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Professional development of Indonesian in-service EFL teachers: Perceived impacts and challenges

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing interest in research on Teacher Professional Development (TPD) carried out by previous researchers, the voices of local EFL teachers in different regions in Indonesia in which top-down TPD activities are still prevalent remain underrepresented. As a result, in order to fill a gap in the literature, the current study sought to investigate the TPD activities undertaken by EFL teachers, the extent to which those formal TPD programs had an impact on their professional development based on their perceptions, and the constraints that they encountered. This descriptive qualitative study utilized a questionnaire and semi-structured interview as the instruments to gather the data and ensure triangulation for trustworthiness. Twenty-five English teachers from various Junior High schools associated with MGMP in Cirebon, West Java were voluntarily involved in this research. The result revealed that TPD activities that the participants have undertaken all these times helped them improve self-efficacy, attitudes, beliefs, reflective competence, classroom practice and instructional skills, and teacher knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, some challenges such as excessive workload as a teacher, time constraints or mismatched schedule, limited choices of TPD programs that were not in line with teachers' interests, the mismatch between teachers' needs and what the program offered, limited access and information about the programs, and less effective program duration remained prevalent during the TPD program implementation.

Keywords: *Challenges; EFL; Perceived impact; Teacher professional development*

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1. Introduction

As the dynamics of education keep shifting and the demands to prepare students with 21st century skills and competencies have intensified, more sophisticated and complex ways of teaching are highly required (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). One of the ways to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century is by encouraging teachers to engage in effective professional development by continuously refining and improving their teaching practice, knowledge, and pedagogy to meet the intended demand. Utami and Prestridge (2018) argued that a well-designed and effective professional development program undertaken by teachers can lead to desirable changes in teachers' practice and students' outcomes. It is supported by Utami (2018) who argued that developing and increasing teachers' quality and professionalism are perceived as paramount and consequential since teachers are regarded to have "value-added impacts" on students' learning and outcomes (p.1). Furthermore, teacher professional development (TPD) also plays an essential role in enhancing teachers' professional careers, determining the educational institution's quality, and improving the quality of education as a whole (Rahman, 2016; Utami, 2018).

Teacher professional development (TPD) can be generally defined as structured and sustained activities undertaken by teachers to enhance their professional skills, knowledge and practice that will eventually lead to the improvement in the students' learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As a matter of fact, every nation worldwide has its own program and regulation concerning teachers' professionalism. In Indonesia, TPD is regulated under Indonesia's Law Number 14 Year 2005 about Teacher and Lecturer in which one of the articles states the importance of teachers' professionalism to continuously refine, develop, and sustain their professionalism as lifelong learners. Furthermore, as the effort and realization of this law, in 2022 Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (henceforth: *Kemendikbudristek*) issued a policy focussing on the teacher as a driving force (*Guru Penggerak*) to transform and improve the quality of education as a whole. This policy is issued under *PERMENDIKBUDRISTEK* number 26, year 2022 as part of the *Merdeka Belajar* Program. This policy emphasizes facilitating the teachers with equal opportunities to join the program by continuously and actively being involved in reflection and professional development activities for themselves and others in their community of practice.

However, the majority of EFL teachers in Indonesia still perceive TPD activities merely as a top-down process, carried out and organized by the government or formal educational institution as an "overly prescriptive one-size-fits-all solution" by inviting experts without grounded knowledge of the real context (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). The formal TPD programs organized by the government and educational institutions usually hold the agenda to improve teachers' practice by introducing them to innovative technology-based teaching media, novel teaching-learning instructions and

methodologies, effective classroom management, and classroom-based research approach that might also benefit the educational institution as a whole (McCray, 2016). Nonetheless, this formal type of TPD, which is usually characterized by externally defined agendas, is considered less effective and impactful since it was mostly compulsory for the teacher without considering each teacher's needs, interests, and goals (Utami & Prestridge, 2018).

Previous research in Indonesia revealed that Indonesian teachers have been involved in repeated, ineffective and rather irrelevant TPD programs organized by either the government or formal educational institutions that have often yielded a gap and mismatch between the teachers' real needs and the program goals (Utami & Prestridge, 2018). The lack of enactment and active participation in the formal-based TPD have been scrutinized to be one of the reasons why such a program failed to improve teachers' actual teaching practice (Kennedy, 2016). Similarly, the study conducted by Cirocki and Farrell (2019) showed that EFL teachers in Indonesia defined TPD in terms of "a school-based learning, an academic undertaking, a professional pursuit outside school, self-directed learning, and a government scheme" (p.12). However, despite various TPD activities undertaken by the participants either formal or informal, only some of them reported positive benefits of TPD programs in both their personal and professional lives as English teachers. In addition, a slightly different study was conducted by Utami, Saukah, Cahyono, and Rachmajanti (2017) which revealed that the level of EFL teachers' formal TPD involvement was influenced by various factors including the frequency of participation and professional enthusiasm which encompassed "motivation and professional development attitude" (p.341).

