

Exploring the EFL Teachers' Satisfaction: Professional Development Activities at a Language Center in a Non-Anglosphere Context

Thao Thanh Le¹, Thi Anh Nguyen², Yen-Khoa Thi Nguyen³, Yen Hoang
Phuong⁴, Thuy Trut Pham⁵, Anh-Thu Thi Nguyen⁶, Tra Huong Nguyen⁷

¹ *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: lethanhthao110294@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8471-8305>

² *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: nathi@ctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2835-7330>

³ *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: khoab1912436@student.ctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9172-9505>

⁴ *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: phyen@ctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0137-4795>

⁵ *Nam Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: ptthuy@nctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6596-2686>

⁶ *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: ntathu@ctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3190-3968>

⁷ *Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam*
E-mail: nhuongtra@ctu.edu.vn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7511-5579>

DOI: 10.26907/esd.19.1.02

EDN: FBLYHU

Submitted: 19 May 2023; Accepted: 15 December 2023

Abstract

This descriptive study aims to investigate the satisfaction levels of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in their professional development activities at a language center situated in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. A total of 30 EFL teachers were solicited to provide data through a questionnaire, and six out of the 30 were further selected for participation in semi-structured interviews. This study incorporated two primary techniques for data analysis: descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The study concludes that the EFL teachers exhibited a high level of satisfaction towards the existing professional development activities that involved mentorship, observation, feedback from experts, and learning from colleagues. These activities fostered a supportive, collaborative, and personalized approach to professional development, resulting in the enhancement of the teachers' knowledge, skills, motivation, and job satisfaction. The results, accordingly, suggest that language centers should adopt a personalized,

supportive, and collaborative approach to professional development while also addressing the various factors that hinder teachers' interest in research and writing.

Keywords: language centers, non-Anglosphere context, professional development activities, teachers' satisfaction.

Исследование удовлетворенности преподавателей английского как иностранного (EFL): мероприятия по профессиональному развитию в языковом центре в неанглоязычной среде

Тхао Тхань Ле¹, Тхи Ань Нгуен², Йен-Хоа Тхи Нгуен³, Йен Хоанг Фуонг⁴, Тхюи Трут Фам⁵, Ань-Ту Тхи Нгуен⁶, Тра Хуонг Нгуен⁷

¹ Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: lethanhthao110294@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8471-8305>

² Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: nathi@ctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2835-7330>

³ Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: khoab1912436@student.ctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9172-9505>

⁴ Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: phyen@ctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0137-4795>

⁵ Университет Нам Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: ptthuy@nctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6596-2686>

⁶ Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: ntathu@ctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3190-3968>

⁷ Университет Кантхо, Кантхо, Вьетнам

E-mail: nhuongtra@ctu.edu.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7511-5579>

DOI: 10.26907/esd.19.1.02

EDN: FBLYHU

Дата поступления: 19 мая 2023; Дата принятия в печать: 15 декабря 2023

Аннотация

Данное описательное исследование направлено на изучение уровня удовлетворенности преподавателей английского языка как иностранного (EFL) их деятельностью по повышению квалификации в языковом центре, расположенном в дельте реки Меконг во Вьетнаме. В общей сложности 30 преподавателей EFL были приглашены для предоставления данных

с помощью анкеты, а шесть из 30 были отобраны для участия в полуструктурированных интервью. В исследовании использовались два основных метода анализа данных: описательная статистика для количественных и тематический анализ для качественных данных. По результатам исследования можно сделать вывод, что преподаватели EFL продемонстрировали высокий уровень удовлетворенности существующими мероприятиями по профессиональному развитию, которые включали в себя наставничество, наблюдение, обратную связь от экспертов и обучение у коллег. Эти мероприятия способствовали поддержке, сотрудничеству и индивидуальному подходу к профессиональному развитию, что привело к повышению уровня знаний, навыков, мотивации и удовлетворенности работой преподавателей. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что языковые центры должны применять персонализированный и поддерживающий подходы к профессиональному развитию слушателей, коллективные формы работы с ними, устранять факторы, препятствующие интересу учителей к исследовательской деятельности.

Ключевые слова: языковые центры, неанглоязычный контекст, деятельность по повышению квалификации, удовлетворенность учителей.

Introduction

As Vietnam continues to integrate into the global economy, proficiency in English has emerged as a pivotal skill. The country's economic reforms since the 1980s have necessitated this linguistic shift, essential for international trade and diplomacy. A burgeoning demand for English education has been observed, particularly in the last two decades, underlining the language's significance across various sectors. It serves not only as a medium for effective communication but also as a gateway to a multitude of personal and professional opportunities, including higher education, enhanced job prospects, and cultural exchange (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Tran & Tanemura, 2020).

Given the impact of English language acquisition on career development and cultural connectivity (Whitty et al., 2015), the quality of English education is paramount for Vietnamese students to succeed in a globalized context. Language centers have become the linchpin in this educational landscape, equipped to offer students a combination of skilled teachers, contemporary resources, and interactive learning experiences within a nurturing environment. Yet, these centers are confronting a critical issue: the dearth of comprehensive and continuous professional development (PD) for their academic staff, a factor that significantly influences the caliber of English language education.

This study sets out to scrutinize the quality and effectiveness of PD activities for EFL teachers at language centers, with an aim to uncover deficiencies and potential enhancements within the existing framework. The focus is on both public and private sectors to gauge a holistic view of the current landscape of English education. By investigating the satisfaction levels of academic staff concerning PD initiatives, the research intends to unearth areas needing attention and to propose more effective PD programs. Through such an analysis, the study aims to provide insights that could influence policy-making and educational leadership, leading to enriched educational practices and outcomes. The overarching objective is to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of English language teaching standards in Vietnam, ultimately fostering better preparedness among learners to navigate the international arena.

