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International  
Conference**

## **Diversity in profiles and training needs of teachers engaging in virtual exchange**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION





## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2. Review of literature: Intercultural virtual exchange (IVE)

- ✓ IVE: the engagement of learners in online interactions and task-based collaborative projects with peers from other geographical locations and cultural contexts either during their schooling or as an integrated part of a formal educational programme.
- ✓ *the intercultural turn* (Thorne, 2010) led to telecollaborative models of IVE being put forward in which an emphasis was placed on developing intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence as well as linguistic skills.
- ✓ “Institutionalised, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a linguacultural expert (i.e. a teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence” (Belz, 2003:2).
- ✓ At the end of the 2010s, intercultural virtual exchange was increasingly integrated into formal education predominantly in language study programmes at a tertiary level.
- ✓ Within schools, projects including TILA (Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition), TeCoLa (Pedagogical Differentiation through Telecollaboration and Gaming for Intercultural and Content Integrated Language Teaching) and eTwinning also helped better integrate intercultural virtual exchange in foreign language classes.

## 2. Review of literature: IVE in primary and secondary education

- A large number of studies (Belz, 2003; Müller-Hartmann, 2006; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008; Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011; O'Dowd, 2013; Guth, Helm & O'Dowd, 2014; Helm, 2015) have been devoted to the use of VE in **higher education** in recent years.
- Much less attention has been given to **secondary education** (Clavel-Arroitia & Pennock-Speck, 2015; Jauregi, 2015; Ware & Kessler, 2016; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Pennock-Speck & Clavel-Arroitia, 2018; Pennock-Speck & Clavel-Arroitia, 2019; Clavel-Arroitia, 2019) while very few studies have focused on **primary education** (Pennock-Speck & Clavel-Arroitia, 2022).



## 2. Review of literature: IVE in primary and secondary education

- The scant research into primary school VE exchanges mostly focuses on pedagogy, but does not offer research results (Loukia, 2003; Ligorio & Van Veen, 2006; García-Martínez & Gracia-Téllez, 2018; Bejarano-Sánchez and Giménez-Manrique, 2018; Mont & Masats, 2018; Morcilo-Salas, 2018)
- We were only able to find the following that focus on research:  
Cuestas-Verjano (2013), Austin, Hampel and Kukulska-Hulme (2017), Dooly and Sadler (2016), Gruson and Barnes's (2012), Bautista and Escofet (2009), Ku (2014)
- Main findings from these studies:
  - the potential for purposeful communication
  - student autonomy
  - shared knowledge construction
  - increased motivation



## 2. Review of literature: IVE and diversity

In our highly diverse society, social inclusion and active citizen participation contribute to social cohesion and democracy



**Contact theory (O'Dowd, 2023)**

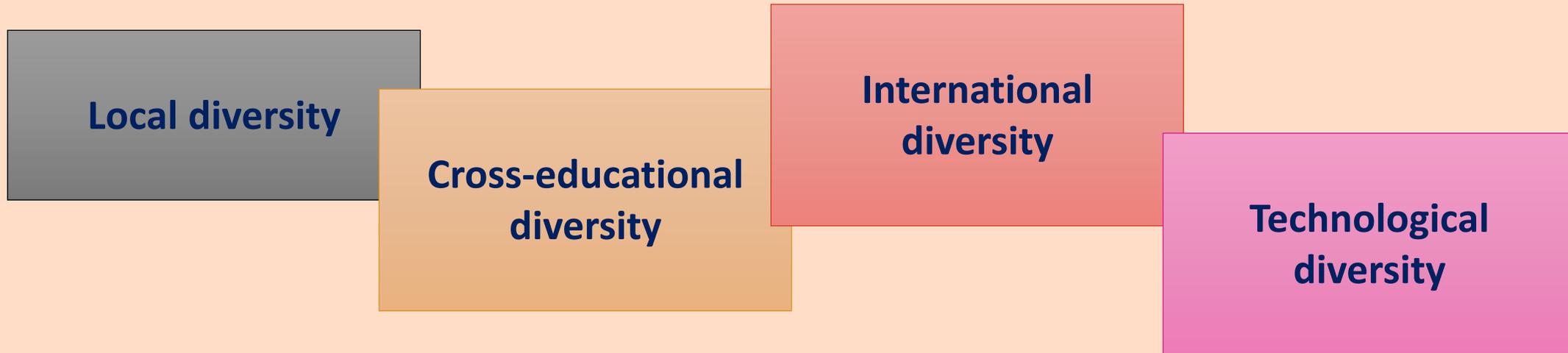
**Inclusion** has been approached as “valued diversity rather than as a teaching obstacle” (Moschenbacher, 2016:160)

**Social dimensions:** social class, gender, ethnicity and other factors

**The aim:** to remove discrimination and intolerance in order that all learners feel included and supported (Jauregi, Melchor-Couto & Vilar, 2019) and approach diversity, as Jauregi & Melchor-Couto describe (2018: 113), as “a socially meaningful concept [...] that should strategically lead towards understanding and valuing diversity as a prerequisite for an inclusive society”.

