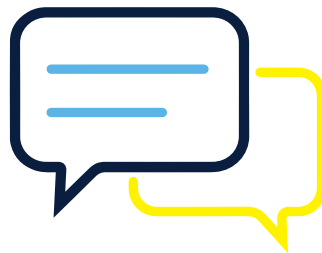
All of the teachers perceived that the tutor input had a positive impact on their application of learning.



Peer forum

Peer forums in OTA learning modules are spaces where teachers can interact, share their ideas and learn from each other.

The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the peer forum had a positive impact because it facilitated learning from each other.



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The more I heard from other teachers about their experiences of teaching at different levels, the more I see the differences. **It's something I really liked about the course.** People were adapting material for different levels all the time.

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I liked all the materials but especially the videos. Explanations in videos were very clear. **The examples given were really good...** They explain very clearly what a right example or a wrong example of mediation would be.

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Resources

Resources in OTA courses include downloadable texts, interactive quizzes and audio and video materials, aimed at supporting the course. Tutors also offer resources for further reading.

The majority of teachers agreed that the varied nature of the input resources (textual, visual and aural) had a positive impact on their application of learning.



Assignments

Modules in OTA courses contain assignments, focusing on how learning can be applied to teachers' contexts. Assignments are commented on by tutors for each individual teacher.

The majority of teachers agreed that the assigned tasks had a positive impact on the application of their learning.



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The learning is there for you in the course: you have to think, apply, refine activities, prepare for class, **check you are not asking students to do too much**, ensure there's a clear purpose for the activity.

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One of the most helpful elements of the course was **the inclusion of exercises that require reflection** on how to approach an issue.

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Opportunities to reflect

Through prompts, discussion forums and note taking, OTA courses encourage teachers to reflect on their learning throughout course modules.

All of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the course supported reflection and critical thinking about what they had learnt in light of their teaching context.



Conclusion

The majority of teachers in the OTA Moderated Mediation impact study agreed that the course increased their understanding of mediation and expanded their knowledge of strategies and activities for addressing mediation in the classroom. Most teachers were positive about the impact of the course on their consistent application of learning in the classroom. Inputs from tutors and peers, course resources, the assignments set and the opportunities to reflect upon learning were largely seen to have had a positive impact on teachers' application of their learning.

This study was planned and implemented using the Oxford Impact Framework. The Framework is a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of Oxford University Press products and services, developed through a unique collaboration with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and supported by the Oxford University Department of Education.



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