Literature Review

2.1. Professional Development

The process of teacher PD can be characterized as a systematic and continuous process of learning and growth that elevates their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This process is fundamental in enhancing the quality of education by allowing teachers to engage in critical self-reflection, learn novel pedagogical techniques, and stay updated with the latest research and trends in their field (Efu, 2023; Richards & Farrell, 2005). To be effective,

PD should be aligned with the individual needs of teachers and the context in which they work (Martin et al., 2019). This entails customizing PD to fit the specific needs of each teacher, such as their level of expertise, subject matter, and teaching environment. PD is an ongoing and ever-evolving process that must be supported and encouraged by schools, institutions, and education systems (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Westwood, 2018). This necessitates the availability of sufficient resources and funding to support PD activities and a culture of continuous learning and development throughout teachers' careers.

2.2. Professional Development in Vietnam

In the context of language centers in Vietnam, there is an expanding corpus of research on PD activities and their influence on teacher satisfaction and teaching efficacy. Duong (2021) investigated the part played by PD in augmenting the effectiveness of teachers in English language teaching in Vietnamese universities. The aforementioned study found that PD activities, including workshops, conferences, and mentoring programs, substantially improve teacher efficacy and promote reflective teaching practices. Similarly, Vu et al. (2020) scrutinized the effectiveness of PD activities in enhancing the teaching skills and attitudes of English language teachers in Vietnam. They found that peer observations, coaching, and reflective practice were effective in enhancing the skills and attitudes of English language teachers. Nevertheless, research also indicates that there are impediments to providing effective PD activities in Vietnam. For example, Hashimoto and Nguyen (2018) identified that a paucity of funding and time constraints were the primary barriers to providing effective PD activities for English language teachers in Vietnam. Moreover, further research is essential to explore the impact of PD activities on teacher satisfaction and retention. Arokiasamy (2021) discovered that PD activities were positively correlated with teacher satisfaction and retention in Vietnamese universities, but more research is needed to corroborate these findings and explore their applicability to language centers. Overall, the literature suggests that PD activities can have a positive impact on the efficacy of English language teachers in Vietnam. However, there are also obstacles to providing effective PD activities in this context.

2.3. Types of Professional Development Approaches

These approaches have been established as the most frequently used and effective forms of PD for language teachers, based on extant research (Borg, 2015; Brannan & Bleistein, 2012; Fletcher, 2018; Gunn et al., 2017; Mag et al., 2017; Prieto et al., 2020; Tseng et al., 2016; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). These activities have been shown to enhance teacher knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and contribute to overall improvements in teaching and learning outcomes.

2.3.1. Training Workshops and Conferences

Language educators frequently participate in training workshops and conferences to acquire innovative knowledge, skills, and techniques applicable to their teaching practice. Extant research shows that such events are efficacious in enriching their professional expertise and skills, and in fostering reflective pedagogy (Borg, 2015). Nevertheless, challenges such as limited funding and customizing the content of these activities to cater to individual teachers are obstacles to successful implementation (Mag et al., 2017). Nonetheless, these training activities and conferences continue to be pivotal in advancing the professional growth of language teachers and enhancing the quality of instruction and learning in language centers, contingent upon judicious planning and execution.

2.3.2. Reflective Journaling

Reflective journaling serves as a salient pedagogical tool that engenders self-reflection and critical thinking, ultimately improving the professional knowledge and skills of language teachers. The process involves the regular documentation of classroom experiences, their analysis, and decisions concerning instructional practices. Existing research affirms its effectiveness in augmenting teaching strategies and reflective abilities (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Yet, time constraints and implementation hurdles may curtail its efficacy (Prieto et al., 2020). Nevertheless, reflective journaling remains a crucial means of PD for language teachers, fostering heightened self-awareness and better teaching outcomes.

2.3.3. Peer Mentoring and Coaching

Peer mentoring and coaching is an interactive PD approach whereby language teachers collaborate to exchange knowledge, observe one another's practices, and offer constructive feedback and support. Scholarly evidence indicates that it can foster improvements in the professional competencies of language teachers (Gunn et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the effective implementation of this strategy faces challenges such as limited time and institutional endorsement, difficulties in delivering valuable feedback, and identifying suitable mentor-mentee matches. Notwithstanding these barriers, peer mentoring and coaching remain vital for language teachers to cultivate a collaborative teaching approach, which in turn fosters superior learning outcomes.

2.3.4. Teacher Support Group

A teacher support group is a collaborative PD activity where language teachers convene to share knowledge, discuss common challenges, and provide mutual support. Empirical research has established that such groups can be a potent tool for enhancing the PD of language teachers by fostering collaborative learning and the development of novel teaching strategies (Tseng et al., 2016). However, the authors also indicated some challenges such as time and interest constraints, difficulty in ensuring positive group dynamics, and limited resources that may impede its implementation. Despite these challenges, teacher support groups remain a vital form of PD for language teachers, promoting greater connection to their profession and colleagues and the creation of innovative teaching strategies.

2.3.5. Teacher Support Network

Teacher support networks refer to the virtual communities where language educators engage in the sharing of resources, ideas, and mutual support for their PD. The existing research exhibits their potential to improve teaching skills and establish collegial relationships. Nonetheless, impediments such as temporal constraints, apathy, and a requirement for a comprehensive and accessible platform must be addressed (Brannan & Bleistein, 2012). Nevertheless, teacher support networks persist as an essential resource for language educators to acquire new skills and methodologies and experience a sense of support within their teaching practice.