## 2. Review of literature: IVE and diversity

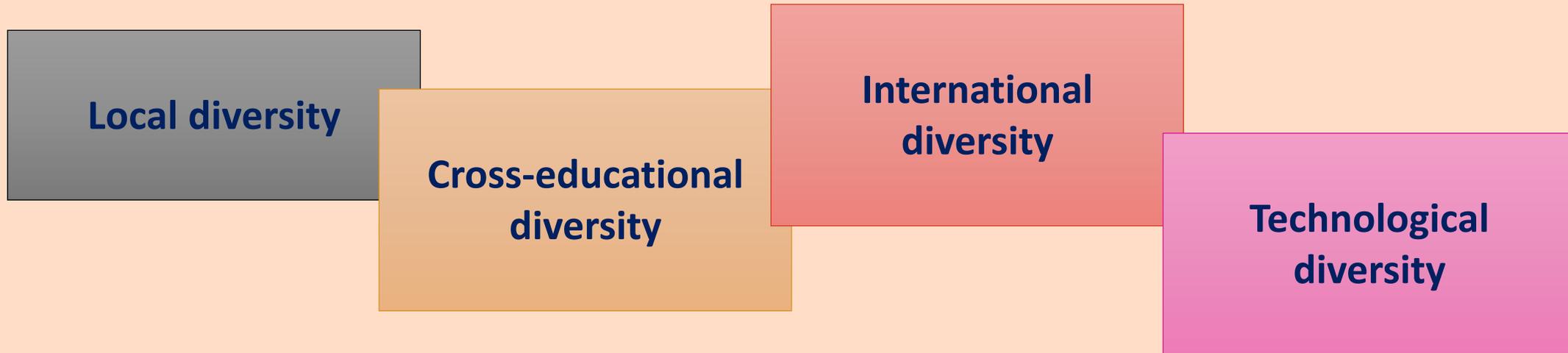
Within IVE contexts, diversity is considered a social force in education at four levels:



**Local diversity:** the diversity present in the language classrooms of the cohorts involved in the exchange in relation to learners' different talents, needs, intellectual, linguistic and intercultural skills, gender, age, social and cultural backgrounds and the idea that by partaking in an IVE these learners will cooperate and collaborate on an equal footing.

## 2. Review of literature: IVE and diversity

Within IVE contexts, diversity is considered a social force in education at four levels:

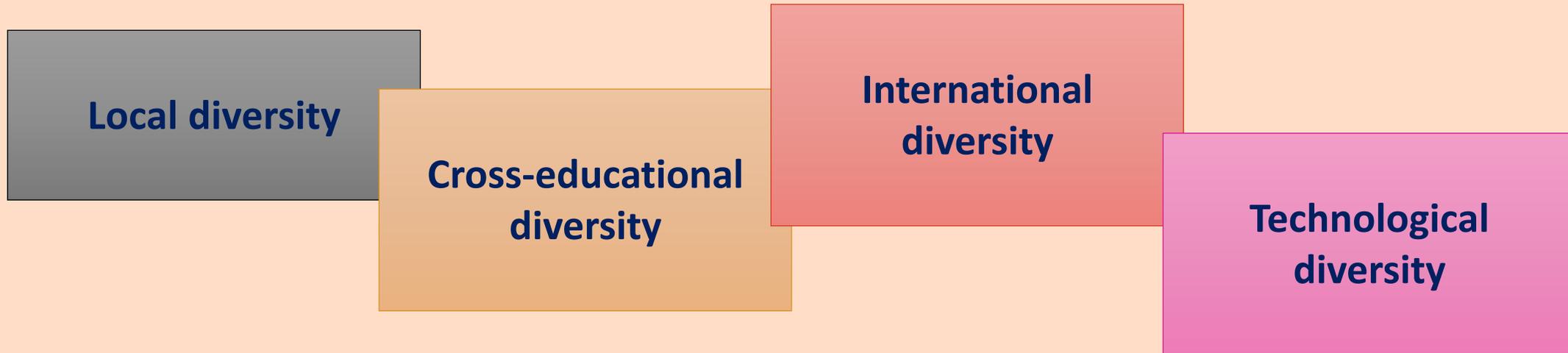


**Cross-educational diversity:** learners from different school sectors engaging in IVEs, for example a secondary school collaborating with a primary school.

