

---

## Indonesian EFL Teachers' Professional Development: Views and Current Practices

---

UTAMI DEWI<sup>1\*</sup>, RAHMAH FITHRIANI<sup>2</sup>, AND HOTMA BERUTU<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Teachers play a critical role when it comes to impacting student achievement. Consequently, the matter of teacher quality is currently being tackled through the implementation of professional development (PD) initiatives. PD in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning context has gained burgeoning attention in the last decade. However, it is not known how Indonesian EFL teachers perceive and practice PD for their professional development. The objective of this research was to investigate the viewpoints of EFL teachers in Indonesia towards the importance of professional development (PD) and ascertain their existing PD practices, if any. A total of 70 teachers participated in this study by completing the survey, with 37 of them subsequently invited to participate in the forum group discussion (FGD) on a voluntary basis. The analysis of the collected data revealed that the participants perceived PD as significant for their professional development in three areas: knowledge, pedagogy, and language proficiency. Conversely, the findings also reveal a low degree of participation in professional development activities (PDAs), despite their common engagement in these activities. This study concludes by highlighting the significance of addressing certain areas that require particular attention to effectively support teachers in their continuous professional development endeavors.

### Keywords

English language teacher training, professional development activities, top-down and bottom-up approaches, English teaching

### Article History

Received 18 September 2024  
Accepted 11 December 2024

### How to Cite

Dewi, Utami., Fithriani, R., & Berutu. H. (2024). Indonesian EFL Teachers' Professional Development: Views and Current Practices. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |*, 8(2), 589 – 607.  
<https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v8i2.39425>

---

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Sumatra Utara, Indonesia, Corresponding author: [utamidewi@uinsu.ac.id](mailto:utamidewi@uinsu.ac.id)

<sup>2,3</sup> Universitas Islam Sumatra Utara, Indonesia

## Introduction

Upon embarking on a professional journey, individuals across various industries are required to augment their existing skills while acquiring novel proficiencies. This essential undertaking aims to advance their professional trajectory and provide them with the requisite skills to adeptly navigate the ever-evolving landscape of professional challenges (Mukminin, 2012). These endeavors, commonly designated as professional development (PD), are typically attained through continuing education and engagement in specialized training programs (Agbayahoun, 2016; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). Professional development is especially crucial in domains where innovation and adaptability are essential for success, establishing it as a fundamental element of sustained professional advancement (Avillanova & Kuswando, 2019). Structured learning experiences enable professionals to enhance their skills and implement newly acquired knowledge in their work, fostering personal achievement and the progression of their industry (Lestari & Dewi, 2022). Professional development is, hence, an ongoing activity that cultivates competence and resilience in the workplace.

The notion of PD has a long-standing history in academic environments, acknowledged as a vital element of advancement since the era of Socrates (Charlotte & McGreal, 2000). For educators, professional development entails more than just knowledge acquisition; it requires continuous dedication to methodical advancement and experiential learning. Contrary to the prevalent view of teaching as a mere transmission of knowledge, professional teaching requires the establishment of dynamic learning environments that engage and inspire students while promoting creativity (Lestari & Dewi, 2022). Teachers must consistently assess their methodologies, adjust to emerging educational trends, and incorporate novel techniques into their classrooms. PD promotes self-reflection and teamwork, enabling teachers to refine their instructional skills, expand their comprehension of educational research, and engage in new initiatives. Additionally, it cultivates collaborations with peers, facilitating chances for mutual learning and collective advancement (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Thus, PD is essential for maintaining educators' effectiveness and adaptability in a continually evolving professional environment.

Several approaches have defined teacher professional development (TPD), such as school-based learning, external professional activities, academic endeavors, self-directed learning, and government-sponsored initiatives (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). TPD encompasses a systematic process and a series of activities aimed at improving teachers' professional knowledge, abilities, and attitudes throughout their careers, from pre-service education to retirement (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Guskey, 2000). TPD can be approached from two distinct perspectives: formal and informal (Tarc, 2012).

The formal approach entails teachers participating in organized educational programs with established curricula centered on particular topic areas. Conversely, the informal approach permits teachers to autonomously select topics of interest, frequently guided by their everyday instructional experiences or informal discussions with more experienced peers (Bennett, 2012; Farrell, 2004). The formal approach is typically characterized as hierarchical and top-down, while the informal approach as grassroots and bottom-up. TPD can be facilitated in a variety of ways, such as through self-monitoring, teacher support groups, team

teaching, journal writing, teaching portfolios, case studies, peer observation, analysis of critical incidents, peer coaching, workshops, and action research (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Prior studies have delved into the perspectives and experiences of English teachers concerning their professional growth within the global context (e.g., Agbayahoun, 2016; Koşar et al., 2022; Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017; Poonpon, 2021), as well as within the specific context of Indonesia (e.g., Avillanova & Kuswandono, 2019; Cirocki & Farrel, 2019; Kurniati et al., 2023; Zein, 2016). However, the importance of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) for English teachers in Indonesia remains largely unexplored. This disparity in studies emphasizes the significance of looking into their perspectives and real-world practice of TPD programs. Furthermore, much research on teacher professional development has investigated educators' viewpoints and convictions on PD activities (e.g., Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Chang et al, 2014; Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017). However, research on the beliefs and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in Indonesia remains limited.