2.3.6. Peer Observation

Peer observation is a collaborative PD practice that entails observing and providing feedback on the teaching practices of language teachers. Its primary aim is to stimulate reflection and self-awareness and foster the enhancement of teaching skills. Studies reveal that it is a potent tool in advancing the PD of language teachers (Fletcher, 2018). Nevertheless, hurdles such as distrust in colleagues, anxiety about being judged, and

challenges in ensuring supportive feedback can impede its execution. Despite these challenges, with adequate guidance and preparation, peer observation remains a critical avenue for language teachers to cultivate novel skills, strategies, and introspective approaches to teaching.

2.3.7. Inquiry/Action Research

Inquiry or action research is a collaborative and systematic process that teachers use to refine their teaching practices with the aid of data. It has been demonstrated through research to be effective in improving the PD of language teachers (Prieto et al., 2020). Nevertheless, those studies also stated that obstacles such as insufficient comprehension of the research process and insufficient guidance and preparation may impede its execution. Despite these impediments, with proper guidance and instruction, inquiry or action research can equip teachers with new competencies and techniques, empowering them to make data-informed decisions.

While PD activities are well-documented, the research specifically addressing the satisfaction of EFL teachers with these activities in Vietnam remains limited. Nguyen et al. (2021) hinted at a positive correlation between PD and teacher satisfaction in Vietnamese universities, but did not focus on EFL teachers. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2014) highlighted the relationship between PD opportunities and job satisfaction, yet the satisfaction with the PD activities themselves was not the focal point. This study, therefore, aims to fill these gaps by assessing the levels of satisfaction EFL teachers in Vietnam, especially those at language centers, have with their PD activities, and to understand the factors that contribute to this satisfaction. Such insights are crucial for tailoring PD programs that are both effective and culturally congruent, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language education in Vietnam.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent are EFL teachers content with the caliber of their present PD activities?
2. What factors influence teacher satisfaction with their current PD activities?

Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The objective of this research was to investigate the degree of contentment of EFL teachers in a language institution with their current PD activities. The research utilized both quantitative and qualitative techniques to increase the validity of the findings (Secomb & Smith, 2011). The rationale behind utilizing a combination of methods was to provide a clearer and deeper comprehension of the topic under examination. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods also allowed for a more rigorous analysis of the data collected.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

For the quantitative side of the research, the researchers designed a well-crafted questionnaire. To be more specific, the questionnaire was formulated on a five-point Likert scale (Boone & Boone, 2012) with the main aim to assess the satisfaction level of EFL teachers with their PD activities. On the qualitative side, semi-structured interviews were conducted, serving as intimate conversational spaces where teachers could articulate the nuanced motivations, challenges, and triumphs that numbers alone could not capture. These interviews were designed to dig deep into the psyches of the teachers,

providing a platform for them to voice out the reasons behind their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their PD activities. In essence, the quantitative data gave the study the “what,” and the qualitative data supplied the “why,” enabling a more rigorous and enriched analysis of the collected data.

3.3. Participants

The investigation recruited a cohort of 30 EFL teachers employed at an English center situated in a metropolis in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The participants were of varying backgrounds and held diverse levels of teaching experience. Table 1 manifests the information of the participants.

Table 1. Participants' demographic data

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Sub-variables</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Gender	Males	19
	Females	11
Major	English Teacher Education	21
	English Studies	9
Age	Under 30 years old	21
	Above 30 years old	9
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	5
	From 5 to 20 years	22
	More than 20 years	3
Educational qualification	Bachelor	17
	Master	13

The majority of them had recently completed their university studies with a major in English Teacher Education or English Studies, indicating their theoretical understanding of the subject matter. The participants comprised both novice and experienced teachers. The inclusion of participants with diverse levels of experience and backgrounds offered a varied outlook on the matter. Furthermore, six out of the 30 participants were involved in semi-structured interviews, selected based on their questionnaire responses and their willingness to provide additional insights into their experiences with PD activities. The integration of these interviews provided greater depth to the understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

It is imperative to acknowledge that ethical principles were meticulously considered when recruiting participants for this study. Informed consent was procured from all participants, and they were apprised of the nature of the research, their entitlements as participants, and the privacy of their responses. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given time without suffering any adverse consequences. The research was executed in accordance with ethical guidelines and benchmarks for research involving human subjects.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection instrument in this research, recognizing its potential to gather extensive information from a large number of participants. The questionnaire was developed based on a framework of seven key clusters of PD activities, as described in the literature, including (1) training workshops and conferences, (2) reflective journaling, (3) peer mentoring and coaching, (4) teacher

support group, (5) teacher support network, (6) peer observation, and (7) inquiry/action research. They all were presented in Vietnamese language to avoid any misunderstandings. It was bifurcated into two sections, with the first part obtaining participants' personal information, such as gender, age, educational qualification, and years of teaching experience in English. The second section, containing 15 items, aimed to assess the participants' degree of contentment with the current PD activities and was presented on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Completely Unsatisfied" to "Completely Satisfied." The 5-point Likert scale was adopted to rate the responses, which allowed the researchers to quantify the participants' answers and perform statistical comparisons. The questionnaire was disseminated to the English language center's teachers through Google Forms. The researchers conducted a reliability analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A Scale test was conducted to compute the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.93 was generally deemed satisfactory.