Jauregi, Melchor-Couto & Vilar (2019)

## 2. Review of literature: IVE and diversity

Within IVE contexts, diversity is considered a social force in education at four levels:

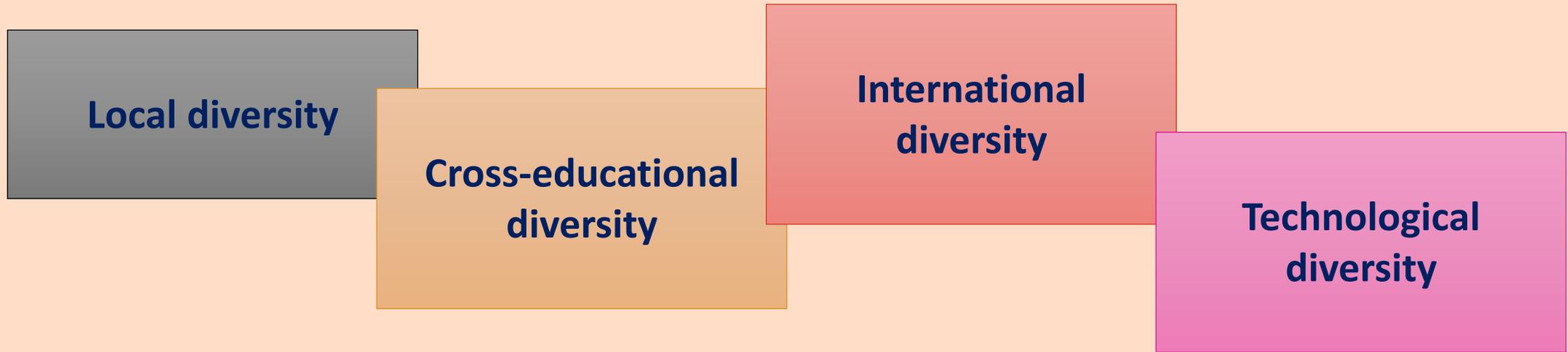


**International diversity:** learners collaborating internationally with peers from other countries and cultures and links to the notions of intercultural competence. IVEs can encourage the development of intercultural competence through intercultural communicative competence and intercultural awareness affording opportunities for interaction, analysis and reflection.

Salamão et al. (2023), Belz & Kinginger (2002)

## 2. Review of literature: IVE and diversity

Within IVE contexts, diversity is considered a social force in education at four levels:



**Technological diversity:** the use of different interaction tools to facilitate the inclusion of all different classes in IVE activities, irrespective of their technical capability.

## 2. Review of literature: Teacher training for IVE

**IVE** is a complex activity demanding knowledge and skills related to course integration, task design, choice of tools and technologies, online coordination between teachers and assessment (O'Dowd, 2021) and, as a cross-cultural learning activity that involves diversity on different levels, **IVE** requires training, coaching and resources for facilitators (Stevens initiative, 2020).



## 2. Review of literature: Teacher training for IVE

EVOLVE report (Nissen & Kurek, 2020, pp10-11):

- A. being able to constructively align the course;
- B. being able to align technologies with learning objectives and tasks;
- C. being able to put into place tasks that engage/motivate students;
- D. being able to put into place tasks that allow students to think critically;
- E. being able to clearly present course goals, task instructions, course structure, etc. to the students;
- F. being able to align one's teaching role in accordance with task / course demands and constraints;
- G. being able to foster students' communication and/ or collaboration;
- H. being able to choose appropriate feedback and assessment methods and techniques;
- I. being able to reflect on one's teaching;
- J. being interested/ involved in continuous professional development either individually or in a community;
- K. being able to adapt one's teaching to available resources and constraints;
- L. feeling comfortable selecting technology for one's VE/ one's teaching;
- M. being able to design a VE;
- N. being able to carry out/implement a VE. Yellow expressed in our results

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### **3. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE STUDY**

### 3. Contextualization of the study: The E-LIVE project

**E-LIVE: Engaging Languages in Intercultural Virtual Exchange (2021-1-NL01-KA220-SCH-000032600)**



This project is funded  
by the European Union

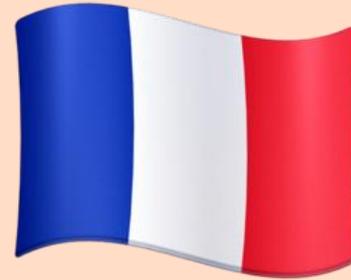
**Erasmus + Project (European Commission) Duration: 2022-2024**

E-LIVE aims to contribute to enhancing digital pedagogical competencies of:

- language teacher trainers,
- trainees and
- school teachers

### 3. Contextualization of the study: The E-LIVE project

The consortium is made up of a team of specialists in Computer-Assisted Language Learning from:



and school teachers experienced in IVE from:



It collaborates with 32 associate partner schools and teacher training institutions from The Netherlands, France, Spain, the UK, Colombia, the US, Poland and Germany.