Despite the growing interest in research on TPDs carried out by previous researchers (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Kennedy, 2016; Utami & Prestridge, 2018; Utami et al., 2017), teachers' perceived impacts of those TPD programs on their classroom practice and professional development remain under-research. Furthermore, the voices of local EFL teachers across different regions in Indonesia where top-down TPD activities are still prevalent remain under-represented. This was strengthened by the results of the preliminary interview with one of the authoritative educational figures in Cirebon who stated that teachers' needs, challenges, and perceptions of the TPD programs that have been carried out all these times are barely voiced. Therefore, to fill the gap in the literature, this present study aimed to explore the TPD activities undertaken by EFL teachers in Cirebon, the extent to which those formal TPD programs gave an impact on their professional development based on their perceptions, and the constraints that they encountered. Moreover, stakeholders and policymakers of the Department of Education and Culture may also benefit from this research to evaluate and improve the future TPD programs that would give more positive impacts on the EFL teachers not only in Cirebon but also across different regions in Indonesia. Thus, to reach the aforementioned aims, the researchers formulated two research questions as follows: (1) To what extent do the formal TPD activities make significant impacts on developing in-service EFL teachers'

professionalism? (2) What are some challenges faced by in-service EFL teachers in Cirebon in undertaking formal TPD activities?

2. Literature review

2.1. In-service teacher professional development in the Indonesian context

In order to be highly professional teachers who can keep up with the educational dynamics, Indonesian EFL teachers are required to have four competency standards which encompass: (1) professional, (2) pedagogical, (3) social, and (4) personality. These competency standards are issued under Indonesia's Law Number 14 Year 2005 about Teachers and Lecturers. Furthermore, this law also highlights the importance of teachers' professionalism to continuously refine, develop, and sustain their professionalism as lifelong learners. From this, it is apparent that Indonesian teachers should always engage in various teacher professional activities or programs. Day (1999) defines professional development as deliberate, structured, and planned activities initiated by either a teacher as an active agent or as a collaborator with colleagues to review, renew, extend, and improve their quality, commitment, and practice intended to make direct and indirect contributions to the students, the community of practice, school, and larger educational contexts. Teacher professional development activities can take many forms including formal and informal. Formal TPD (top-down) involves training, workshop, teacher forums (MGMP), webinars, conferences, and seminars organized by either the Ministry of Education or other formal educational institutions (Utami & Prestridge, 2018).

Meanwhile, informal TPD (bottom-up) or what is usually called self-driven TPD can take many forms including engaging in self-reading, observing other teachers' teaching, developing creative materials (i.e. worksheets, modules, lesson plans, and syllabus), engaging in professional conversation with colleagues, utilizing interactive teaching media and innovative teaching practice, learning from feedback given by supervisors or other teachers, enrolling to ELF online course as self-driven professional development, and doing critical self-reflection to evaluate one's practice (Simegn, 2014; Utami, 2018). Recently, the emphasis has been put on the ongoing practice of TPD to engage the teachers to regularly re-evaluate and re-examine their practice in the classroom and expand their professional as well as personal understanding of life in the classroom context (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019).

2.2. The conceptual framework of TPD's perceived impacts

Borg (2018) stipulated a framework encompassing different kinds of aspects to critically measure the perceived impacts of TPD activities on EFL teachers. The first aspect concerns teachers' knowledge and skills. Undoubtedly, teachers with a high level of knowledge and skills contribute positively to the quality of classroom practice and students' learning outcomes (Borg & Edmett, 2018). Teacher knowledge and skills encompass content and pedagogical knowledge, language and communication skill, ICT integration in the language classroom, language assessment, and curriculum in the

English language classroom. The second aspect deals with teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs in teaching and learning. TPD activities are expected to improve not only the technical functions and roles of a teacher but also their attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy. Castaneda (2011) argued that a teacher's belief is manifested in their teaching practice as it indirectly affects the actions and decisions that they make in the classroom. Thus, TPD activities should enable the teachers to strengthen their sense of professional belonging and job satisfaction; increase their self-efficacy in teaching and self-confidence as teachers; become mindful teachers who can emphasize and help students with learning problems and special learning needs; and encourage them to be effective, autonomous, life-long learners (Borg, 2018).

Furthermore, the third aspect involves teachers' reflective competence. Reflection is the practice that enables teachers to critically ponder on their experience and practice, draw inference, and engage in the meaning-making process to evaluate and improve their practice which eventually leads to professional development (Day, 1999; Thompson, 2022). In the professional context, building a reflective habit and engaging in professional conversation with other teachers provide the opportunity to discuss, examine, and evaluate everyday ordinary experiences to be more meaningful; thus leading to transformative learning and teaching as the final goal (Morgan, 2017). Lastly, the fourth aspect of TPD perceived impact concerns with classroom practice and instructional skills. Various TPD programs should enable the teachers to develop creative materials (worksheets, modules), lesson plans, and syllabus for teaching; to have better and more effective classroom management; to utilize interactive teaching media for classroom practice; to implement a new teaching method and interesting teaching activities by integrating technology in the language classroom; and to promote 21st century skills in the language classroom (Borg & Edmett, 2018).

