From the Community, For the Community
Participant Engagement with the Teaching Development Program During the Pandemic

ctl grads

Tianyuan Huang
tianyuan.huang@columbia.edu

Fall 2021 Teaching Development Program (TDP) Consultant, Center for Teaching and Learning
PhD Candidate, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University

Overview

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only reshaped pedagogy but also catalyzed a reconfiguration of pedagogical training. Supported by the GSAS Fall 2021 Fellowship in Academic Administration as well as the CTL, this poster charts the **evolution of participant engagement with the Teaching Development Program (TDP) during the pandemic**.

The TDP helps Columbia graduate students cultivate, document, and reflect on their teaching development. To receive TDP credits, participants upload written reflections for each CTL offering in which they engage. In each reflection, participants articulate changes in their pedagogical perspective and practice, and describe the resulting impact on student learning.

My project focuses on reflections written in fulfillment of the **Pedagogy Workshop** requirements, a band of TDP requirements that allows for the greatest choice and variety in offerings. In turn, such reflections constitute a dataset that conveys graduate students' agency and decision-making regarding how and when to move forward in the TDP.

Between **2018**, the inaugural year of TDP, and **August 31, 2021**, right before the return to in-person classes in Fall 2021, TDP participants submitted **over 470 reflections for the CTL Pedagogy Workshop requirements**. The resulting reservoir of personal narratives—the **source material** of my project—provides a window into graduate students' collective experience of pedagogical training, including evidence of resilience and adaptation at the community level.
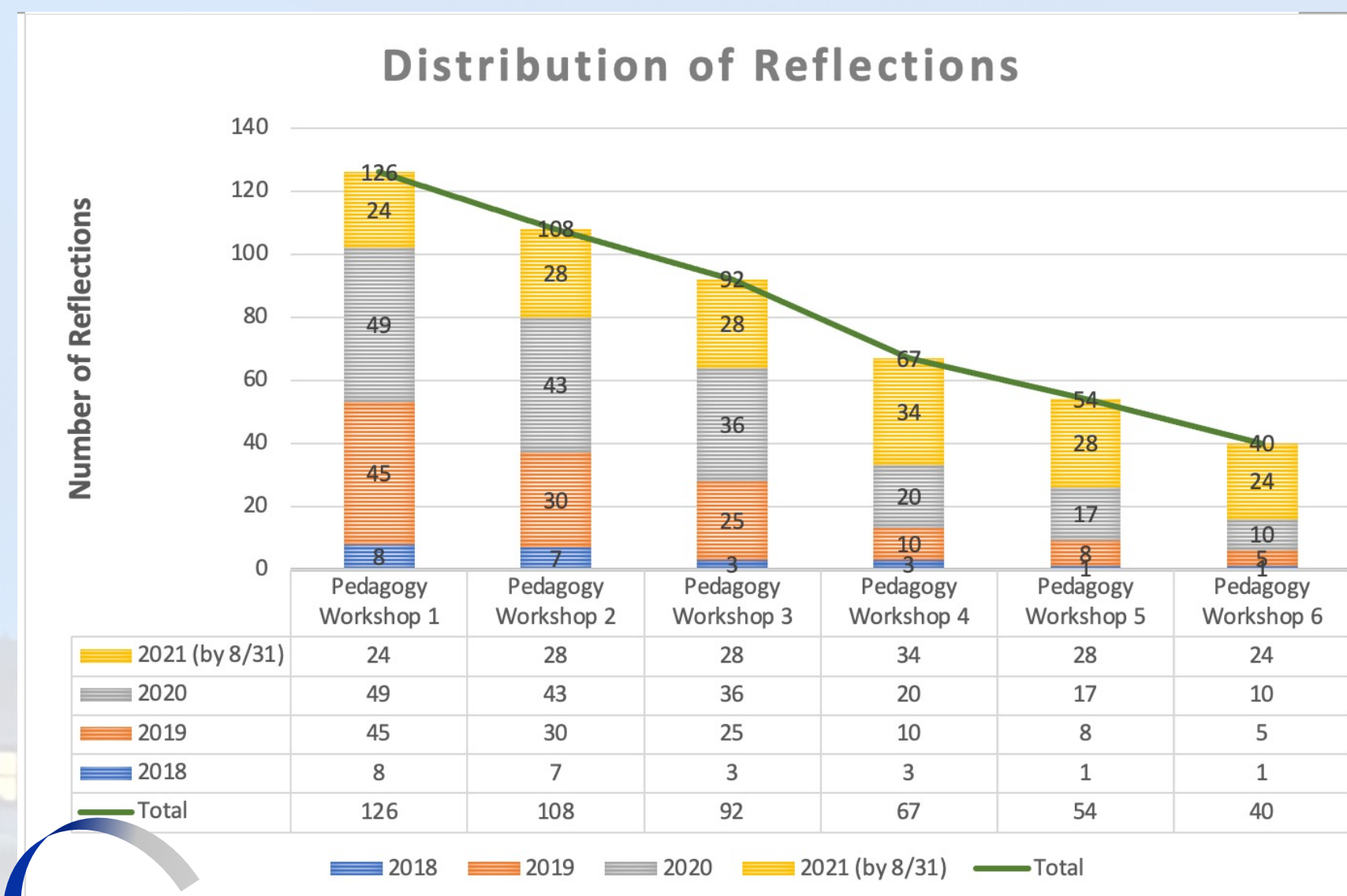