Recognized as an ongoing cycle of reflection, learning, and practical implementation, TPD enhances teaching efficacy and student results. These activities frequently seek to transform educators' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions to promote significant instructional change (Guskey, 2002). Notwithstanding its significance, obstacles remain, including insufficient awareness of professional development options among certain educators and an inability to convert professional development into enduring modifications in instructional methodologies. Confronting these obstacles is essential for guaranteeing that professional development programs significantly enhance quality instruction and the professional advancement of all educators. Thus, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of Indonesian EFL teachers on the importance of professional development (PD) for their professionalism, as well as the types of PD activities they participate in. The following research questions guide this: 1.) What are Indonesian EFL teachers' views on the need to practice PD for their professionalism? 2.) What PD practices are Indonesian EFL teachers involved in?

The results of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions, especially on the framework for the professional development of Indonesian EFL teachers. Theoretically, the results are anticipated to validate and enhance existing theories on TPD, highlighting the advancement of teachers' skills, knowledge, and competencies to address present and future career requirements. The results are anticipated to offer significant insights for Indonesian EFL educators and scholars. Their objective is to establish a basis for future research in the subject, provide pragmatic advice for EFL educators aiming to improve their professional development, and tackle particular issues in instructional techniques. This research will provide a comprehensive reference to assist instructors and promote improvements in teaching approaches.

## Literature Review

### *Teacher professional development models*

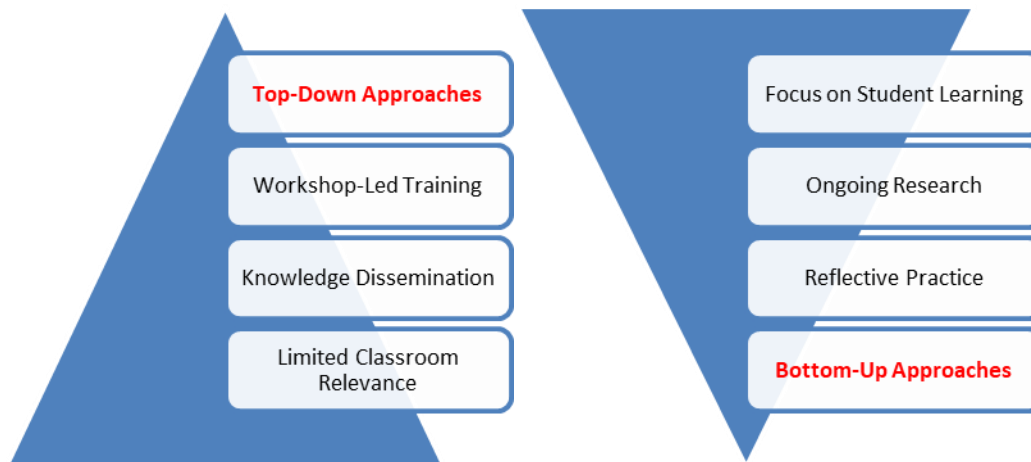
As an educator, there will never be a term to stop innovating to keep up with the times and technology in the educational realm. Teachers are expected to be able to innovate to create a better quality of education. Engaging in professional development is one of the efforts that can be taken to achieve this. Teacher professional development (TPD) is the entire experience of a teacher from pre-service education to retirement, whether the experience is obtained formally or informally (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Teacher professional development has always attracted a lot of attention, especially in TESOL research (Moncada, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Vygotsky's constructivist theory asserts that internal and external cognitive factors influence the complex process of teacher learning, with context significantly shaping this development (Qinling et al., 2016). According to this theory, learning is not a passive reception of information but an active process in which teachers construct knowledge based on their interaction with the environment and their experiences. According to contemporary Second Language Teacher Education research, teachers' professional development includes not only what teachers know and how they apply that knowledge in their teaching practice but also more understanding of the cognitive processes involved in their learning. This includes exploring teachers' thinking, internalizing new information, and continuously developing their teaching methods. Effective teacher professional development is more than just improving skills and knowledge; it involves a comprehensive approach to understanding how teachers engage with and learn from their experiences in the classroom (Richards, 2008).

Since TPD is crucial for maintaining educational quality by improving educators' abilities, knowledge, and practices. Effective TPD programs must meticulously evaluate both structure and execution. Research categorizes teacher professional development methods into two primary models: top-down and bottom-up (Johnson, 2006; Richards, 2008; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Each provides unique strategies for facilitating educators' professional growth and meeting the needs of educational institutions. Comprehending the attributes of these models allows educators and policymakers to choose or integrate methods efficiently.

The top-down paradigm emphasizes disseminating knowledge regarding essential information and actions for instructors, typically imparted by specialists via workshops or brief training sessions (Richards, 2008). This strategy imparts new pedagogical knowledge to teachers, yet they frequently perceive the content as irrelevant to their classroom contexts, resulting in a return to traditional teaching practices post-training. Conversely, the bottom-up model prioritizes teachers developing their own expertise via continuous research and reflective practice. This enduring strategy motivates educators to evaluate their instructional techniques, investigate their methodologies, and strive to enhance student learning results (Burns, 2000; Geyer, 2008). Figure 1 shows the different characteristics of the two models.

Figure 1. Top down and bottom-up approaches of TPD



In a similar vein, Villegas-Reimers (2003) categorizes professional development into two primary models: organizational partnership models and individual or small group models (Novozhenina & Pinzon, 2018). The organizational partnership approach entails continuous assistance from external entities, such as educational support services or institutions, which offer enduring professional development opportunities. This partnership supports educators across their professional journeys. Conversely, the individual or small group method emphasizes personal growth through activities such as class observations, case studies, and participation in conferences or workshops (Novozhenina & Pinzon, 2018). These models highlight the importance of tailoring professional development strategies to accommodate the distinct demands and situations of various educational settings. Consistent with this notion, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) asserts that the ideal model for professional development depends on various factors, including the institution's context, requirements, and objectives.