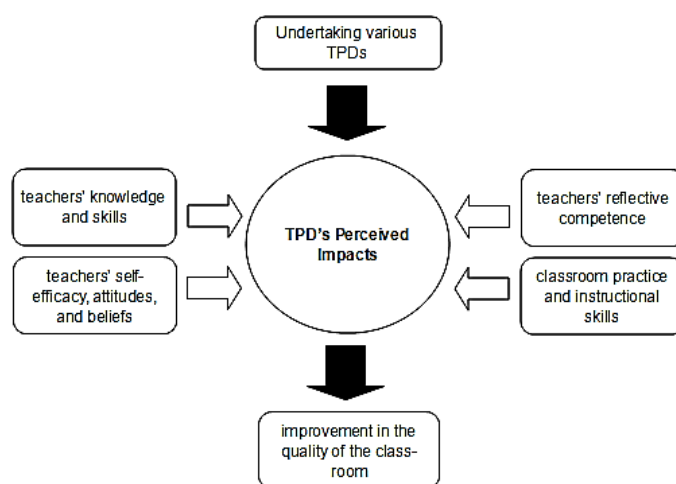


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of TPD's perceived impacts (Borg, 2018)

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This descriptive qualitative study attempted to investigate the types of formal TPD activities that have been undertaken by EFL in-service teachers along with the extent to which those programs made significant impacts in developing their professionalism. The descriptive qualitative study aims to assist the researchers to comprehend a certain phenomenon by providing descriptive accounts gathered through various data collection techniques such as questionnaires, observation, and interviews (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In this study, a questionnaire in the form of a Likert scale and open-ended questions was given beforehand, followed by a semi-structured interview. The use of a questionnaire aimed to obtain the general descriptions of the issue and select the prospective interview participants. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted to obtain deeper and richer data which depicted each individual's insights and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied.

3.2. Research setting

The research was conducted from March to May 2022 in Cirebon, West Java. Prior to the research, an interview with the head of the Association of Teachers of Subject Matters (henceforth: MGMP) in Cirebon was conducted to know the overall formal TPD programs that have been carried out and organized by either MGMP or the Department of Education and Culture in Cirebon as the collaborative programs. The data from the preliminary interview were used to partially construct the close-ended questionnaire. Then, a close-ended questionnaire was distributed to the MGMP WhatsApp Group by utilizing a Google Form due to the distance and pandemic situation. The participants who voluntarily agreed to participate were provided with informed consent to ensure ethical conduct. As for the interview, the researchers utilized the Zoom video conference platform.

3.3. Research participants

The purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants of the research (Ary et al., 2010). Twenty-five English teachers from various Junior High schools associated with MGMP in Cirebon, West Java were voluntarily involved in this research. The researchers chose the participants with two major considerations. First, they were all members of the same teacher association. Second, they were assumed to have undertaken various types of formal TPD activities organized by either MGMP or the Department of Education and Culture in Cirebon. By this, the researchers could obtain and ensure more nuanced and richer data as the teachers come from various educational settings. Following up on the questionnaire, five participants were purposefully selected to be interviewed. The researchers chose 2 participants with less than 5 years of teaching experience and 3 participants with more than 10 years of teaching experience to represent the novice and senior teachers.

Table 1

Participants' demographic data.

No	Demography	n	%
1	Educational background		
	Bachelor's degree	21	84%
	Master's degree	4	16%
2	Age		
	20-30 years	9	36%
	31-40 years	5	20%
	41-50 years	6	24%
	>50 years	5	20%
3	Years of Teaching Experience		
	1-5 years	9	36%
	6-10 years	3	12%
	11-15 years	3	12%
	16-20 years	4	16%
	>20 years	6	24%
4	Place of Teaching		
	Private School	15	60%
	Public School	10	40%

3.4. Research instruments

To ensure triangulation, a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were utilized as the data gathering techniques. The close-ended questionnaire was adapted from Borg (2018) and Simegn (2014). The researchers combined two aspects of Borg's (2018) questionnaire, namely "language proficiency" and "teacher knowledge" into one aspect "teacher knowledge and skills". As for Simegn's (2014) questionnaire, the researchers adjusted the language so that it was suitable for EFL teachers in the Indonesian context. The close-ended questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the first part, the participants were to choose some formal TPD activities that they have undertaken. The choices of the TPD activities were constructed based on the prior interview with the head of MGMP. They were allowed to choose more than one activity based on their participation.

For the second part, the participants were to measure their perceived impacts of undertaking those TPD activities on their professional development by filling up the Likert scale with five degrees of agreement ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Meanwhile, for the last part, they were presented with some common challenges of undertaking formal TPD activities based on the results of previous studies and were asked to choose some of them that were relevant to their experiences. However, in each part, they were also encouraged to elaborate on their experiences more by answering and responding to the open-ended questions.