*Figure 1. Distribution of reflections over time and among the six Pedagogy Workshop assignments. Participants of the Foundational Track of TDP are expected to submit **three Pedagogy Workshop** reflections to fulfill program requirements, whereas those on the Advanced Track must complete all **six** reflections.*

Methodology

With the goal of developing a sustainable approach to describing and assessing participant engagement, I catalogued and analyzed all reflections submitted to fulfill the TDP **Pedagogy Workshop** requirements before September 1, 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Analyzed **473 reflections** on CTL Pedagogy Workshops.
- Documented event and submission **times** for each reflection.
- Cataloged general **categories** and specific **themes** of any given Pedagogy Workshop offering.


Key Findings

- Participants reflected on attended Pedagogy Workshop events more quickly during the pandemic, compared to years before the pandemic.

  For Pedagogy Workshop events that took place between March 20, 2020 and August 31, 2021, when courses (and CTL offerings) shifted online, the average time between event and reflection decreased from the pre-pandemic era's three months (**95.05 days**) to one month (**30.93 days**).

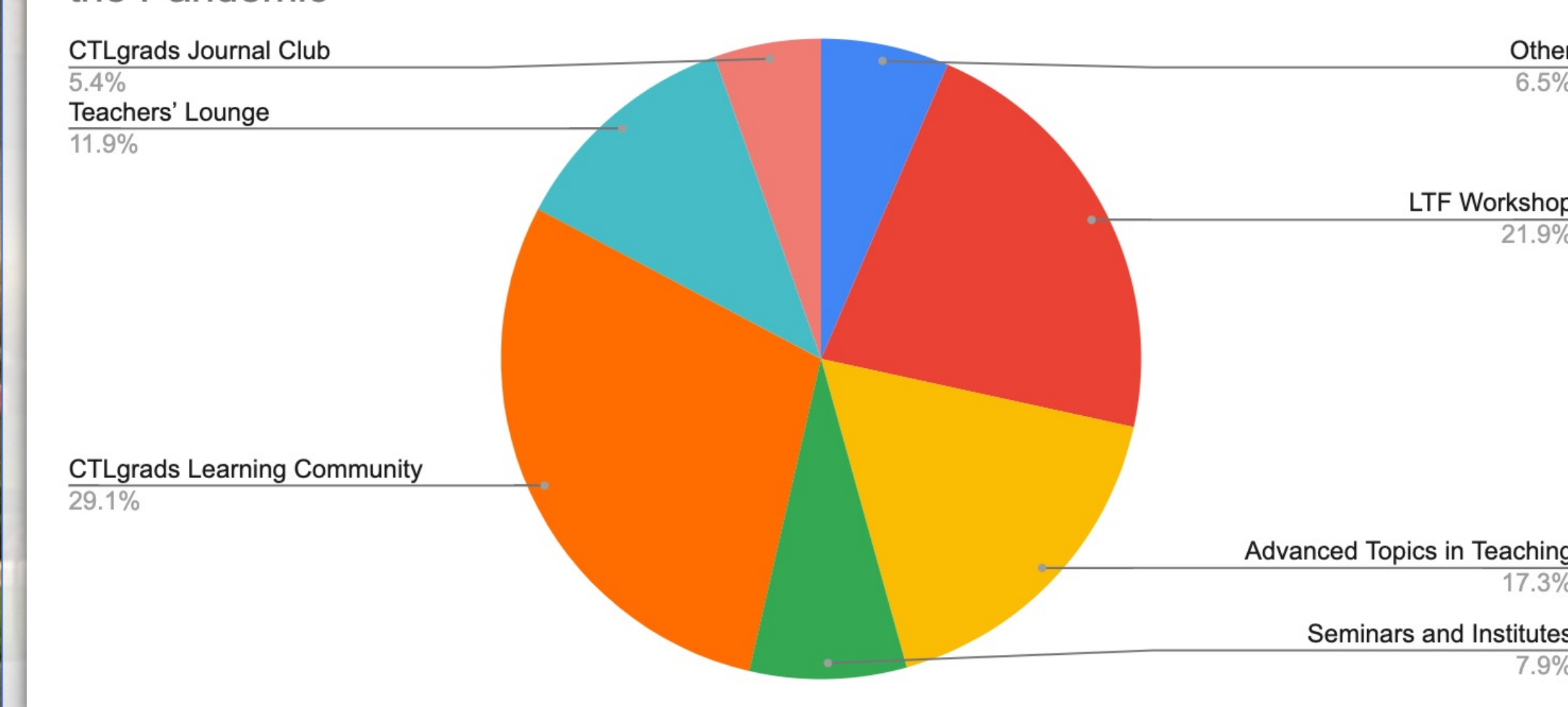- Participants demonstrated **increased interest in student-led events** (*Figure 2*).
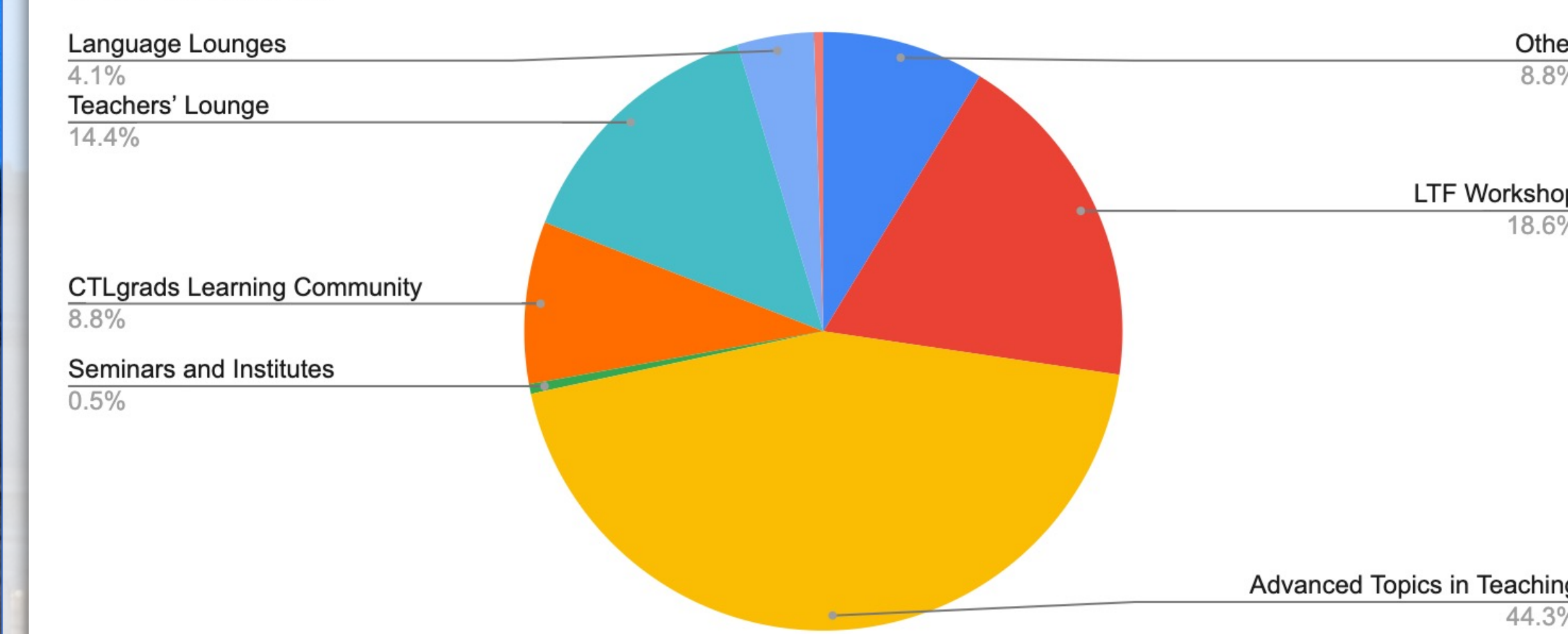
Figure 2 Comparison of the share of reflections among major categories of Pedagogy Workshop offerings between pre-pandemic (2018–Mar 20, 2020) and pandemic times (Mar 20, 2020–Aug 31, 2021). Columbia entered online teaching after the spring break on Mar 20, 2020 and returned to in-person teaching in fall 2021.