### 3. Contextualization of the study: The E-LIVE project

In line with the Digital Education Action Plan (DG EAC, 2021), the key project objectives are to:

- innovate and enrich language teacher training programmes in higher education to develop digital literacy skills and organization, pedagogical and intercultural competences of (trainee) teachers by mainstreaming virtual exchange projects within teacher training programmes;
- enrich and make foreign language teaching programmes at primary and secondary schools more meaningful by offering training to in-service teachers and accompany them in offering their learners opportunities to engage in virtual exchanges with peers from other cultures;
- exploit the possibilities that online interactive tools (virtual and augmented reality) offer with a view to enriching and diversifying teaching for intercultural language learning.



## **4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHOD AND PARTICIPANTS**

## 4. Research questions, method and participants

Our needs analysis explores four questions:

**RQ1.** In their current teaching situations, what felt needs are expressed by primary and secondary school language teachers in the associated schools participating in the E-LIVE project?

**RQ2.** To identify anticipated needs, what circumstances stop teachers from practicing IVE?

**RQ3.** For teachers who have previous experience of IVE, what critical incident needs do they identify from their previous practices?

**RQ4.** What training delivery formats do the associate schools' teachers suggest for training implementation?



## 4. Research questions, method and participants

### Research instruments:

#### 1. An online questionnaire



14 closed and 5 open questions structured in 5 parts:

- Background information
- Face-to-face teaching conditions and challenges
- IVE and current digital competences
- Previous experience of IVE
- IVE Pedagogical and digital training needs and preferred training delivery methods

#### 2. Focus groups

A semi-directed guide was elaborated for these based on four topics:

- (1) the main difficulties participants encounter in language teaching,
- (2) participants' perceptions of whether IVE would/would not address their aforementioned challenges,
- (3) participants' perceived advantages and challenges of IVE and
- (4) participants' technical and pedagogical training needs in relation to IVE.

## 4. Research questions, method and participants

1. Online questionnaire:

39 participants

9 primary-level educators

30 secondary-education teachers

- ✓ The 9 teachers in primary education were based in France (2), Spain (5), Poland (1) and the UK (1)
- ✓ 30 secondary-education teachers representing L2 English (10), Spanish (6), German (2) French (3) and 9 teachers specialized in two or more languages.
- ✓ The secondary school teachers were based in France (1), Indonesia (1), the Netherlands (14) and Spain (14).
- ✓ The participants had fairly balanced experience of virtual exchange:

Primary education: 4/5

Secondary education: 21/18

## 4. Research questions, method and participants

### 2. Focus groups:

20 of the 39 participants

5 FGIs in summer 2022



6 primary education teachers of English based in France (3) Spain (1), Poland (1) and the UK (1)



14 secondary education teachers based in Spain (5) and the Netherlands (9)

- ✓ Between 3 and 5 participants
- ✓ 4 in Big Blue Button and 1 face-to-face
- ✓ 2 in Dutch, 1 in English, 1 in French and 1 in Spanish
- ✓ The language was either their L1 or the target language they taught
- ✓ Qualitative data analysis from the focus groups is presented using participant codes

## 4. Research questions, method and participants

### Data analysis:

- ✓ Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively using a spreadsheet application.
- ✓ For the analysis of the FGIs, we used content analysis (Stemler, 2001).
- ✓ Summary documents of the FGIs were produced by the project participant who conducted each focus group.
- ✓ These documents underlined the main contributions from each participant in relation to each of the four topics.
- ✓ These summaries were coded with relation to the different themes that appeared in responses across all focus groups.





## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ1. Felt needs in current teaching