Table 2

Questionnaire blueprint.

Questionnaire	Aspects	Number of Items
TPD Perceived Impacts on Teachers (adapted from Borg, 2018)	Teachers' knowledge and skills	3,4,5,6,7
	Self-efficacy, attitudes, and belief	8, 9,10,11,12
	Reflective Competence	13,14,15,17
	Classroom Practice and Instructional Skills	18, 19, 20, 21, 22

As for the semi-structured interview, nine questions were addressed exploring (1) the reasons for joining the formal TPD program, (2) the perception of the formal TPD program, (3) the expectation after undertaking formal TPD programs, (4) the perceived impacts, (5) the types of TPD program that were effective or less effective for them, and (6) things that need to be improved in the formal TPD programs.

3.5. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics was employed to analyse the numerical data gathered through the close-ended questionnaire to find out the types of formal TPD programs undertaken by the teachers, the perceived impacts of TPD activities, and the challenges that they encountered. This process involved sequential data collection and analysis in which the results of the close-ended questionnaire were used as the building block to gather the qualitative data through the semi-structured interview (Ary et al., 2010). After the researchers analysed the data gathered from the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was conducted by choosing five participants under purposive sampling. The researchers chose 2 participants with less than 5 years of teaching experience and 3 participants with more than 10 years of teaching experience to represent the novice and senior teachers. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and were analysed under the coding technique by identifying, coding, and interpreting the emergent salient themes (Creswell, 2002). The additional data gathered through open-ended questions were also analysed under the coding technique. For data presentation, the participants' responses to the open-ended questions were labelled OEQ (Open-ended questions). Meanwhile, for interview results, the data were labelled SSI (Semi-structured interview). To ensure validity, member checking was conducted by sending the final report of major findings and salient themes found from the interview to each participant through email (Creswell, 2002). The numerical and qualitative data were eventually triangulated and elaborated to build robust and comprehensive findings.

4. Findings

4.1. Teacher professional development activities undertaken by the participants

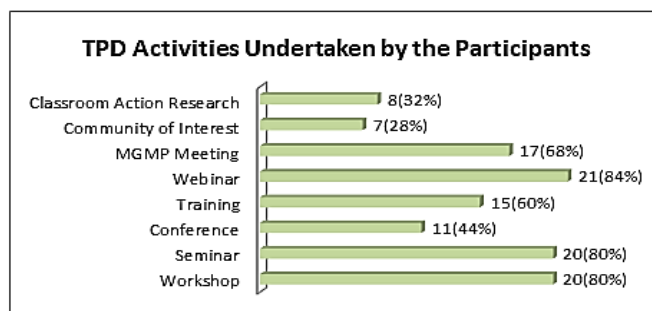


Figure 2. TPD activities undertaken by the participants

Based on the questionnaire containing the list of various alternatives of TPD activities undertaken by the participants, it was found that webinars (n=21; 84%) followed by seminars (n=20; 80%) and workshops (n=20; 80%) became the most popular and common TPD activities that the participants engaged in and that were widely available for them. However, despite its popularity and availability, the answers to open-ended questions yielded a different result. Of 25 participants, 9 of them mentioned workshops to be the most effective and motivating TPD compared to webinars and seminars. One of them stated:

Even though seminars and webinars are the most popular types of TPD activities, I am not really keen on them since they only discuss theories and have one way of communication. For me, I enjoy joining workshops since it gives me the opportunity to know the theory and implement it directly. (P.3/OEQ)

From the study, it was revealed that workshops became favourable as they stimulated the teachers to participate actively to think and produce concrete, applicable results. Furthermore, the present study showed that the second most common TPD activities undertaken by the participants were MGMP meetings (n=17; 68%) followed by training (n=15; 60%) and conference (n=11; 44%). This is in line with the answers gathered from the open-ended question in which 6 out of 25 participants mentioned the benefit of MGMP to develop their professionalism. One of them argued:

For me, the MGMP meeting is the most effective TPD since the MGMP itself has an agenda which includes various TPD activities that facilitate the English teachers to have on-going updates of the current trends in education. The other thing is that we also meet regularly so we can know what problems the teachers encounter and how to solve them. Furthermore, becoming part of MGMP enables me to have support either intellectually or emotionally from other teachers. (P.25/OEQ)

The excerpt above highlighted the role of MGMP as it provided the continuous TPD programs that enabled them to develop their professionalism, build a network, and get practical solutions to solve the problems encountered in the classroom. Moreover, this

study also revealed that Classroom Action Research (n=8; 32%) and Community of Interest became the least favoured TPD activities undertaken by the participants.