### *Form of TPD activities*

Professional development comes in many forms, each with advantages and disadvantages. Guskey (2000) identifies seven professional development activities that educators can use. The design of each activity caters to the unique needs and objectives of the teaching profession. Understand that each activity has pros and cons and may not work for everyone (Eun, 2008). The first activity, training, includes large group lectures, seminars, workshops, demonstrations, colloquia, role-playing, simulations, and micro-teaching. A team or presenter usually uses interactive group-based learning experiences to convey concepts in these events. This activity is often considered economical and effective due to its ability to accommodate a large number of participants in a single session, making it a viable choice for extensive professional development. Nevertheless, despite these benefits, the form of activity has a significant drawback: it provides little room for customization (Bennett, 2012). Although the activities' planned format works well for imparting general knowledge, it might not permit



individualized attention or specially designed learning opportunities for every participant. The approach may not meet each educator's learning needs, despite its cost and reach advantages.

The second paradigm in Guskey's (2000) framework is observation and assessment, which is advantageous for both the observer and the observed instructor. Observers get fresh ideas by observing others' teaching, while the watched educator can enhance their practice through the comments received. This reciprocal learning process is a fundamental aspect of professional development (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Observation and evaluation intricately link to the third type, mentorship. Mentoring, however, underscores a more direct and continuous engagement between seasoned and novice educators. Mentoring facilitates a profound, individualized relationship, enabling the mentor to offer customized direction and assistance to the mentee.

Alternative forms of professional development encompass engagement in enhancement activities and involvement in study groups. These activities allow educators to develop new skills and knowledge by tackling common difficulties through collaborative efforts (Zein, 2016). All participants in these events must possess equal opportunity to contribute and express their views, hence fostering a balanced and collaborative learning environment. The concluding models in Guskey's framework are action research/inquiry and personally led activities. These activities emphasize individual professional development, wherein educators participate in action research to address classroom-specific challenges and reflect on their practices through autonomous activities (Moncada, 2007).

Each of these forms of TPD activities offers unique opportunities to enhance educators' skills, knowledge, and practices (Tarc, 2012). By addressing diverse professional requirements and promoting ongoing enhancement, TPD is essential in preparing educators to meet the evolving challenges of education (Poonpon, 2021). In addition to enhancing instructional methods, effective TPD fosters reflective practice, cooperation, and innovation, eventually benefiting educators and students. A comprehensive understanding of these strategies guarantees that professional development activities are effective, sustainable, and pertinent to many educational environments (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017). The subsequent sections will explore the distinct attributes and advantages of various methodologies.

### ***Teacher professional development in Indonesia***

In Indonesia, teacher professional development programs and other forms of training have been continuously conducted. Starting in 2006, the Ministry of Education established a program named Teacher Certification in order to develop teacher professionalism and to produce more qualified teachers. The most interesting benefit for the teachers who have the certification is that they get financial incentives to support their professional and daily needs (Avillanova & Kuswandono, 2019). This becomes one of the motivations for teachers because Indonesian teachers' salary tends to be small. Similarly, Fahmi et al. (2011) argue that the certification can improve teachers' welfare. Since teacher certification is found to be beneficial for the teachers, many teachers who meet the requirements in following teacher certification register themselves in the program. Within the contexts of teacher certification and professional development, continuous professional development done after the certification is also needed to improve the quality of the teachers (Kuswandono, 2014). One of the

programs that the local government promotes is the *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP) Empowerment Program (hereafter referred to as the MGMP Empowerment Program).

The MGMP Empowerment Program focused on developing teaching and learning models in a bid to help teachers prepare creative, critical, and skillful students, intending to improve student achievement (Seobari & Aldridge, 2016). The project goals of the MGMP Empowerment Program were to develop professional activities to improve teaching practices that met the standards of educational services (within the framework of the Indonesian national education quality assurance). Upon completion of this one-year program, teachers were expected to employ more student-centered approaches in their practice, such as contextual teaching and learning, student active learning and problem-based learning (Mustofa, 2007). The implementation of the MGMP Empowerment Program involved teachers participating in a range of activities, including workshops, action research, peer planning and peer observation, to help them to change their teaching practice (Seobari & Aldridge, 2016).

Other teacher professional development programs held by Indonesian institutions or non-government organizations are also projected to help teachers develop their professionalism (Mustofa, 2007). Several researchers have investigated teacher professional development practices and effectiveness for Indonesian teachers. For instances Harjanto et al. (2017) investigated the implementation of community-based teacher professional development in remote areas in Indonesia. The results indicated that the program helped teachers to enhance their knowledge regarding the student's active learning and creative teaching practices. Furthermore, Sari (2012) investigated the concept of online learning community (OLC) to address the issues of Mathematics teacher professional development practice in Indonesia. The findings of this study proposed a new model for TPD to generate new possibilities for teachers, school leaders and teacher educators to conduct collaborative and reflective professional learning in an equal-footing environment while enabling them to surpass the constraints of scarce financial and human resources, as well as overcome the geographical remoteness limitations. The new model encourages the stakeholders' participation and initiatives to create and build new knowledge to solve authentic professional issues.

However, among all of the programs above, research on English teachers' professional development seems to earn less attention. Some of them are Avillanova and Kuswandono (2019) who investigated the challenges and opportunities of junior high school English teacher professional development in Indonesia. Their findings revealed that the challenges of TPD related to, firstly, program timing as the program was carried out during working hours; and, secondly, lack of information about workshop schedules from the government (Education Office) because, geographically, some schools are located in remote areas.