3.4.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Aside from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were carried out with six participants chosen based on their willingness to provide additional perspectives on their experiences with PD activities. These interviews were held face-to-face and each interview spanned approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, the interviewees' mother tongue to help express their opinions at the best convenience (Rowley, 2012). Open-ended questions were formulated to allow participants to express their thoughts and ideas without constraint. The questions were focused on gauging the participants' levels of satisfaction with the PD activities they had attended, as well as the reasons behind their levels of satisfaction. The objective of these interviews was to gain further insights into the participants' perceptions and experiences with PD activities and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the data collected through the questionnaire. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for data analysis purposes.

To guarantee the dependability and soundness of the interview protocol, the researchers implemented five measures. First, the interview questions were formulated based on the same framework used for the questionnaire to ensure consistency and coherence with the research objectives. Second, the researchers underwent training in qualitative interview techniques to ensure appropriate questioning techniques, neutrality, and consistency in conducting the interviews. Third, the interviews were conducted in-person to enable non-verbal communication, establish a connection, and encourage participants to express their experiences and opinions candidly. Fourth, the researchers transcribed and translated the interviews to guarantee the accuracy and lucidity of the gathered data. Finally, the researchers conducted member checking, a process involving presenting the participants with the transcribed interview to confirm that their responses accurately reflect their experiences and opinions. By implementing these measures, the researchers ensured the interview protocol's reliability and validity, and the gathered data were credible and trustworthy.

3.4.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis segment of this study incorporated two primary techniques: descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. Descriptive statistics were utilized to scrutinize the questionnaire responses that were presented on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses were gathered and computed, and the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each item in the questionnaire.

The data were subsequently scrutinized to ascertain the extent of contentment exhibited by EFL teachers with their PD activities.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the semi-structured interview data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts underwent multiple rounds of reading to identify recurring themes and patterns that emerge from the data. Each segment of the data that related to a specific theme was assigned a code, and these codes were grouped into categories. The categories were then analyzed to identify any patterns or trends in the data that pertain to the research questions. The results of the analysis, together with the descriptive statistics, were presented in an orderly manner.

Results

4.1. The Degree of Teacher Satisfaction with Current PD Activities

Table 2 presents the results of a Descriptive Statistics test on the satisfaction level of EFL teachers with their existing PD activities.

Table 2. Teachers' satisfaction with the existing PD activities

<i>Existing PD Activities</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Observing experienced teachers model effective teaching practices to improve teaching skills	4.00	5.00	4.83	.38
Receiving guidance and support through mentoring from more experienced teachers to enhance teaching abilities	3.00	5.00	4.77	.50
Receiving constructive feedback and guidance from experts on how to improve teaching practices	3.00	5.00	4.67	.61
Mentoring in-service teachers to help develop knowledge and skills in teaching practice	3.00	5.00	4.63	.62
Learning from colleagues about effective teaching practices and strategies to enhance teaching skills	3.00	5.00	4.60	.68
Engaging in discussions and collaborations with other teachers to improve teaching practices	3.00	5.00	4.40	.72
Co-teaching with other teachers to enhance teaching skills and share knowledge and ideas	2.00	5.00	4.40	.86
Reflecting on new teaching strategies and approaches to improve teaching effectiveness	2.00	5.00	4.37	.89
Engaging in team teaching to collaborate and enhance teaching practices	2.00	5.00	4.27	.87
Analyzing specific classroom challenges with other teachers to develop effective solutions	2.00	5.00	4.23	.86
Becoming an expert and sharing experiences and knowledge with other teachers to enhance teaching practices	1.00	5.00	4.03	1.07
Collaborating with colleagues to analyze students' work and develop effective teaching strategies	2.00	5.00	3.90	.92
Creating training programs, courses, or conferences for other teachers to enhance their teaching skills	1.00	5.00	3.67	1.09
Collaborating with other teachers to analyze scientific journals and apply research findings to teaching practices	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.01
Collaborating with other teachers to conduct scientific research and write journal articles to contribute to the field of teaching and learning	1.00	5.00	3.40	1.13
Total	2.95	4.81	4.24	.63

The results demonstrate that the EFL teachers expressed a remarkably high degree of contentment with their current PD activities ($M=4.24$). This result could be interpreted positively, as teachers who are content with their PD activities might be inclined to participate more actively in them and consequently improve their teaching performance. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that this outcome is established on self-reported data and might not necessarily reflect the actual quality or efficacy of the PD activities.

The results indicated that the teachers showed high levels of satisfaction with specific PD activities, such as observing experienced teachers model effective teaching practices to improve teaching skills ($M=4.83$), receiving guidance and support through mentoring from more experienced teachers to enhance teaching abilities ($M=4.77$), receiving constructive feedback and guidance from experts on how to improve teaching practices ($M=4.67$), and mentoring in-service teachers to help develop their knowledge and skills in teaching practice ($M=4.63$).

