

EFL teachers' perceptions on teacher professional development

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to explore EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' perceptions of professional development and its impact on their effectiveness in the classroom. Adopting qualitative approach, interview and questionnaire were utilized to collect the data. Findings indicate that teachers value professional development for improving pedagogy, language proficiency, and teaching strategies. Preferred activities include workshops, MGMP forums, and digital platforms. However, challenges such as time constraints, financial limitations, and lack of motivation hinder participation. Teachers emphasize the need for practical, relevant, and well-supported programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an activity to optimize the development of students' potential, skills and personal characteristics. Educational activities are directed towards achieving certain goals which are called educational goals (Sukmadinata, 2003). For educational improvement, teacher professionalism is essential. In addition, professional development for practicing teachers' is essential to their professional success and for the benefit of their students learning. Moreover Yoo (2016) has argued that to ensure sustainable development, educators should focus on studies related to teacher programmers. Recently, there has been increased interest in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of English language teachers' where they can gain new knowledge and experience which they later integrate into the teaching learning process to make their courses more efficient and successful (Crandall and Christison, 2016, Hashimoto and Nguyen, 2018, Wikden and Porsch, 2017).

There is much interplay between primary and reflective consciousness that can foster teacher sustainable professional development (Reid & Horvathova, 2016). Jerez (2008, p. 91) asserted that professional development (PD) programs use reflection to develop teaching, Tate & Sills (2004, p. 126) also stress the role of reflection on learning by saying "we learn through critical reflection by putting ourselves into the experience and exploring personal and theoretical knowledge to understand it and view in different ways". Teacher generally reflects on their teaching and students learning in order to improve their practice and cognitive awareness of their reflective processes (McAlpine, Weston, Berthiaume, Fairbank, and Owen 2004).

Additionally, Back et al. (2009) emphasize that the development of reflection on practice is essential for sustainable professional development. McAlpine and Weston (2000) argue that reflection is helpful in promoting professional growth. Jerez (2008, p. 91) asserts that PD programs use reflection to develop teaching. Teachers commonly reflect on their teaching and students' learning to increase their cognitive practices and awareness of their reflective processes (Tomlison, 1999a; 1999b; McAlpine, Weston, Berthiaume, & Fairbank, 2004).

2. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to gain in-depth insight into teachers' perceptions of professional development. Interview and questionnaire were employed to get data. There were 4 EFL teachers' who were involved as participants. These teachers have diverse educational backgrounds, with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 27 years. Most of the teachers have undergone some form of professional training, whether organized by the school, the government, or private institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Needs and Expectations

The findings suggest that EFL teachers recognize the importance of professional development in enhancing their pedagogical skills, language proficiency, and knowledge of modern teaching methods. The teachers interviewed expressed a strong need for continuous learning through structured training such as workshops and seminars. However, they also emphasized the need for professional development programs that are relevant to their specific teaching contexts and aligned with current curricula. In addition, teachers identified their key expectations from professional development programs, which include acquiring updated teaching strategies, improving classroom management skills, and integrating technology into their teaching practices. This aligns with previous research that highlights the necessity of contextually relevant and teacher-centered professional development programs.

Types of Professional Development Activities

The data indicate that workshops and seminars—whether online or offline—are the most preferred professional development activities among EFL teachers. In addition, collaborative activities such as *Musyawah Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP) were mentioned as valuable platforms for sharing teaching experiences and discussing classroom challenges. Some teachers also noted the usefulness of informal learning opportunities, such as utilizing social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to access innovative teaching strategies. This finding highlights the increasing role of digital platforms in teacher development and the potential of blended learning approaches.

Factors Influencing Perceptions of Professional Development

Several factors were found to influence EFL teachers' perceptions of professional development. These include:

- **Teaching Experience:** More experienced teachers, such as RR (27 years of experience), placed significant value on peer collaboration and MGMP activities, whereas younger teachers leaned towards structured workshops and online training.
- **Institutional Support:** Teachers reported that incentives, provision of resources, and administrative encouragement play crucial roles in their participation in professional development. However, while some teachers received institutional support, others reported moderate to limited backing from their schools.
- **Workload and Time Constraints:** Many teachers indicated that balancing teaching responsibilities with professional development activities is a significant challenge. Evening training sessions were cited as ineffective due to exhaustion from daytime teaching duties.

Impact on Teaching Practices

The teachers reported that they actively implement knowledge gained from professional development programs in their classrooms. Commonly used strategies include adapting the curriculum, experimenting with new teaching techniques, and incorporating peer collaboration. One notable approach mentioned was *peer tutoring*, which was identified as an effective method to enhance student engagement and comprehension. The findings also suggest that professional development positively influences teaching confidence and pedagogical innovation.

Barriers and Challenges

Despite recognizing the importance of professional development, teachers face multiple barriers that limit their participation. The most frequently cited challenges include:

- **Limited time:** Teachers struggle to allocate time for professional development due to full teaching schedules.
- **Financial constraints:** Costs associated with attending training, especially offline programs, are a deterrent for many teachers.
- **Lack of motivation and Interest:** Some teachers noted that personal motivation and institutional encouragement significantly impact their willingness to participate in professional development.

These barriers suggest the need for more flexible and accessible professional development programs, such as hybrid learning models or school-supported funding initiatives.

Effectiveness of Professional Development Programs

Teachers generally perceived professional development programs as beneficial but expressed concerns about their effectiveness in improving teaching competence. While most teachers found workshops and training useful, they emphasized that effectiveness depends on the relevance of the content to real classroom needs. Teachers also suggested that professional development programs should incorporate:

- More practical applications of theories and strategies.
- Opportunities for continuous mentorship and follow-up training.
- Updated and contextualized materials aligned with current educational policies, such as the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of professional development in enhancing EFL teachers' skills and teaching effectiveness. However, for professional development programs to be truly impactful, they must address teachers' specific needs, overcome barriers to participation, and be supported by school administrations. Future initiatives should focus on increasing institutional support through funding and incentives; offering more flexible learning options such as asynchronous online courses; and ensuring that professional development content is practical and directly applicable to classroom teaching. By addressing these factors, professional development programs can significantly contribute to the continuous improvement of English language teaching and learning outcomes.

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