Furthermore, Zein (2016) conducted research to identify suggestions to improve PD programs held by government-based training agencies to help enhance Indonesian EYL teachers' instructional practice. The findings suggest the theorization of a PD model that involves complex and dynamic interactions between actors including teacher educators, school principals, educational administrators and teachers' groups. This paper argues for the need to separate the expertise and facilitative roles between PD actors as it relates to PD accountability in terms of design, development and implementation. The implications drawn from the study

may inform teacher educators and policy-makers in countries facing a shortage of properly trained EYL teachers. Until now, teacher training has become a challenge in supporting English teacher professionalism because the government has limitations to hold it. Overall, the focus of training originates from reflection and evaluation, the theory and practice taught in training must be relevant to school needs and emphasis more on method and practice of teaching.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to comprehensively explore Indonesian EFL teachers' views and practices regarding professional development (PD). This approach involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, followed by a comparative analysis to determine whether the findings from the quantitative data corroborate or contradict those from the qualitative data (Cresswell & Clark, 2017). The quantitative component utilized a survey using close-ended questions to measure trends in PD practices, supplemented by open-ended responses to elucidate participants' general views. The qualitative included focus group discussions (FGD) using open-ended questions that were formulated based on participants' responses to the open-ended section of the survey, aimed to explore participants' perspectives on the need for professional development. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data allowed for triangulation, yielding a nuanced understanding of the participants' views and current practices related to PD while ensuring both depth and generalizability.

### ***Participants***

The study involved 70 EFL teachers who voluntarily engaged in a professional development program. A purposeful sampling approach (Merriam, 2009) was employed to ensure the selection of participants most representative for addressing the research objectives (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). This sampling method is particularly effective for uncovering, understanding, and gaining comprehensive insights from individuals who can provide the most valuable perspectives on the phenomenon under study (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Capturing the perspectives of individuals with prior experience in professional development programs was deemed crucial for understanding Indonesian English teachers' beliefs and practices related to TPD. Additionally, attention was given to achieving a balance in the gender distribution of participants. The following two tables outline the demographic characteristics of the participants across various categories including gender, academic background, grade levels taught, teaching and prior professional development experience.



**Table 1.** *Demographic data of participants (part 1)*

Gender		Academic background			Grade Taught				
Female	Male	B.Ed	B.A	M.Ed	Elementary School	Junior School	High School	Senior School	High
60%	40%	55%	35%	10%	5%	50%		45%	

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the participants' gender distribution, academic backgrounds, and levels of education. A total of 42 participants identified as female, whereas 28 identified as male. In terms of academic qualifications, the majority of participants possessed a Bachelor of Education degree, totalling 39 individuals. This was followed by 25 participants who held a Bachelor of Arts degree, while the remaining 7 participants had attained a Master of Education degree. Regarding the educational levels at which the participants instructed, the majority were engaged at the junior high school level, comprising 35 individuals. This was closely followed by those teaching at the senior high school level, totalling 32 participants. In contrast, a mere 3 participants were involved in teaching at the elementary school level.

**Table 2.** *Demographic data of participants (part 2)*

Teaching Experience				PD Experience			
1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years	5 - 10 years	10 - 15 years	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years	5 - 10 years	10 - 15 years
8%	36%	51%	5%	70%	20	10	-

Furthermore, Table 2 demonstrates that regarding teaching experience, the majority of the participants (36 individuals) have between five to ten years of experience in their respective fields, whereas only 3 participants have served as English teachers for a duration of 10 to 15 years. Nevertheless, regarding professional development experience, 48 participants have only one to three years of such experience. This illustrates the predicament of English teachers in Indonesia, who require further professional development experiences despite possessing extensive classroom teaching expertise.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

Data were gathered through a survey and a focus group discussion (FGD). The survey, comprising 18 items and structured into three sections, was utilised to collect data concerning participants' perspectives and involvement in professional development activities. The initial segment, consisting of six items, was employed to collect the participants' demographic information. The following section, which comprises nine items, was crafted to gather relevant information concerning the participants' prior engagement in professional development activities. The initial eight items requires a selection of either "yes" or "no" as a response, while

the last item permits the inclusion of any additional activities not listed in the preceding items. The concluding open-ended section consists of three enquiries aimed at exploring participants' perspectives on the significance of TPD in their professional growth. To prevent any possible misinterpretation, the survey was provided in both Indonesian and English. The participants were also allowed to respond in either of the languages.

Given that survey research relies significantly on participants' self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors—often reflecting socially acceptable or desirable responses rather than genuine feelings or beliefs (Mertens, 2015)—focus group discussions (FGD) were incorporated to obtain a more profound understanding of teachers' perspectives on their professional development in TPD. A total of 37 English teachers voluntarily engaged in two focus group discussions, with 20 teachers present at the first session and 17 teachers at the second session. The focus group discussion questions were prepared based on the research enquiries and the participants' replies to the survey's open-ended questions. The focus group discussions, lasting 90 to 100 minutes each, were conducted using a combination of English and Indonesian and recorded with the participants' consent. All responses from the participating teachers were transcribed verbatim prior to data analysis.