Interventions

- Participants' **improved timeliness in submitting reflections**, a strong indicator of enhanced engagement, may be a combined result of several factors, such as:

  A. An **increased demand** for teaching support in light of the online teaching and pandemic stress-related challenges.

  B. The shift to **virtual synchronous and asynchronous offerings** ensured the accessibility of CTL events. Additionally, collaborative worksheets used during synchronous meetings and asynchronous modules may have supported reflective practices.

- Pre-pandemic, the **Advanced Topics in Teaching** series of **CTL staff-led workshops** enjoyed the biggest share of TDP participants' reflections. During the pandemic, **graduate student-led offerings**, namely, the Lead Teaching Fellow **(LTF) Workshops** and the **CTLgrads Learning Communities (LC),** witnessed a stunning rise in their share of reflections, an indicator of expanded popularity among graduate students (*Figure 2*).
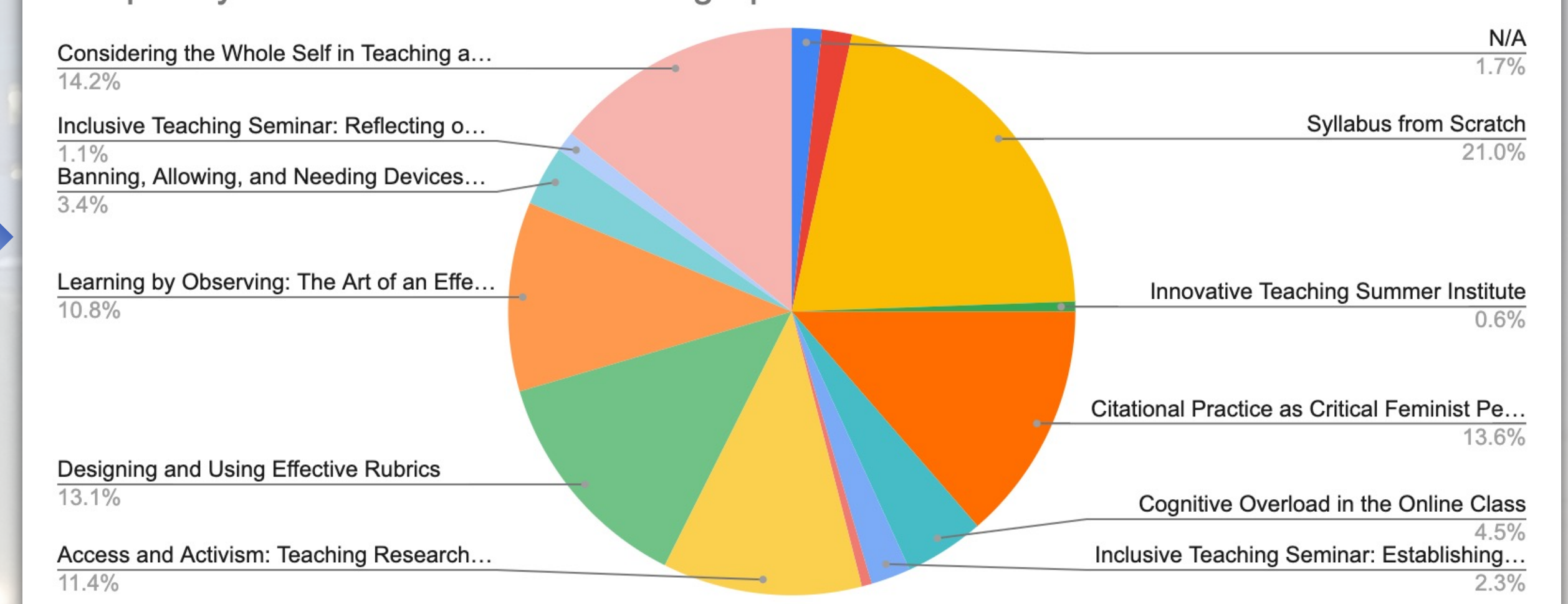