4.2. Teachers' Perspectives on the Factors Contributing to Their Satisfaction with Current PD Activities

One of the PD activities that the EFL teachers in the study found to be highly satisfying was observing more experienced teachers modeling ($M=4.83$). This result could be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, visual demonstrations of effective teaching techniques, strategies, and classroom management skills by more experienced teachers can augment the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills. To illustrate, one of the teachers, for instance, remarked:

In my opinion, the act of observing experienced teachers can be regarded as an invaluable PD activity, as it offers a concrete manifestation of effective teaching techniques and classroom management skills. This exposure may aid in the refinement of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, ultimately resulting in the enhancement of their teaching practices. (Teacher 3)

In addition, witnessing the practices of other educators in reality can serve as a source of inspiration and foster innovation, allowing for the creation of fresh concepts and approaches to lesson planning and implementation. Teacher 5 expressed:

In my perspective, the observation of other teachers could potentially serve as a source of inspiration for EFL educators, inciting them to venture into novel teaching strategies and techniques. This can ultimately improve their pedagogical approach and foster a dynamic and stimulating learning environment for students. (Teacher 5)

In tertiary consideration, the act of observing fellow pedagogues can afford educators an occasion to introspect on their own didactic methodologies and discern domains for advancement. Regarding this idea, Teacher 2 said:

I think EFL teachers can procure sagacity into their own didactic methodologies and expose domains necessitating progress by means of witnessing the erudition of more seasoned educators. This introspection may culminate in a heightened sense of self-consciousness and aspiration to betterment, ultimately ameliorating the comprehensive caliber of pedagogy and erudition within the classroom. (Teacher 2)

Beholding erudite pedagogues can engender a communitarian ethos amid educators, and instigate a milieu of reciprocity and cooperative undertaking, which may elicit salutary effects upon the comprehensive ambiance of pedagogy and erudition. Teacher 3 shared:

Well, EFL teachers can acquire knowledge from their compatriots and generate a mutually supportive and collaborative milieu, which advocates for the sharing of conceptions and resources, by means of scrutinizing erudite pedagogues. This collaborative engagement

can potentially establish a sense of community amid educators, and promote a positive ambiance of erudition and pedagogy. (Teacher 3)

In sum, the scrutiny of proficient pedagogues has been identified as a remarkably gratifying pursuit in the realm of PD for EFL teachers, due to its capacity to fortify their didactic cognition and aptitude, prompt ingenuity, present avenues for introspection, and engender a climate of camaraderie and collaborative scholarship.

Another PD activity that the EFL teachers showed a high level of satisfaction was receiving guidance and support through mentoring from more experienced teachers to enhance teaching abilities ($M=4.77$). Teachers evinced elevated degrees of gratification with the tutelage of more seasoned pedagogues as a means of refining their didactic prowess, with several rationales warranting such sentiment. Primarily, mentoring provides a bespoke and customized technique to PD that can concentrate on select domains for progress. Teachers may experience a greater sense of backing and motivation to undertake pedagogical risks when collaborating with a mentor, who can furnish productive feedback and counsel, as reported by one of the teachers.

In my opinion, the mentorship approach facilitates the provision of customized counsel and constructive appraisal, which can prompt pedagogical risk-taking and advancement. The mentor-mentee rapport also engenders a supportive and motivating milieu, which may boost job fulfillment and nurture pedagogical development. (Teacher 6)

Secondarily, collaboration with a mentor can proffer avenues for introspection and dialogue, which may aid instructors in intensifying their comprehension of efficacious pedagogical methodologies. Teacher 4 said:

From my standpoint, mentoring provides a venue for educators to participate in contemplative discourse, which can culminate in an ameliorated apprehension of their didactic capabilities and limitations. This can facilitate the evolution of a more discerning appreciation of efficacious pedagogical methodologies. (Teacher 4)

Furthermore, mentors can serve as propitious exemplars, instilling a sense of inspiration and impetus in teachers, galvanizing them to persist in augmenting their didactic expertise and sagacity. Dealing with this, a teacher shared:

In my opinion, mentors have the potential to exemplify efficacious pedagogical methodologies and, thereby conferring salubrious effects on the confidence and self-efficacy of educators. This, in turn, can serve as a source of inspiration and impetus, galvanizing teachers to persevere in refining their didactic proficiency and elevating the scholastic experiences of their pupils. (Teacher 1)

Ultimately, the act of mentoring can engender a communitarian ethos among the teaching profession, as educators cultivate affiliations with their mentors and other fellow instructors who are similarly committed to their PD. Teacher 5 remarked:

In my view, mentoring has the potential to cultivate a nurturing and cooperative atmosphere among teachers, as they collectively endeavor to enhance their pedagogical skills. This sense of communal spirit may contribute to the mitigation of isolation and reinforce an ethos of persistent learning and progress. (Teacher 5)

The tutelage of seasoned pedagogues through mentoring emerged as a highly satisfactory PD approach for educators, primarily due to its bespoke and customized nature, concentrating on select areas for progress. Collaborating with a mentor also affords an encouraging environment that promotes risk-taking, introspection, and augments understanding of effective teaching practices while providing inspiration and motivation through positive role models. Finally, the act of mentoring fosters a communitarian ethos among educators, promoting continuous learning and development.

The results also indicate that the teachers were highly satisfied about the activity of receiving constructive feedback and guidance from experts on how to improve teaching

practices ($M=4.67$). It should be noted that acquiring feedback from proficient assessors following an observation is a potent technique for enhancing pedagogical expertise, for it furnishes teachers with meticulous and constructive recommendations on how to ameliorate their instructional capacity. Through feedback from experts, teachers can pinpoint the specific domains of their teaching that demand refinement and can devise a tailored plan of action to address these areas. Teacher 2, for instance, stated:

To me, the provision of feedback by experts can enable teachers to discern the specific domains of their pedagogy that necessitate refinement and devise a course of action to remedy them. Such bespoke attention to their PD can yield an amelioration of their teaching methodologies and an augmented sense of job gratification. (Teacher 2)

Furthermore, specialists can furnish instructors with pragmatic guidance and resolutions to tackle their quandaries. This feedback can be customized to meet the specific requirements of each teacher, guaranteeing that the recommendations are pertinent and practicable. Teacher 3 said:

In my opinion, professionals with expertise can furnish teachers with individualized feedback and pragmatic recommendations to tackle their distinct needs and hurdles. This approach can facilitate the creation of customized strategies and remedies that target specific areas for enhancement of their pedagogical skills. (Teacher 3)

Upon receiving feedback from experts, teachers can perceive themselves to be valued and supported, which can consequently lead to heightened motivation and job satisfaction. Teacher 1 remarked:

To me, the receipt of feedback from experts can elicit a sense of validation and bolstering for teachers, elevating their motivation and job satisfaction. Additionally, such feedback can furnish a sense of guidance and purpose, thereby enabling teachers to set specific goals and to make enhancements to their teaching methodologies. (Teacher 1)

Educators stand to gain immense benefits from feedback given by proficient assessors following observation. This method enables teachers to receive precise and constructive recommendations that can aid in improving their pedagogical practices and identifying areas that necessitate refinement. Furthermore, specialists can offer practical counsel that is customized to meet each teacher's specific needs. Moreover, feedback from experts can provide a sense of being appreciated and supported, resulting in heightened motivation and job satisfaction. The study's high levels of satisfaction with expert feedback among teachers highlight its effectiveness in elevating pedagogical expertise.

The results additionally show that the teachers expressed profound contentment with the activity of mentoring other in-service teachers to enhance their knowledge and skillset ($M=4.63$), owing to the opportunity to disseminate their expertise and experiences with other teachers while supporting their peers to improve their pedagogical practices. Furthermore, mentoring activities have the potential to foster leadership skills and elevate job satisfaction among educators. As for a clarification, one of the teachers shared:

I think mentoring other in-service teachers was a source of elevated satisfaction for the teachers involved, as it enabled them to impart their proficiency and experiences, while supporting their peers in refining their pedagogical expertise. Moreover, this undertaking serves to augment leadership skills and job gratification. (Teacher 6)

Furthermore, the act of mentoring can serve as a platform for the mentor to introspect on their own teaching methodologies, and to benefit from the mentee's diverse experiences and viewpoints. Thus, the potential to mentor other teachers presents a precious prospect for both parties, with the potential to generate a feeling of attainment and a constructive influence on the general standard of education provided by the institution. Teacher 2 said:

I believe that mentoring can be a mutually beneficial experience for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring allows the mentor to reflect on their own teaching practices,

while also learning from the mentee's experiences and perspectives. This can result in a sense of accomplishment and a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching in the institution. (Teacher 2)

Mentoring other in-service teachers was determined to be a gratifying experience for educators since it provided them with an opportunity to impart their expertise and experiences while aiding colleagues in enhancing their instructional techniques, resulting in a boost in leadership abilities and job satisfaction. Moreover, mentoring furnishes mentors with a platform to introspect on their own teaching methodologies and benefit from a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives. The investigation concludes that mentoring is a mutually advantageous experience for both parties and exerts a favorable influence on the general standard of education provided by the institution.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the EFL teachers exhibited a markedly elevated level of satisfaction towards their existing PD activities ($M=4.24$). To delve deeper into this result, it is essential to explore the mediating elements that contributed to the success of the CPD activities. This outcome can be interpreted as a positive indicator, as contented teachers may be more likely to actively participate in PD initiatives and enhance their teaching performance. The discovery that EFL teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction with their current PD activities aligns with prior research that has established job satisfaction as a critical driver of teacher motivation and involvement in PD endeavors (e.g., Guan et al., 2014; Vittek, 2015).

The act of scrutinizing proficient pedagogues has been deemed a highly rewarding pursuit within the sphere of PD for EFL instructors, due to its ability to strengthen their pedagogical cognition and aptitude, foster ingenuity, provide avenues for introspection, and create a culture of camaraderie and collaborative scholarship. Here, the mediating elements could be the well-structured observation protocols and the culture of sharing and reflection that the CPD framework encourages. The findings of the present study corroborate previous research indicating that observing experienced teachers is an effective PD method for EFL instructors. Earlier studies have emphasized the potential of teacher observation to enhance teaching skills, stimulate creativity, and promote collaboration (e.g., Brownell et al., 2006; Fletcher, 2018; Scott & Miner, 2008). Moreover, research has suggested that PD activities that prioritize reflective practice and collaboration can lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes (e.g., Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Hence, the current study furnishes supplementary evidence that observing skilled educators can serve as a valuable mechanism for augmenting EFL instructors' pedagogical knowledge and abilities, cultivating creativity, and establishing a culture of collaboration and reflective practice.

The present study's findings are in alignment with earlier research that suggests mentoring as an efficacious PD technique for educators (e.g., Gunn et al., 2017; Johnson, 2009; Wong & Wong, 2018). Within the CPD framework, mentoring works exceptionally well due to its continuous and iterative nature. Mentoring has been reported to offer bespoke and personalized assistance to facilitate professional growth among teachers, concentrating on specific areas for improvement (e.g., Kram & Isabella, 1985; Gunn et al., 2017). In terms of mediating elements, the personal relationship between the mentor and mentee and the ongoing support throughout the cycle of teaching can be key contributors to the success of the CPD in this area. It also provides a supportive and constructive atmosphere that promotes risk-taking, introspection, and the development of an improved understanding of effective teaching methods through positive role models (e.g., Van Ginkel et al., 2016). Moreover, mentoring has been recognized as an approach that

fosters a community of teachers that is collaborative, engenders continuous learning and growth, and is marked by a shared sense of identity (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Wong & Wong, 2018). Consequently, the current study corroborates that mentoring can be an efficacious PD technique for teachers as it provides personalized support to address individual needs, facilitates experimentation and risk-taking, enhances teaching practices, and engenders a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