The analysis of the data collected through the close-ended part of the survey involved frequency counts, which entailed tallying responses to quantify trends in participants' TPD practices. This approach yielded measurable data that complemented the qualitative insights derived from other data sources. The analysis of the data derived from the open-ended section of the survey, along with the focus group discussion, was conducted employing inductive content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). The data were initially scrutinized within their contextual framework by meticulously reviewing each response and emphasizing pertinent words, phrases, or concepts associated with the investigated phenomenon. The elements that have been highlighted constituted the foundational framework for the coding process. Upon completing the initial coding phase, the responses provided by participants were subjected to a systematic review through an iterative process aimed at identifying and documenting all emerging codes. Themes were subsequently extracted from these codes, signifying the conclusion of the coding process. Upon the conclusion of the coding system, all transcriptions were disseminated to an expert to verify their accurate interpretation. In light of his recommendations, several subthemes and codes were integrated. The subsequent section of this article encapsulates a comprehensive summary of the data that has been gathered.

## **Findings**

### ***Views on the need of practicing TPD***

This study investigates Indonesian EFL teachers' views on the need to engage in PD activities for their professional advancement, as well as their current PD practices, to determine whether there is alignment or misalignment between their perspectives and actions. We examined data from the open-ended part of the survey and the focus group discussion to address the first research question on teachers' views on the necessity of TPD activities. The results demonstrate that the teacher participants concur that TPD activities are significant for

three primary reasons: developing pedagogical skills, broadening knowledge, and improving language proficiency.

### *Needs for extending knowledge*

Engaging in TPD activities is essential in influencing multiple facets of the professional development of Indonesian EFL teachers, as the participants stated in their responses to the survey and the FGD. The EFL teachers participating in this study recognize the significance of engaging in TPD activities to broaden their knowledge, especially in aspects that improve their teaching efficacy and professional development. Continuous professional development regards knowledge enhancement as a crucial component, enabling educators to stay up-to-date with contemporary trends, approaches, and advancements in language instruction. This part provides comprehensive insights from the interviews, illustrating how the educators' perspectives correspond with the necessity to consistently enhance and expand their knowledge to more effectively support their students and refine their teaching methodologies.

“I consider it crucial to enhance my understanding, particularly about the most recent developments in language instruction. Innovative approaches and research ensure my teaching remains current and pertinent, as the strategies I acquired years ago appear inadequate to address my students' requirements.” (T1, FGD Group 1)

T1's statement emphasizes a common concern among teachers, which is the belief that their approaches and training strategies could not be sufficient in the setting of a fast-changing educational environment. This teacher emphasizes the need to always be informed about modern teaching strategies and research to ensure that their instruction is efficient and in line with present educational criteria. The focus of T1 on attending to students' needs shows a larger desire to change teaching strategies in response to the changing needs of students and the difficulties of modern education. This teacher believes that retaining effectiveness and relevance in their line of work depends on the improvement of knowledge.

In a similar vein, another participant (T2) recognizes that engaging in professional development activities enables her to remain current with the ever-evolving body of knowledge. She recognizes that by continually enhancing her knowledge through professional development, she can incorporate innovative ideas and pedagogical methods into her teaching strategies.

“Enhancing my knowledge through professional development introduces new concepts and methods that keep me motivated and improve my lessons. Without it, I'd fall behind.” (T2, Survey).

The reference to "new concepts and methods " in classes denotes the teacher's aim to guarantee that courses stay dynamic and interesting, which is absolutely vital for keeping student attention and enabling successful learning. Moreover, T2 recognizes the natural motivation resulting from knowledge growth and implies that professional development benefits not only the teachers but also the students themselves. The teacher's concern about

"falling behind" shows a strong belief that lifelong learning is necessary to keep competitiveness and relevance in a constantly changing profession.

### *Needs for enhancing pedagogical skill*

In addition to the need to expand their knowledge, the teacher participants in this study articulated that professional development is essential for enhancing their pedagogical competencies, including classroom management, syllabus design, and the creation and implementation of lesson plans. Most of the teachers express apprehensions about their insufficient classroom management skills, especially when they have a large number of students. Some teachers contend that teaching a large class hindered their ability to effectively execute their lesson plans. The situation is exacerbated by the presence of disruptive students, which frequently results in a chaotic and non-conducive classroom environment for effective learning. T3 acknowledged that he often had to depart from his lesson plan because of this issue.

“Although I have already prepared what I want to do (in my class), not all of them can be carried out as I planned. I have 35 students in my class. I get tired just making sure they pay attention when I explain the lesson.” (T3, FGD Group 2).

Other teachers also highlighted a different focus on pedagogical skills, articulating the necessity of TPD for their professional development. They assert that the enhancement and refinement of their pedagogical skills will positively impact their students' learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers require professional development to enhance their understanding of students and to remain current with technological advancements.

“Professional development can help me improve my understanding of student psychology and technology, making me a more effective teacher.” (T4, FGD Group 1).

T4's statement highlights a crucial element of professional development focusing on the aspiration to acquire in-depth expertise in particular teaching domains that surpass fundamental content areas such as grammar and vocabulary. The teacher demonstrates a desire to comprehend elements of pedagogy, including student psychology and the incorporation of technology in the classroom. Such insights enable teachers to modify their instructional methods to accommodate the varied demands of their students and improve the overall educational atmosphere. T4's aspiration to expand her expertise in these domains indicates an acknowledgement of the intricacies of teaching and a dedication to cultivating a more comprehensive educational approach. The mention of classroom technology underscores the increasing significance of digital tools in education, and this educator appreciates professional development programs that enable them to remain current with these innovations.

*Needs for improving language proficiency*

One of the main areas Indonesian EFL teachers think PD activities should help them improve is language competency. The teacher participants in this study realized they had to keep improving their language abilities if they were to provide their students with better support and more efficient education. They underlined the value of improving their language competency in all spheres of instruction, from communication to class delivery to answering student queries. Three important interview quotes capture the teachers' opinions on the necessity of constant improvement in language competency.