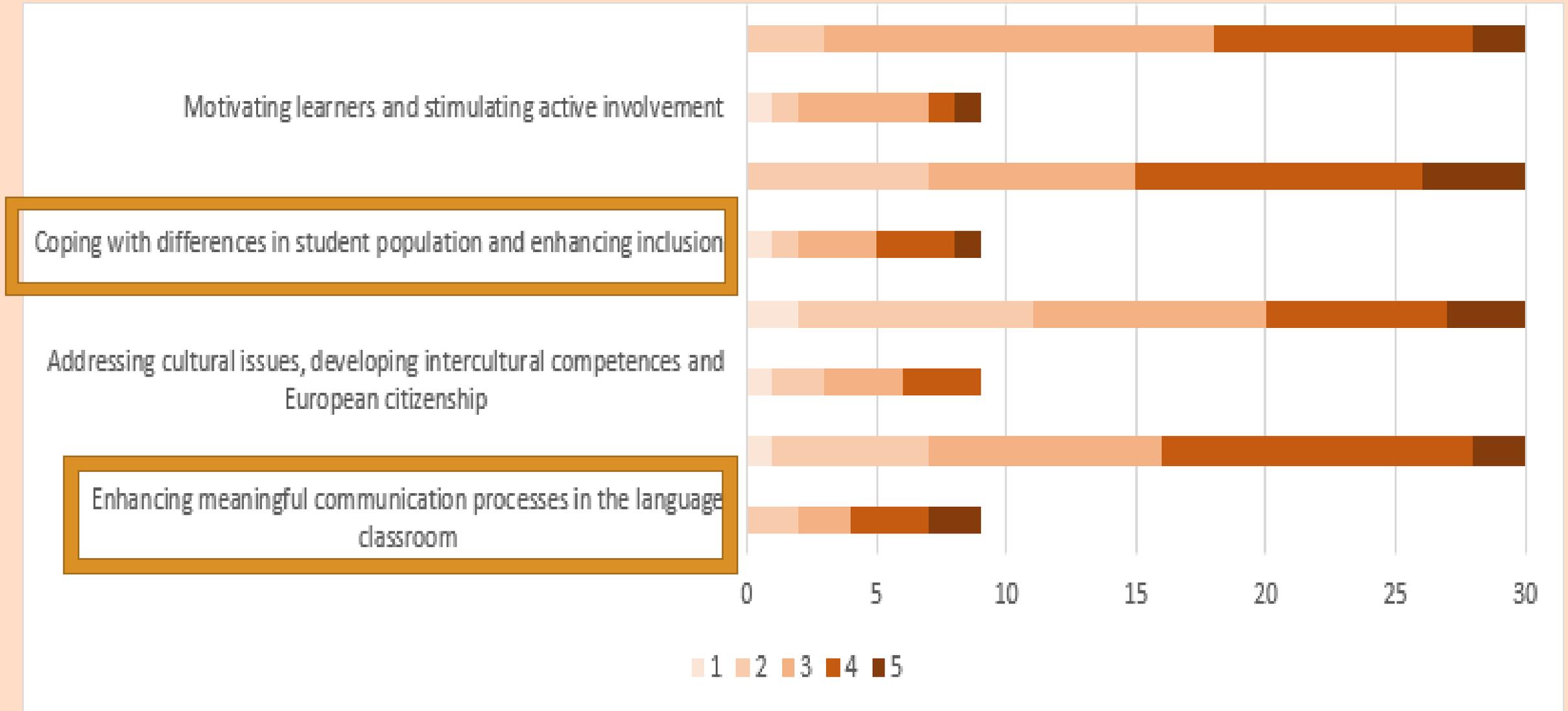


Figure 1 Pedagogical challenges in current teaching situation

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ1. Felt needs in current teaching

- ✓ Teachers brought up the culturally diverse contexts in which they teach and multilingual backgrounds of some learners leading to heterogeneous classes and the difficulties felt in designing language units to account for all learners.
- ✓ They also described challenges related to teaching for different competence levels within the same group, both in terms of learning objectives and linking these to topics to which all learners can relate. As one teacher described:

*The biggest problem (...) I have had is this: wanting to give you a high-quality education and not being able to do it so, so, so well because you have maybe 35 students in class and each one has a few interests, motivations, specific and different problems between them and they are very very very heterogeneous classes.*