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CAR takes a long time and I don't know where to start. I have already had a lot of administrative work outside teaching and I do not have time to conduct CAR. Furthermore, workshops and training are more useful for me as they provide more practical insights which are easy to be applied in my class. (P.19/OEQ)

The excerpt above found that the limitation of time, the complex nature of research, and teachers' excessive workload are the notable reasons why teachers 'avoid' conducting research to improve their practice and the education quality as a whole. Further inquiry through interviews also found that teachers preferred implementing the ready-to-use teaching techniques, methods, and media that they learned from joining various TPD activities in their classroom to conducting research.

4.2. TPD perceived impacts as reported by the participants

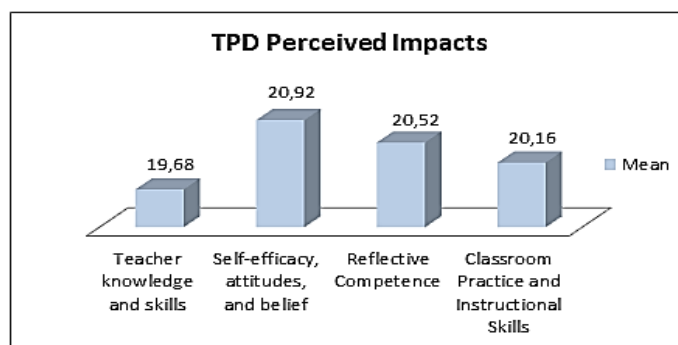


Figure 3. TPD Perceived Impacts

4.2.1. Self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs

Table 3

Summary of participants' self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs.

Statements		Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement		Mean
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
The TPD activities that I joined...								
Q8	Strengthen the sense of professional belonging and job satisfaction	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	
Q9	Strengthen my belief on my capacity in helping the students to value and optimize learning	1	4.00	1	4.00	23	92.00	
Q10	Enable me to be a more confident English teacher	1	4.00	1	4.00	23	92.00	20.92
Q11	Enable me to be a mindful teacher who can help students with learning problems and special needs	0	0.00	4	16.00	21	84.00	
Q12	Enable me to be an effective, autonomous, lifelong learner	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	

*Disagreement: Strongly Disagree to Disagree

**Agreement: Agree to Strongly Agree

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Based on the participants' responses in the self-reported questionnaire; self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs (Mean=20.92) are the aspects that they perceived to be the most developed as a result of joining various TPD programs. This is in line with the results gathered from the interview. Two of the participants mentioned:

For me, I notice the improvement in my belief and ability especially in helping students with learning difficulties to value and optimize their learning. I feel like these skills are incredibly relevant in today's disruptive world as more students are diagnosed with physical, mental, or learning disabilities. (P.4/SSI)

In the interview, participant four further elaborated that after joining some TPD programs that focused on diversity and inclusivity in education, she was able to broaden her view about education and became more confident in her ability to respect diversity by providing her students with equal educational opportunities in her classroom. A similar response was also stated by participant one in the interview:

I have joined various TPD activities, but one of the most motivating, inspiring, and memorable is *Gerakan Sekolah Menyenangkan*. This community of learning enables me to create a creative, interesting, and child-friendly educational environment for my students.....even though the result cannot be seen instantly, by implementing it bit by bit with other teachers, we can become the agents of change to improve the educational quality in Cirebon. (P.1/SSI)

From the excerpt above, the TPD activities that the participant joined strengthened her belief that learning could occur in a pleasant and supportive environment. Furthermore, her sense of agency and self-efficacy were also increased as she was certain that by working collaboratively with other teachers, she could improve the educational quality in Cirebon.

4.2.2. Reflective competence

Table 4

Summary of participants' reflective competence.

Statements		Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement		Mean
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
The TPD activities that I joined enable me to...								
Q13	Do critical self-reflection to evaluate my teaching practice	1	4.00	4	16.00	20	80.00	20.52
Q14	Build a reflective habit	1	4.00	5	20.00	19	76.00	
Q15	Learn from the evaluation and feedback given by other teachers and students	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	
Q16	Provide opportunities to engage in professional conversation with other	1	4.00	4	16.00	20	80.00	

	teachers to discuss, evaluate and improve each other teaching practice							
Q17	Learn about how others teach to improve my own practice	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	
*Disagreement: Strongly Disagree to Disagree **Agreement : Agree to Strongly Agree								

From figure 3, it was apparent that reflective competence (Mean=20.52) became the second aspect that the participants perceived to develop as a result of attending TPD programs. This is in accordance with the interview result. One of the participants stated:

...reflective practice has been ubiquitously implemented in education as a means to evaluate and improve teachers' classroom practice. Various TPD programs have emphasized this practice, even my school implements reflection as a habit...We usually have daily self-reflection and weekly reflection in the form of FGD with other teachers who teach the same subject. (P.5/SSI)

4.2.3. Classroom practice and instructional skills

Table 5

Summary of participants' classroom practice and instructional skills.