Educators have the potential to reap substantial benefits from receiving feedback from proficient assessors subsequent to observation. This is particularly relevant within the CPD framework, where ongoing assessment and feedback are integral components. This approach allows teachers to obtain precise and constructive recommendations that can assist in refining their pedagogical practices and identifying areas that necessitate improvement. The mediating elements here could be the specificity, timeliness, and actionable nature of the feedback, all of which are emphasized in a well-designed CPD program. Furthermore, experts can provide practical advice tailored to meet the specific requirements of each teacher. Moreover, feedback from specialists can create a sense of being valued and supported, resulting in heightened motivation and job satisfaction. The current study's high levels of satisfaction with expert feedback among teachers highlight its effectiveness in elevating pedagogical expertise. The current study's findings align with earlier research on the advantages of obtaining feedback from experts after observation for PD among educators. Earlier studies have emphasized the significance of feedback in promoting professional growth and enhancing pedagogical practices (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback from experts has been found to be particularly advantageous in providing tailored and constructive recommendations that cater to individual needs (e.g., Gordon, 2002; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Additionally, research has suggested that feedback from experts can boost teachers' motivation and job satisfaction by instilling a sense of being valued and supported (e.g., Esia-Donkoh & Baffoe, 2018; Schartel, 2012). Consequently, the current study provides further evidence that obtaining feedback from experts after observation can be an effective approach for PD among educators. The study's high levels of satisfaction with expert feedback underscore its potential to enhance pedagogical expertise. The act of mentoring other in-service teachers has been deemed a highly rewarding experience for educators due to the opportunity it provides to impart their expertise and experiences while also assisting colleagues in enhancing their instructional techniques. Within the CPD framework, peer mentoring can be seen as a sustainable and self-reinforcing activity that has benefits for both mentors and mentees. This, in turn, has been shown to result in a boost in leadership abilities and job satisfaction. As a mediating element, the CPD framework's focus on ongoing professional growth and reflection could explain the high satisfaction levels associated with mentoring. Furthermore, mentoring serves as a valuable platform for mentors to introspect on their own teaching methodologies while also benefiting from a diversity of experiences and perspectives (Gunn et al., 2017). The investigation ultimately concludes that mentoring represents a mutually advantageous experience for both parties and exerts a favorable influence on the general standard of education provided by the institution. The current study's findings align with previous research which similarly indicates that mentoring is a gratifying and mutually beneficial experience for both mentors and mentees. Previous research has emphasized the potential benefits of mentoring for in-service teachers, including the ability to share expertise and experiences, improve instructional techniques, and enhance leadership abilities and job satisfaction (e.g., Wong & Wong, 2009). Additionally, mentoring has been recognized as a valuable platform for mentors to reflect on their teaching methods and gain new insights from diverse perspectives (Sanders, 2009). Research has also suggested that mentoring

can positively impact the overall quality of education provided by an institution (e.g., Lunsford et al., 2017). Therefore, the current study's findings corroborate earlier research on the benefits of mentoring for in-service teachers and the positive impact it can have on the quality of education.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this research employed a mixed-method methodology to scrutinize the degree of contentment among EFL teachers with their vocational growth undertakings in a language center in Vietnam. The research disclosed that EFL teachers were extremely content with the current PD activities, such as observing more experienced teachers modeling, being mentored by experienced teachers, receiving feedback from experts, and mentoring other in-service teachers. These activities offer a personalized, supportive, and collaborative approach to professional growth that can enrich instructors' pedagogical knowledge and skills, augment their motivation and job satisfaction, and advance a positive teaching and learning milieu.

It should be noted that through the collected results, it has been evident that the teachers can acquire a more profound understanding of teaching methodologies and evidence-based teaching strategies that help create engaging and effective learning environments for their students through PD activities. The research provides teachers with a sense of autonomy and personal growth, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the field of language education. It is imperative that more training programs for the teachers' PD in Vietnam should be prioritized.

Furthermore, it may be necessary for language centers to allocate sufficient resources and bolster their infrastructure to enable effective PD activities, including the establishment of training programs, mentoring systems, and collaborative opportunities. Moreover, language center managers should endeavor to create a culture of support that recognizes and promotes continuous learning and research.

References

- Arokiasamy, A. R. A. (2021). The uncharted territory: Plotting the relationships between perceived organizational support, work engagement and expatriate retention in Vietnam. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, 22(3), 201–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10599231.2021.1943809>
- Boone Jr, H. N., & Boone, D. A. (2012). Analyzing likert data. *The Journal of Extension*, 50(2), 1–5. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol50/iss2/48>
- Borg, S. (2015). The benefits of attending ELT conferences. *ELT Journal*, 69(1), 35–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu045>
- Brannan, D., & Bleistein, T. (2012). Novice ESOL teachers' perceptions of social support networks. *Tesol Quarterly*, 46(3), 519–541. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.40>
- Brownell, M. T., Adams, A., Sindelar, P., Waldron, N., & Vanhover, S. (2006). Learning from collaboration: The role of teacher qualities. *Exceptional Children*, 72(2), 169–185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290607200203>
- Clement, A., & Murugavel, T. (2018). English for the workplace: The importance of English language skills for effective performance. *The English Classroom*, 20(1), 1–15.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200622>
- Duong, M. T. (2021). Vietnamese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of reflective teaching as a tool for professional development. *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*, 3(3), 170–180. <https://doi.org/10.31849/reila.v3i3.7961>
- Efu, S. I. (2023). Reflection: a means to faculty engagement in meaningful continuing professional development. *Teacher Development*, 27(2), 234–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2022.2159508>