## 5. Results and discussion: RQ2. Anticipated needs

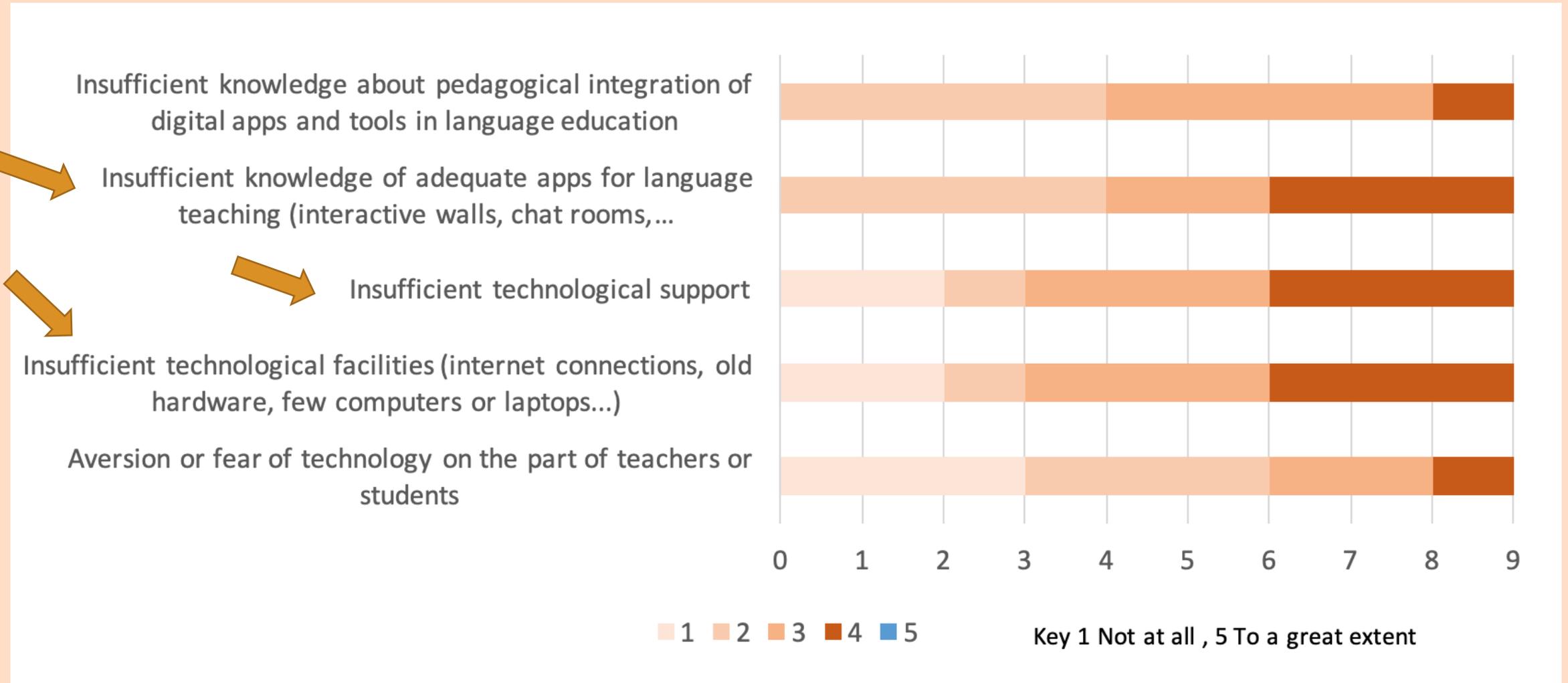


Figure 2 : Circumstances preventing primary teachers from practicing IVE

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ2. Anticipated needs

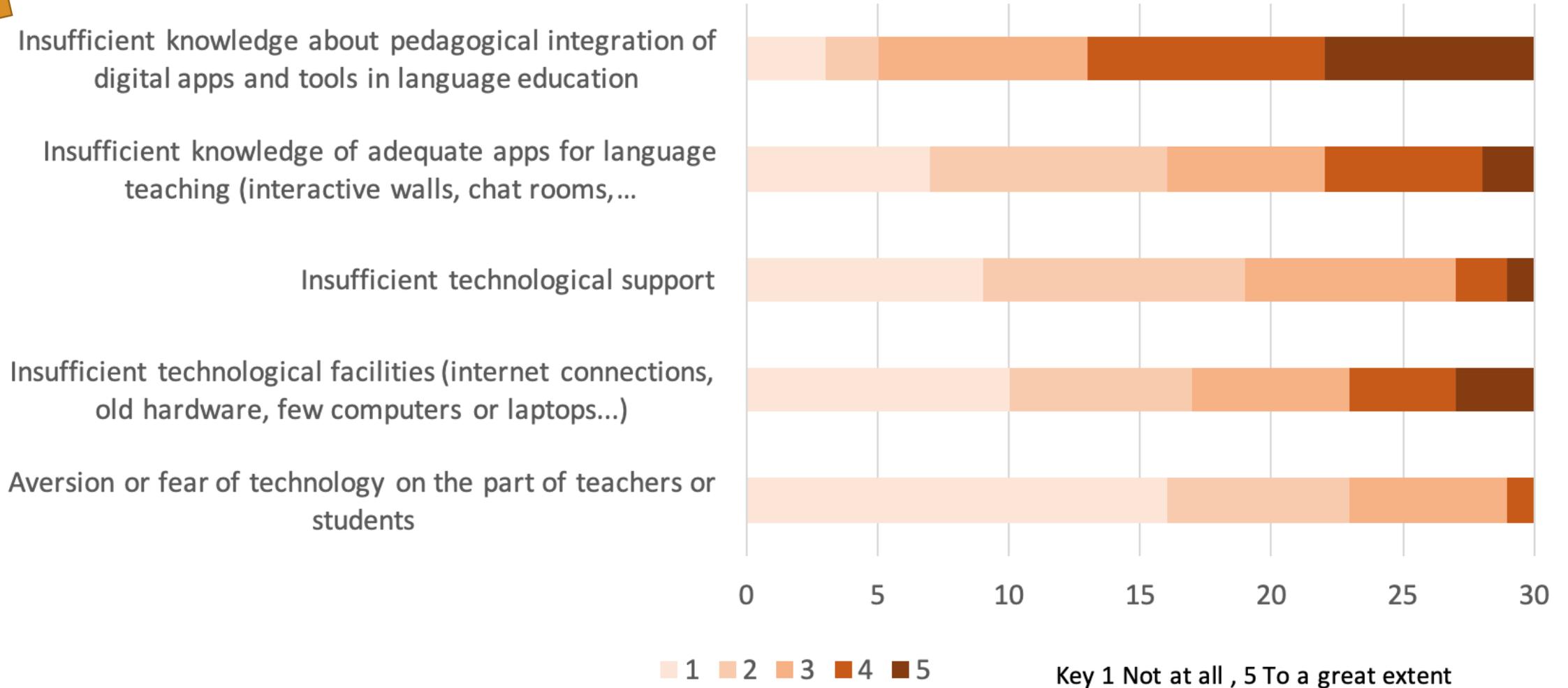


Figure 3 : Circumstances preventing secondary teachers from practicing IVE

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ2. Anticipated needs

In the focus groups, the secondary teachers' discussions again focused on the pedagogical integration of IVE and, across the different focus groups, the topic of task design took a central place in the exchanges, particularly how to design tasks that could be adapted to different language levels within the same class:

*I think it would be important for there to be certain levels so that we could reach this heterogeneity that we were talking about before...because if we are