Statements		Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement		Mean
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
The TPD activities that I joined enable me to...								
Q18	Develop creative material (worksheet, module), lesson plan, and syllabus for teaching	1	4.00	4	16.00	20	80.00	20.16
Q19	Have a better and more effective classroom management	2	8.00	4	16.00	19	76.00	
Q20	Utilize interactive teaching media for classroom practice	1	4.00	4	16.00	20	80.00	
Q21	implement new teaching method and interesting teaching activities by integrating technology in language classroom	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	
Q22	I have joined enable me to promote 21st century skills in the language classroom	2	8.00	6	24.00	17	68.00	
*Disagreement: Strongly Disagree to Disagree								
**Agreement : Agree to Strongly Agree								

From figure 3, it was apparent that classroom practice and instructional skills (Mean=20.16) became the third aspect that the participants perceived to be developed as a result of undertaking TPDs. From the interview, it was revealed that even though the participants have had sufficient classroom practice and instructional skills as a result of joining TPDs, they hoped that they could improve this aspect more. Some of their responses were presented in the following excerpts:

Basically I know how to make syllabi, lesson plans, modules, and worksheets because those are part of my job. However, I realize that I lack creativity to make

them look good and engaging. So, I often ended up making a plain module and worksheet with less interactive activities. (P.3/SSI)

The excerpt above showed that the participant was aware that his current knowledge and skill in designing interactive and creative instructional materials were still insufficient. Furthermore, a slightly different concern was expressed by another participant. He stated:

...the challenge is how to prepare the students with 21st century skills to face globalization in the future. Furthermore, literacy skill in which digital literacy is included is also needed to help the students thrive in the real-world future workplace. I honestly still learn about it and I hope future TPD programs can accommodate this need. (P.2/SSI)

In the interview, participant two explained that one of his concerns related to classroom practice and instructional skills was how to promote 21st century literacy skills in the teaching-learning process. Realizing this situation, TPD programs aim to help the teachers to design creative materials and implement interactive activities which integrate the 21st century skills (i.e. critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, innovation, self-direction, global connections, local connection, and technology integration).

4.2.4. Teacher knowledge and skills

Table 6

Summary of participants' knowledge and skills.

Statements		Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement		Mean
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
The TPD activities that I joined...								
Q3	Increase my pedagogical knowledge	1	4.00	4	16.00	20	80.00	19.68
Q4	Increase my English language and communication skills	3	12.00	4	16.00	18	72.00	
Q5	Improve my ICT skills (Information and communication technology) for language classroom	1	4.00	3	12.00	21	84.00	
Q6	increase my understanding of language assessment	2	8.00	3	12.00	20	80.00	
Q7	Increase my understanding of curriculum and its implementation in English language classroom	3	12.00	5	20.00	17	68.00	

*Disagreement: Strongly Disagree to Disagree

**Agreement : Agree to Strongly Agree

Lastly, based on the participants' responses in the self-reported questionnaire, teacher knowledge and skills (Mean=19.6) became the aspect that they perceived to be the least developed. From the participants' responses in the self-reported questionnaire

and interview, the participants perceived that the TPD activities that they have undertaken still couldn't help them to improve this aspect optimally. Two of them argued as follows:

I expect to improve my ICT skills more since this post-pandemic era has shifted the dynamics of education and required the teachers to be more tech-savvy in implementing technology in the language classroom. (P.2/SSI)

I still need to learn more about *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*, especially about the real implementation and assessment.....This curriculum is new and as far as I am concerned that many teachers are still confused with the implementation. (P.4/SSI)

From the two excerpts above, participant two was aware of the current education need in which teachers are expected to have a good understanding and skill of TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) to prepare the students for the digital era. Meanwhile, participant four expressed her need to learn more about the new curriculum reform in terms of its implementation and assessment policy.

4.3. The challenges of undertaking TPD activities

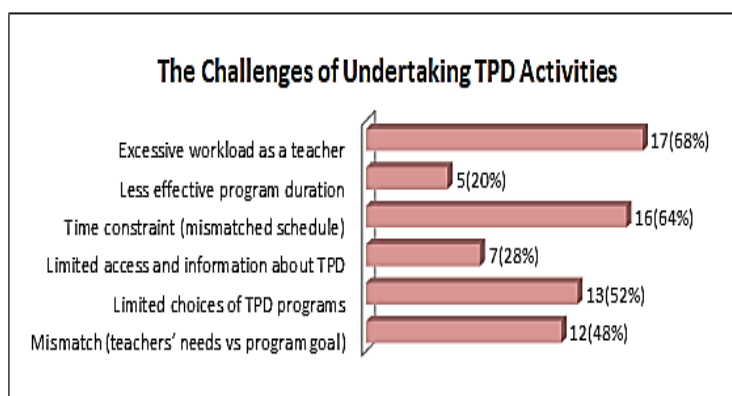


Figure 4. The challenges of undertaking TPD activities

In undertaking various TPD programs organized by either MGMP or the Department of Education and Culture in Cirebon, the participants reported some difficulties that hindered them from fully participating in those programs. Figure 3 showed six challenges of TPD encountered by the participants which encompassed excessive workload as a teacher (n=17; 68%), time constraints or mismatched schedule (n=16; 64%), limited choices of TPD programs that were not in accordance with teachers' interests (n=13; 52%), the mismatch between teachers' needs and what the program offered (n=12; 48%), limited access and information about the programs (n=7; 28%), and less effective program duration (n=5; 20%). Furthermore, the answers from the interview also yielded similar results in which the participants mentioned excessive workload and time constraints or mismatched schedules as the main impediments to undertaking TPDs. One participant stated:

Most of the time I get too busy making lesson plans and other administrative work at school so that I have only a little time to join TPD. In addition, the number of English teachers in my school is limited so sometimes I cannot attend the TPD activities due to the mismatched schedule. (P.3/SSI)

Furthermore, the other challenges that the participants encountered in undertaking TPDs are limited choices of TPD programs that are not in accordance with teachers' interests and the mismatch between teachers' needs and what the program offered to be the hindrances of participating TPDs. One participant argued:

I'm a picky person and it is so difficult to find a program that matches my interests and needs. Furthermore, sometimes there was a mismatch between what the program offered with the quality content of the program as some of them only discuss the topic at a skin-deep level with rather unclear objectives. (P.4/SSI)

Further inquiry through interviews identified that there were three additional challenges apart from those six mentioned above, those were: (1) complex administrative pre-requisite as some of the free programs from the government required NUPTK or SIM PKB as the requirements; (2) lack of funding as some of the programs required the participants to pay the registration fee; (3) lack of permission from the authoritative figures to leave the school and attend TPD programs during school hours. It usually happens in some schools with a limited number of teachers.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the TPD activities undertaken by EFL teachers, the extent to which those formal TPD programs gave impacts on their professional development based on their perceptions, and the constraints that they encountered. The following is the discussion of the result as well as the major takeaways that can be drawn from this study.

First of all, regarding the types of TPD activities that the participants have undertaken, webinars (n=21; 84%) became the most popular and widely available for them followed by onsite workshops (n=20; 80%) and seminars (n=20; 80%). This result highlighted the trends of current TPDs in which the focus has shifted from onsite seminars to digitalizing the teacher professional development in the form of webinars as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar results were also found in the study conducted by some researchers which revealed that during the lockdown due to the pandemic, webinars became one of the most widely used online platforms that facilitated teachers' professional development and mediated the exchange of resources and ideas due to its flexibility, efficiency, and cost-benefit reasons (Ramírez-Montoya, Andrade-Vargas, Rivera-Rogel, & Portuguese-Castro, 2021; Silvhiany, 2022). Nonetheless, in terms of effectiveness, workshops still became the most favourable as they stimulated the teachers to participate actively to think and produce concrete, applicable results. It is supported by Rahman (2016) who argued that teachers' active participation and enactment were found

to be stimulating and effective rather than “passive, one-shot and authoritative” types of TPD activities (p.2).

Moreover, this study also revealed that Classroom Action Research (n=8; 32%) and Community of Interest (n=7; 28%) became the least favoured TPD activities undertaken by the participants. The plausible explanation for this is that the two activities required the teachers to invest more time, energy, and effort. Manfra (2019) asserted that conducting classroom action research as a ‘systematic and intentional inquiry’ requires the teachers to engage in a critical and reflective thinking process that aims to bring forth change in teachers’ practice and students’ outcomes. Despite its benefit, the findings showed that teachers seemed to be reluctant to conduct CAR. This showed teachers’ reluctance to engage in critical thinking to identify the problems found in the classroom and improve practice through interventions (Manfra, 2019). In addition, this result was also in accordance with the study conducted by some researchers which found that conducting research was the least favoured TPD activities among Indonesian teachers (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Hustarna, Melati, Mardiah, Rachmawati, & Susanah, 2020).

Secondly, concerning the participants' perceived impacts of TPD on their professionalism, the present study revealed that self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs (Mean=20.92) became the aspects that they perceived to be the most developed. According to Borg (2018), TPDs often target changes in teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and efficacy. The result of the present study was similar to the study conducted by some researchers which revealed that teachers’ self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs were developed and evolved as a result of joining online TPD programs in which they acquired robust beliefs on their capacity in helping the students to value and optimize learning by designing innovative forms of classroom practice that could accommodate students coming from diverse backgrounds including academically and economically disadvantaged learners (Philipsen, Tondeur, Roblin, Vanslambrouck, & Zhu, 2019; Yoo, 2016). Moreover, it was apparent that reflective competence (Mean=20.52) became the second aspect that the participants perceived to be developed as a result of attending various TPDs. Thompson (2022) argued that reflection created ‘a safe forum’ for the teachers to be open and objective by allowing them to critically analyse their practice. In the reflection process, the teachers must possess some qualities which include “curiosity, critical thinking, intellectual perseverance, willingness to wonder, open-mindedness, and desire for growth” that become the keys to critical reflection (Šarić & Šteh, 2017, p.81). The result of the current study is in line with the studies conducted by some researchers which revealed that the TPD programs enabled the teachers to implement various strategies of reflective practice in the form of writing a daily journal, setting up the reflection group, conducting collaborative learning or action research, recording lessons, and receiving peer feedback as a result of classroom observation (Gheith & Aljaberi, 2018; Mathew, Mathew, & Peechattu, 2017; Mesa, 2018).