- Esia-Donkoh, K., & Baffoe, S. (2018). Instructional supervisory practices of headteachers and teacher motivation in public basic schools in Anomabo education circuit. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 5(1), 43–50. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2018.51.43.50>
- Fletcher, J. A. (2018). Peer observation of teaching: A practical tool in higher education. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 32(1), 51–64.
- Gordon, C. (2002). Changing practices in evaluating teaching: A practical guide to improving faculty performance and promotion/tenure decisions, by Peter Seldin and associates. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, 16(2/3), 126–129.
- Guan, Y., Wen, Y., Chen, S. X., Liu, H., Si, W., Liu, Y., ... & Dong, Z. (2014). When do salary and job level predict career satisfaction and turnover intention among Chinese managers? The role of perceived organizational career management and career anchor. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 23(4), 596–607. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.763403>
- Gunn, F., Lee, S. H., & Steed, M. (2017). Student perceptions of benefits and challenges of peer mentoring programs: Divergent perspectives from mentors and mentees. *Marketing Education Review*, 27(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2016.1255560>
- Hairon, S., & Dimmock, C. (2012). Singapore schools and professional learning communities: Teacher professional development and school leadership in an Asian hierarchical system. *Educational Review*, 64(4), 405–424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2011.625111>
- Hashimoto, K., & Nguyen, V. T. (Eds.). (2018). *Professional development of English language teachers in Asia: Lessons from Japan and Vietnam*. Routledge.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge.
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: a historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254–284.
- Kram, K. E., & Isabella, L. A. (1985). Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 28(1), 110–132. <https://doi.org/10.5465/256064>
- Lunsford, L. G., Crisp, G., Dolan, E. L., & Wuetherick, B. (2017). Mentoring in higher education. *The SAGE Handbook of Mentoring*, 20, 316–334.
- Mag, A. G., Sinfield, S., & Burns, T. (2017). The benefits of inclusive education: new challenges for university teachers. In *MATEC Web of Conferences* (Vol. 121, p. 12011). EDP Sciences.
- Martin, L. E., Kragler, S., Quatroche, D., & Bauserman, K. (2019). Transforming schools: The power of teachers' input in professional development. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 9(1), 179–188. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2019.09.1.13>
- Nguyen, H. T., Warren, W., & Fehring, H. (2014). Factors affecting English language teaching and learning in higher education. *English Language Teaching*, 7(8), 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n8p94>
- Nguyen, L. T. M., Tran, T., Pham, T. V., Le, H. T. T., Nghiem, T. T., La, T. P., ... & Ta, T. N. (2021). Investigation of the relationship between teacher job satisfaction, empowerment and loyalty: the difference between teachers of ethnic majority students and teachers of ethnic minority students in Vietnam. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1991488>
- Prieto, L. P., Magnuson, P., Dillenbourg, P., & Saar, M. (2020). Reflection for action: Designing tools to support teacher reflection on everyday evidence. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 29(3), 279–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2020.1762721>
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. *Management research review*, 35(3/4), 260–271. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409171211210154>
- Sanders, M. (2009). *The Power of mentoring: Shaping people who will shape the world*. Moody Publishers.
- Schartel, S. A. (2012). Giving feedback—An integral part of education. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Anaesthesiology*, 26(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bpa.2012.02.003>

- Scott, V., & Miner, C. (2008). Peer coaching: Implication for teaching and program improvement. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, 1(3), 1–11.
- Secomb, J. M., & Smith, C. (2011). A mixed method pilot study: The researchers' experiences. *Contemporary Nurse*, 39(1), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.2011.39.1.31>
- Sims, S., & Fletcher-Wood, H. (2021). Identifying the characteristics of effective teacher professional development: a critical review. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 32(1), 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2020.1772841>
- Tran, P. M., & Tanemura, K. (2020). English in Vietnam. *World Englishes*, 39(3), 528–541. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12489>
- Tseng, J. J., Lien, Y. J., & Chen, H. J. (2016). Using a teacher support group to develop teacher knowledge of Mandarin teaching via web conferencing technology. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 29(1), 127–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2014.903978>
- Van Ginkel, G., Verloop, N., & Denessen, E. (2016). Why mentor? Linking mentor teachers' motivations to their mentoring conceptions. *Teachers and Teaching*, 22(1), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1023031>
- Vittekk, J. E. (2015). Promoting special educator teacher retention: A critical review of the literature. *Sage Open*, 5(2), 2158244015589994. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015589994>
- Vu, T., Winser, W., & Walsh, J. (2020). Teacher attitudes towards the English language curriculum change: The case of Vietnam. *TESOL International Journal*, 15(6), 84–111.
- Westwood, P. (2018). *Inclusive and adaptive teaching: Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom*. Routledge.
- Whitty, G., Hayton, A., & Tang, S. (2015). Who you know, what you know and knowing the ropes: A review of evidence about access to higher education institutions in England. *Review of Education*, 3(1), 27–67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3038>
- Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2009). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher*. Harry K. Wong Publications.
- Zulfikar, T., & Mujiburrahman. (2018). Understanding own teaching: becoming reflective teachers through reflective journals. *Reflective Practice*, 19(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2017.1295933>