looking for an activity that is, let's say, a standard level or adjusted solely and exclusively for the level of the class, perhaps the students - those with higher capacities - still get a little bored after having interacted for a certain time and the students who have a little trouble reaching that level of content may also get bored, but due to lack of knowledge.*



## 5. Results and discussion: RQ2. Anticipated needs

Turning to those educators who had not previously experienced virtual exchange (5 of the 9 primary school teachers and 18 of the 30 secondary teachers), the primary reason given for not integrating IVE into their teaching practices was a lack of pedagogical training:

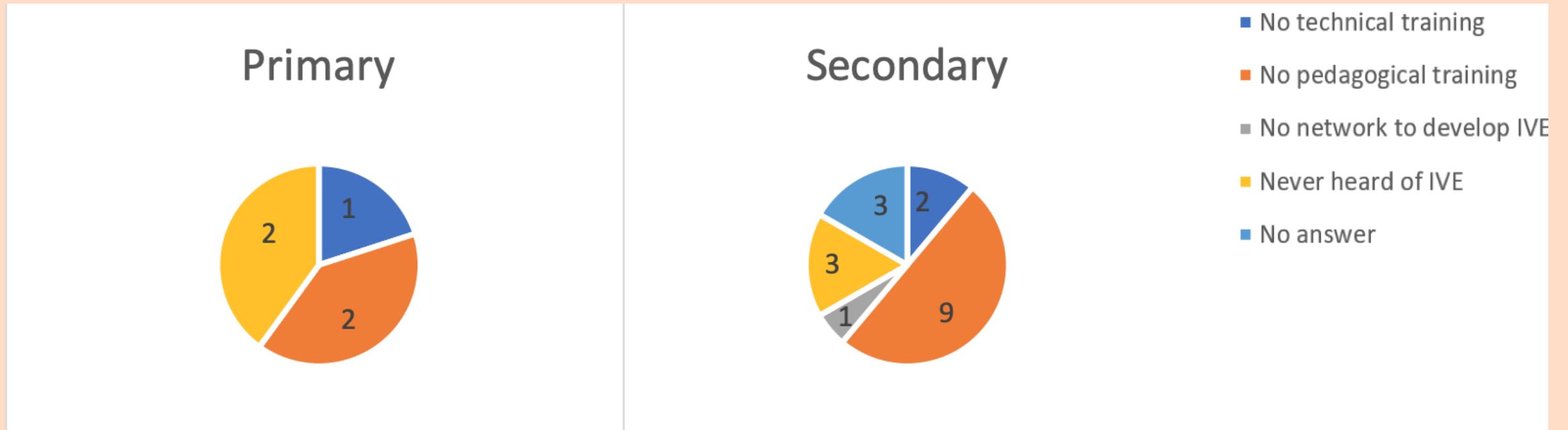


Figure 4: Primary reason given for not previously partaking in an IVE project

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ3. Critical incidents identified in previous practice