Figure 3 Distribution of reflections among specific events (all time). Certain events, such as those of the CTLgrads Journal Club, may not have specific themes, and thus appear as N/A.

- A closer look at the distribution of reflections among specific Pedagogy Workshop events (*Figure 3*) reveals that the CTLgrads Learning Community's popularity can be attributed to two of pandemic-era workshops: **Citational Practice as Critical Feminist Pedagogy** (Spring, Fall 2021) and **Considering the Whole Self in Teaching and Learning** (Fall 2020). Among CTL staff-facilitated events, **Syllabus from Scratch** and **Designing and Using Effective Rubrics**, both offered regularly within the series of Advanced Topics in Teaching, enjoyed the greatest popularity among TDP participants.

Implications: For the Post-Pandemic Teaching Development Program

Check out the new TDP website here→

The COVID-19 pandemic has cultivated a growing demand for student-led pedagogical training opportunities, as **TDP participants collectively expressed an increased interest and capacity in embracing pedagogical training as a shared, empowering, and peer-led experience that not only serves the community of graduate student instructors, but also comes directly from it.**

*Based on findings of this project, the CTL has revised TDP requirements to allow participants to fulfill program requirements by attending **more student-designed and student-led workshops.***

Created by Prateek Chaubha from the Noun Project

*The CTL continues to **offer multiple modalities of offerings to ensure maximal accessibility** of TDP (asynchronous and synchronous; in-person, online, and hybrid).*

Created by Eucalyp
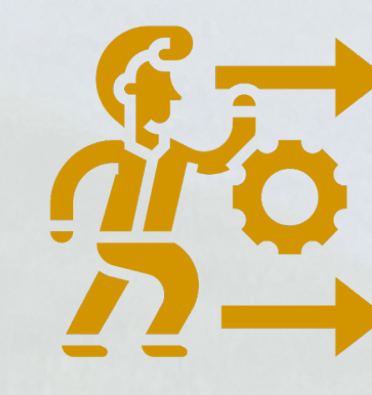
*The CTL facilitates the development of student-designed and -led workshops through the LTF and LC programs, by trained graduate Teaching Consultants, and through CIRTL. Data from this project suggests there could be additional value in expanding existing efforts, such as **by providing small grants and/or by allowing TDP participants to fulfill program requirements not only by attending but also by designing Pedagogy Workshops**. These interventions could create additional capacity among CTL staff, while opening opportunities to **cultivate the agency of graduate students by supporting them to define the terms and formats of their own pedagogical growth**.*

Created by Eucalyp

Mobilize the agency of the graduate student community, in which lies innovation and resilience.