Furthermore, the study suggested that classroom practice and instructional skills (Mean=20.16) became the third aspect that the participants perceived to be developed as

a result of undertaking TPDs. From the study, it was revealed that one of the emphases of teachers' classroom practice and instructional skills was to promote 21st century skills in the classroom. Promoting 21st century skills in the classroom is highly essential to prepare the students to solve complex problems through collaboration and communication with others, acquire a set of novel skills and information independently, and adapt to the ever-changing environment so that they are able to compete and thrive in the future's global development (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagurangan, 2017). Göker (2021) argued that the improvement of teachers' instructional skills is greatly dependent on the awareness of their current practice. The larger their concern about a particular teaching-learning component, the more attention and effort they will invest to improve themselves. In addition, teacher knowledge and skills (Mean=19.6) were found to be the aspects that the participants perceived to be the least developed. The study found that in terms of teacher knowledge and skills, teachers' ICT skills and knowledge about curriculum reform became the aspects that the participants lacked the most.

Hartshorne, Baumgartner, Kaplan-Rakowski, Mouza, and Ferdig (2020) stated that there was a slight shift of focus on TPD after the Covid-19 pandemic in which the emphasis was put on providing the teachers with systematic instruction and assistance on how to utilize technology in language learning, access a variety of accessible resources online, and design high-quality innovative learning either online or hybrid that are suitable with the curriculum. This should also be balanced with teachers' knowledge about the new curriculum reform so that there is no misalignment between the curriculum and ICT implementation in the classroom (Borg, 2018). This finding is in accordance with the study conducted by Borg et al. (2018) which revealed that the EfeCT (English for Education College Trainers Project), as a professional development program aimed to enhance teachers' competence was still not able to "promote subject-specific knowledge including pedagogical content knowledge, deliver the content in meaningful ways, and utilize technology in teaching creatively" (p.82). Analysing the results of the current study, it was highly recommended that future TPD programs should focus on assisting the EFL teachers in representing linguistic content by utilizing technology in the appropriate pedagogical delivery that is suitable for the curriculum.

Lastly, regarding the challenges of undertaking TPDs, the current study found that workload as a teacher, time constraints or mismatched schedule, limited choices of TPD programs that were not in accordance with teachers' interests, the mismatch between teachers' needs and what the program offered, limited access and information about the programs, and less effective program duration. These findings were coherent with the studies conducted by some researchers in the Indonesian context. Avillanova and Kuswandono (2019) conducted a study which revealed that the lack of prerequisites for TPD, the lack of funds, the lack of employer support, mismatched schedule, time constraints, and the lack of information about the programs became the main challenges found among EFL teachers in Cilacap. However, slightly different results were found in the study conducted by Tanang and Abu (2014) in which time constraints, cost,

opportunity to learn and bureaucratic matters became the main challenges which hindered the civil servant teachers in South Sulawesi from joining TPDs.

Concerning the discussion above, it could be inferred that effective and motivating TPD activities were those that: (1) involved the teachers in actively participating in producing concrete applicable results, getting involved in the discussion, and practicing the theory; (2) offered practical and applicable innovations and solutions; (3) provided continuous follow-up assistance. Future TPDs should also consider the challenges that are mostly faced by the teachers so that the teachers can optimally cultivate the positive impacts of TPDs on their professionalism.

6. Conclusion

This study explored EFL teachers' TPD activities in Cirebon, the extent to which those formal TPD programs affected their professional development based on their perceptions, and the constraints that they encountered. The current findings revealed that TPD activities that the participants have undertaken all these times helped them to improve self-efficacy, attitudes, beliefs, reflective competence, classroom practice and instructional skills, and teacher knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, some challenges including excessive workload as a teacher, time constraints or mismatched schedule, limited choices of TPD programs, a mismatch between teachers' needs and the program goal, limited access and information about the programs, and less effective program duration were still prevalent during the TPD program implementation. By considering the findings of this study as one of the sources of input, stakeholders and policymakers of the Department of Education and Culture can evaluate and improve future TPD programs that would give more positive impacts on the EFL teachers not only in Cirebon but also across different regions in Indonesia.

Undeniably, this study has some limitations. First of all, the results of this study cannot be generalized as this study involved only a limited number of participants. Secondly, another potential limitation is related to the nature of the self-reported questionnaire to explore participants' perceptions of the impacts of undertaking TPDs. Since it measures perception, some teachers might have given socially desirable responses. Concerning this issue, further studies could cast light on different realizations of the components of TPD perceived impacts and explore the alignment between teachers' perceptions of TPD and their classroom practices through collecting teachers' lesson plans, observations, stimulated verbal and written reports, and reflective journals.

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