“Teaching non-native speakers depends on my increasing language competency. PD exercises targeted at language development would improve my communication skills.” (T5, Survey).

To increase communication and interaction with her students, T5 stresses the crucial need to hone her language abilities, especially in vocabulary and pronunciation. She understands that her command of English directly affects her capacity to clearly, boldly, and successfully convey ideas, qualities necessary to promote student understanding. This self-awareness emphasizes the link between the linguistic competency of a teacher and their classroom performance, where even little differences might affect the general learning environment. Acknowledging these difficulties, the teacher shows a proactive attitude toward professional development by stressing the need for ongoing progress by means of focused professional development activities. Participating in seminars, language classes, and self-directed activities meant to increase vocabulary and improve pronunciation would not only boost their confidence but also help them to set a good example by modeling accurate use.

“I'm focusing on my fluency and advanced grammar in particular. TPD initiatives would increase my confidence and enable me to model better language use.” (T6, FGD Group 1).

In addition, T6 underlines the need to prioritise advanced grammar and fluency. The teacher thinks that improving his language competency will boost his confidence and act as an example for the students, thereby supporting the necessity of TPD initiatives aimed at these areas.

“Explaining tough ideas or answering challenging queries from pupils causes me trouble. By working on my language, especially in academic writing and speaking, I would be able to communicate more effectively and raise my teaching efficiency.” (T7, FGD Group 1).

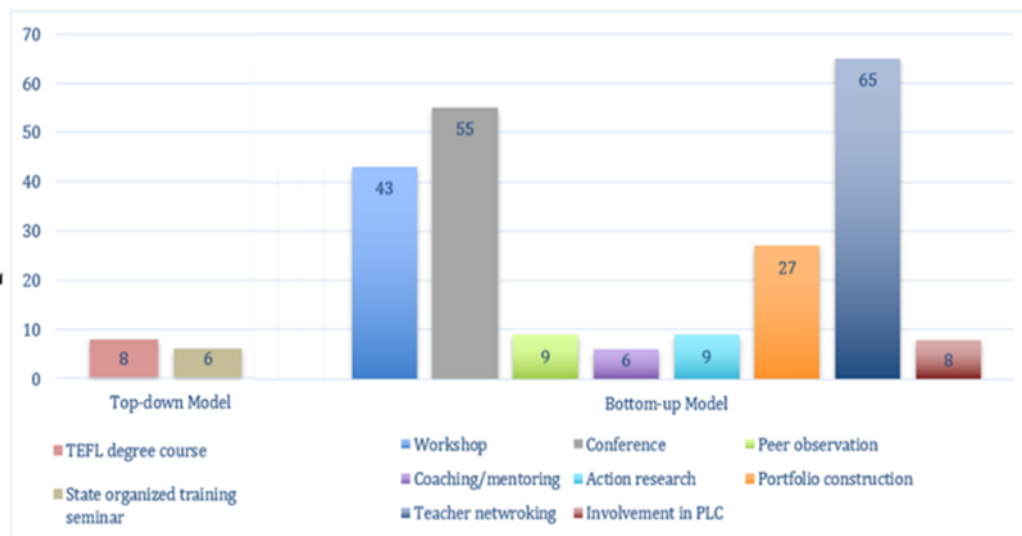
T7 points out that effective teaching depends on language ability. She shows difficulty responding to challenging student inquiries and elucidating complicated subjects. She thinks that improving her writing and speaking abilities will help her better assist her students and raise general teaching quality.



*Practices of TPD*

The second section of the survey focused on identifying the activities teachers had participated in over the previous two years, with the aim of compiling statistics on their professional development (PD) experiences. Participants had a list of choices from which to select. These choices covered activities including completing a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) degree, attending in-service teacher certification programs, ELT seminars, conferences, seminars, professional development training sessions, coaching or mentoring programs, peer observations, teacher networking, portfolio building, professional learning communities, and other pertinent PD activities. Teachers were also urged to indicate any extra initiatives for professional growth that were not included among the given choices. Figure 2 illustrates that, generally, the participants are significantly engaged in the bottom-up model of PDAs, encompassing eight distinct activities, whereas the top-down model adds to only two activities.

**Figure 2.** *Participants' PD practices*



A closer look at the data in Figure 2, showing that the EFL teachers participated in 10 professional development activities (PDAs), it can be concluded that in general, the level of participation among instructors in PDAs is quite low. Out of the 10 PDAs identified, only three PDAs are practiced by over half of the total participants (n=70). The three activities, namely teacher networking, conferences, and workshops emerged as their primary areas of involvement.

The most prevalent practice among teachers was teacher networking, with 65 participants indicating their involvement. Fifty-five teachers attended conferences, followed by 43 teachers attending workshops. The analysis of the focus group discussions (FGDs)

revealed that teacher networking brings together teachers from a variety of backgrounds and regions, provides opportunities to share experiences, knowledge, and best practices, and encourages professional participation at the school, district, and municipality levels. It provides a forum for teachers to share insightful information, trade experiences, and talk about best practices that could advance their professional development.

The subsequent two activities, conferences and workshops, attracted a considerable number of participants, especially those related to English Language Teaching (ELT). This can be attributed to their frequent occurrence in proximity to, or within, the teachers' institutions, thereby enhancing accessibility. Moreover, their involvement in these activities can be attributed to directives issued by the school principals, who designate them as official delegations.