From the questionnaire data, three sub-themes were evident in the secondary school teachers' responses:

- 1) **the logistics** of setting up exchanges: One teacher described this process as “hard to set the wheels in motion” (S2) whilst others explained the challenges of differing timetables and holiday periods (S4, S5) which can lead to slow response times from the school abroad (S1) and, because of the projects are “hard to start” can potentially lead to one partner withdrawing from the project (S12)
- 2) teachers described **task design** as difficult in terms of aligning IVE task design with their curricula (S7), designing IVE tasks that appealed to both classes - particularly if the learners were of slightly different ages (S1, S5), and organizing assessment activities (S7)
- 3) **technical aspects** were often referred to with participants describing the lack of stable wifi connections and limited number of webcams as problematic (S9, S10). These participants related these technical aspects to their difficulties when considering task design and also to activity organization which can lead to only small groups of students being involved in the exchange (S1).

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ3. Critical incidents identified in previous practice

The four primary school teachers who had previously participated in IVE with their classes mainly commented on the added value of exchanges.

Only one teacher (P1) reported on 'critical incidents' in the questionnaire data describing the difficulties of **setting up exchanges** due to differing timetables making it difficult to “manage to find moments for virtual exchange for both teachers” and issues surrounding the “**limited linguistics skills of young pupils**” related to task design and interaction management.

Critical incidents also appeared in **the focus group data** and the challenges of running IVE for learners of A1-A1+ CEFR language levels was described as follows by one primary teacher who had organized an exchange with small group-group interaction:

*Given the restricted time to get everyone to talk, it's complicated. And then, with younger learners, you need to find tasks that allow them to talk when they don't have a lot of linguistic baggage. Basically, they don't have a lot of linguistic knowledge, even in comprehension. So it's really very, very limited and it's really a difficulty. (PFr3)*

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ3. Critical incidents identified in previous practice

Regarding the **added value** of IVE as perceived by the primary and secondary school teachers who had already organized pedagogical projects of this type, they highlighted:

- student engagement (S2, S4, S9, S10)
- ways in which IVE promotes meaningful communication (P1, S3, S4)
- a felt challenge in current teaching situations, allowing increased oral participation (S3)
- pupils to feel “they had really done something with the partner at the other side of the screen” (S4)
- “adapt education to the reality of the learners (their tastes, interests, curiosities and social group) (S8)
- IVE encourages not only linguistic competence development (S3, S7, S11) but also development in intercultural awareness (P1, S3, S7, S10, S11), learner autonomy (S7) and digital literacy (S7)

## 5. Results and discussion: RQ4. Training delivery formats and approaches

We asked the teachers to rate the following four proposals of delivery methods on a scale of 1 to 5:

- interactive materials,
- online workshops,
- face-to-face workshops,
- webinars

Primary school teachers had a slight preference for **face-to-face workshops** (3.89) over **interactive materials and webinars** (both ranked at 3.67)

Secondary teachers suggested they would welcome **interactive materials** (4.17) and **online workshops** (4.08)



## 5. Results and discussion: RQ4. Training delivery formats and approaches

In an open-ended question about suitable training delivery formats, five of the ten secondary teachers who responded would welcome **learning from other colleagues** experienced in IVE.

This was described as:

- “job-shadowing and having the possibility of seeing other teachers already working in their project” (S7);
- “a peer discussion where teachers can share their previous experience, doubt and expectation [with] each other” (S5);
- “exchange of information and good practice” (S9).

The focus group data suggested that for primary educators the most useful activity would be to **discover other teachers’ experiences of IVE** (particularly teachers who had partaken in an IVE with the same partner for a number of years to describe how the collaboration and learning design evolved).

The vast majority of secondary education teachers commented on a need for **technical** and **pedagogical training** regarding IVE. They underlined the need for practical training, and suggested that theoretical offerings could take the form of pre-training stand-alone reading activities.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

## 6. Conclusions

- ✓ Our results suggest **IVE's potential** to address some of the challenges educators currently have to cope with in face-to-face teaching
- ✓ The E-LIVE team will **address diversity** and **facilitate inclusion** by:
  - (1) offering a **diversified range of VE tools, task types and contents** that can be used and further adapted for addressing learner diversity regarding proficiency, ethnic, socio-cultural and linguistic background, learning styles, interests and motivation, familiarity with technology and its availability, through personalised mentoring; and
  - (2) carrying out **IVEs in which students are confronted with various forms of diversity**. They will be encouraged to learn how to reflect on their experience and to acquire strategies for understanding, accepting and embracing otherness.





Thanks for  
your  
attention

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