A group of 27 teachers reported that they employed portfolio construction as a method of professional development. Their administrative obligations, which require them to submit comprehensive reports on their teaching activities to obtain school accreditation documents, underpin this decision. Contrary to the involvement in the professional learning community as reported by eight teachers who actively participated in this professional development activity. They furthermore elaborate that their participation in this specific activity was motivated by their own intentions.

Nine educators conducted peer observation, and another nine conducted action research. Participants with less than three years of teaching experience reportedly oversaw the two TPD activities. Additionally, the teachers engaged in peer observation as part of the school's performance evaluation process. On the other hand, those who conducted action research did so in response to a request for collaboration from a more experienced teacher.

Eight teachers indicated their involvement in the remaining four professional development activities, specifically the TEFL degree course, coaching/mentoring, participation in professional learning communities, and the in-service teacher certification program. Out of the eight TEFL degree candidates, four had graduated the year before, and the other four were first-year students. These educators clarified that their desire to increase their field of knowledge and forward their future employment prospects drove their choice to seek a master's degree in English teaching, as shared by the following participant.

“I wanted to improve my English teaching skills and knowledge, and I believe a master's degree will open up more future job possibilities for me.” (T3, FGD Group 2).

Likewise, the four teachers who took part in professional learning communities did so on their own initiative, driven by a need to increase their knowledge. Other factors that influenced their decision to participate in this professional development activity were teacher networking and cooperation, which they also highlighted as their advantages. Based on the above results, the bottom-up model emerged as the predominant approach, surpassing the top-down model. The predominance of the bottom-up model in the professional development strategies of EFL teachers in Indonesia reveals a change in the paradigm of professional development approaches. This paradigm gives teachers more chances to be proactive and work with colleagues. Nonetheless, it is crucial to underline that the success of the bottom-up strategy

mostly depends on support from several stakeholders, including professional communities, the government, and other organizations.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study present contradictory insights regarding the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the need of TPD and their actual participation in PD activities. Despite recognizing the need to practice PD to improve their teaching knowledge and skills as well as student learning outcomes, the teachers reported limited involvement in professional development activities. Focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that many participants felt inadequate support from school principals and administrators in attending TPD activities. This lack of support appeared to stem from the teachers' heavy workloads and the challenges of balancing teaching responsibilities with participation in professional development activities.

While teachers are expected to take the initiative for their own professional growth and transformation (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017), this study provides evidence that the institutional environment and the level of support provided by educational authorities are key factors influencing successful professional development (Eun, 2008). It suggests that institutional leaders should not overlook the importance of creating a supportive climate when working toward the Indonesian government's TPD goals, which aim to improve the quality of English teaching and learning. This finding aligns with other research emphasizing the need for support from school authorities (Chalikias et al., 2020; Karacabey, 2021; Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017; Pedder & James, 2012).

The teachers' views on TPD also support the belief that professional development improves teachers' pedagogical skills, strengthens teachers' language proficiency, and expands teachers' knowledge, aligning with previous research by Burke (2013), Cirocki and Farrell (2019), and Koşar et al. (2022). Moreover, studies by Babinski et al. (2017), Cheng and Li (2020), Cirocki and Farrell (2019), and Koşar et al. (2022) have shown a positive relationship between TPD and students' learning outcomes.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation/Implications**

This convergent parallel mixed-methods research is the inaugural study in its context to investigate the professional development practices and needs of Indonesian EFL teachers, and it is among the limited studies conducted with similar objectives in many contexts, underscoring its significance. The findings highlighted the necessity for teacher professional development (TPD) to meet the pedagogical, knowledge-based, and language proficiency needs of Indonesian EFL teachers. Moreover, the participants engaged in a range of TPD activities, favoring bottom-up PDAs over top-down approaches. This indicates their readiness and willingness to engage proactively in their own professional development. Unfortunately, notwithstanding their articulation of the need to practice TPD, their involvement in such PDAs is significantly low. It is reasonable to conclude that their limited involvement in TPD activities is not due to a notion that TPD lacks a significant impact on their professional growth.

One plausible explanation for the contradictory findings concerning teachers' favourable perspectives on the need for professional development and their existing practices may stem from insufficient support from authorities and school administrators. Considering the significant impact of TPD on facilitating systemic educational reform and enhancing school improvement, it is recommended that school authorities take on a more proactive role as decision-makers in the professional development of their teachers. This engagement would require active participation in the design, implementation, and content creation of professional development programs, along with evaluating the outcomes derived from these initiatives.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest

### **References**

- Agbahayoun, J. P. (2016). Teacher professional development: EFL teachers' experiences in the Republic of Benin. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(4), 144-152. [\\_\\_\\_](#)
- Avillanova, A. A., & Kuswandono, P. (2019). English teacher professional development in Indonesia: The challenges and opportunities. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 8(1), 41-50. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v8i1.1972>
- Babinski, L. M., Amendum, S. J., Knotek, S. E., Sanchez, M., Malone, P. (2017). Improving young English learners' language and literacy skills through teacher professional development: A randomized controlled trial. *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(1), 117-143. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217732335>
- Baker, K. A., & de Kanter, A. A. (1983). Federal policy and the effectiveness of bilingual education. In K. A. Baker & A. A. de Kanter (Eds.), *Bilingual education: A reappraisal of federal policy* (pp. 33-86). Lexington Books.
- Bennett, E. E. (2012). A four-part model of informal learning: Extending Schugurensky's conceptual model. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*, Saratoga Springs, NY. Retrieved from <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2012/papers/3>
- Buczynski, S., & Hansen, C. B. (2010). Impact of professional development on teacher practice: Uncovering connections. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 599-607.
- Burke, B. M. (2013). Experiential professional development: a model for meaningful and long-lasting change in classrooms. *Journal of Experiential Learning*, 36(3), 247-263.
- Burns, A. (2000). Facilitating collaborative action research: Some insights from AMEP. *Prospect*, 15(3), 23-34.
- Chalikias, M., Raftopoulou, I., Sidiropoulos, G., Kyriakopoulos, G. L., & Zakopoulos, V. (2020). The school principal's role as a leader in teachers' professional development: The case of public secondary education in Athens. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 18(4), 461-474. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18\(4\).2020.37](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18(4).2020.37)
- Charlotte, D., & McGreal, L. T. (2000). *Teacher evaluation to enhance professional practice*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Chang, K., Jeon, Y., & Ahn, H. (2014). Investigating continuing professional development for teacher educators in South Korea: opportunities and constraints. In D. Hayes (Ed.),

- Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers* (pp. 271-297). British Council.
- Cheng, M. M. H., & Li, D. D. Y. (2020). Implementing practitioner research as a teacher professional development strategy in an Asia-Pacific context. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(1), 55-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2019.1708627>
- Cirocki, A. & Farrell, T. S. C. (2019). Professional development of secondary school EFL teachers: Voices from Indonesia. *System*, 85.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage.
- Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). *Teacher-centered professional development*. ASCD.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). Research methods in applied linguistics : quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies. In *Oxford University Press eBooks*.
- Eun, B. (2008). Making connections: Grounding professional development in the developmental theories of Vygotsky. *The Teacher Educator*, 43(2), 134-155,
- Fahmi, M., Maulana, A., & Yusuf, A. A. (2011). *Teacher certification in Indonesia: A confusion between means and ends*. Padjajaran University.
- Fullan, M & Stiegelbauer, S. (Eds.) (1991). *The new meaning of educational change* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Geyer, N. (2008). Reflective practices in foreign teacher education: A view through micro and macro windows. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(4), 627–638.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Corwin Press.
- Harjanto, I., Lie, A., Wihardini, D., Pryor, L., & Wilson, M. (2017). Community-based teacher professional development in remote areas in Indonesia, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 44(2), 212-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2017.1415515>
- Johnson, K. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for second language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 235-257.
- Karacabey, F. M. (2020). School principal support in teacher professional development. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*. 9(1), 54-75.
- Koşar, G., Dolapçioğlu, S., & Abana, Y. E. (2022). Identifying professional development practices and needs of the English language teachers teaching at Anatolian high schools in the county of Antakya, Turkey, *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(5). 243 – 261.
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An Introduction to its methodology*. SAGE.
- Kurniati, E. Y., Adelita, D. & Dewi, U. (2023). English teachers' perspective on keeping a teaching journal as their professional development. *Scope: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(2), 165-172. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.16386>
- Lestari, I. D. & Dewi, U. (2022). Peer observation in facilitating teacher professional development: A study of EFL novice and experienced teachers' perceptions. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(3), 3565-3572. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i3.2197>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1998). *Designing qualitative research*. SAGE.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). SAGE.
- Mohammadi, M. & Moradi, K. (2017). Exploring change in EFL teachers' perceptions of professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 19(1), 22-42
- Moncada, A. G. (2007). Professional development of EFL teachers in Colombia: Between colonial and local practices. *Íkala, revista de lenguaje y cultura*, 12(18), 309- 332.



- Mukminin, A. (2012). Acculturative experiences among Indonesian graduate students in US higher education: Academic shock, adjustment, crisis, and resolution. *Excellence in Higher Education Journal*, 3(1), 14–36.
- Novozhenina, A. & Pinzon, M. (2018). Impact of professional development program on EFL teachers' performance. *HOW*, 25(2), 113-128. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.25.2.406>
- Pedder, D., & James, M. (2012). Professional learning as a condition for assessment for learning. In J. Gardner (Ed.). *Assessment and learning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), (pp. 33–48). Sage.
- Poonpon, K. (2021). Professional development needs of in-service English language teachers in Thailand. *THAITESOL Journal*, 34(2), 1-25 <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/thaitesoljournal/article/view/253961>
- Qinling, Y. Qunhua, Y. & Yang, W. (2016). Exploring professional development from brief experiences: Case studies of secondary EFL teachers in China. *English Language Teaching*, 9(12), 109-116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n12p109>.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC Journal*, 39, 158–177.
- Richards, J. C. & Farrell, T. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sari, E. S. (2012). Online learning community: A case study of teacher professional development in Indonesia, *Intercultural Education*, 23(1), 63–72,
- Soebari, T. & Aldridge, J. M (2016) Investigating the differential effectiveness of a teacher professional development programme for rural and urban classrooms in Indonesia, *Teacher Development*, 20(5), 701–722.
- Tarc, P. (2012). Full-time teachers' learning: Engagements and challenges. In R. Clark, D. W. Livingstone, & H. Smaller (Eds.), *Teacher learning and power in the knowledge society* (pp. 87-108). Sense Publishers.
- Whitworth, B. A., & Chiu, J. L. (2015). Professional development and teacher change: The missing leadership link. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 26(2), 121–137.
- Zein, M.S. (2016) Government-based training agencies and the professional development of Indonesian teachers of English for young learners: perspectives from complexity theory, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(2), 205-223.
- 

### Biographical Notes

**UTAMI DEWI** is a faculty member at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Corresponding e-mail: [utamidewi@uinsu.ac.id](mailto:utamidewi@uinsu.ac.id)

**RAHMAH FITHRIANI** is a professor of English language education at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.

**HOTMA BERUTU** is a master's student of English education at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.