

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

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Abstract

This study examined EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding communities of practice for their continuing professional development. The narrative overview approach was employed to delve into related studies on the concerned topic within the fields of education and English language teaching. The results suggested teachers positively perceived communities of practice as a means to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and reflective practice among members. Furthermore, the results highlighted the alignment between the teachers' practices of their communities of practice and Wenger's (1998) dimensions of communities of practice. Besides its contribution to the literature, this overview study revealed a research gap in EFL teachers' perceptions and their practices of communities of practice in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, thereby making it significant to investigate the research problems in this context.

Keywords: *Communities of practice, continuing professional development, EFL teachers, English language teaching, perceptions, practices.*

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NHẬN THỨC VÀ THỰC TIỄN HOẠT ĐỘNG CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH VỀ CÁC CỘNG ĐỒNG THỰC HÀNH CHO PHÁT TRIỂN NGHIỆP VỤ CHUYÊN MÔN THƯỜNG XUYÊN: MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU TỔNG QUAN TƯỜNG THUẬT

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu về nhận thức và thực tiễn hoạt động của giáo viên tiếng Anh về các cộng đồng thực hành cho phát triển nghiệp vụ chuyên môn thường xuyên của họ. Phương pháp tổng quan tường thuật đã được lựa chọn để tìm hiểu những nghiên cứu có liên quan đến nhận thức và thực tiễn hoạt động của giáo viên về các cộng đồng thực hành trong lĩnh vực giáo dục nói chung và giảng dạy tiếng Anh nói riêng. Kết quả đã chỉ ra được giáo viên nhận thức tích cực về cộng đồng thực hành như một phương thức thúc đẩy sự hợp tác, chia sẻ kiến thức và nhìn nhận về bản thân của họ. Hơn nữa, kết quả cũng nêu bật sự phù hợp giữa thực tiễn hoạt động của giáo viên trong các cộng đồng thực hành với các khía cạnh của cộng đồng thực hành của tác giả Wenger (1998). Bên cạnh việc đóng góp vào lý luận chung, nghiên cứu này cũng chỉ ra sự thiếu hụt trong nghiên cứu nhận thức và thực tiễn hoạt động của giáo viên tiếng Anh liên quan cộng đồng thực hành tại bối cảnh vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long, Việt Nam. Do đó, việc tiến hành nghiên cứu đối các vấn đề trên có vai trò quan trọng trong bối cảnh của vùng.

Từ khóa: Cộng đồng thực hành, phát triển nghề nghiệp liên tục, giáo viên tiếng Anh, giảng dạy tiếng Anh, nhận thức, thực tiễn hoạt động.

1. Introduction

In the drastic wave of educational innovation, continuing professional development (CPD) is essential for teachers to update new pedagogical knowledge, enhance their student’s learning outcomes and ensure the quality of education. Among the recent CPD movements, communities of practice (CoP), which include members with shared concerns interacting regularly and developing a shared repertoire for their practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), could be a promising platform for teachers’ informal learning experience besides formal CPD training. By participating in CoP, members would have more opportunities to collaborate, exchange ideas, and reflect on their practice and identities (Wenger, 1998), ultimately developing their profession. Meanwhile, there is a scarcity of a review on the topic of EFL teachers’ perceptions and practices of CoP for CPD, so this narrative overview was conducted with the current literature (1) to understand teachers’ perceptions around the notion, values and impact of CoP on their CPD, (2) examine the practices and strategies employed by teachers within their CoP to enhance their professional knowledge.

2. Methodology

This study employed a narrative overview approach to identify, analyze, and present relevant studies on teachers’ perceptions and practices of CoP. Green et al. (2006) describe narrative overviews or unsystematic narrative reviews as comprehensive narrative summaries of existing published studies.

According to Chaney (2021), this approach is beneficial for consolidating previous research, identifying research gaps, and gaining insights into specific problems (Chaney, 2021). Because the study aimed at understanding the existing literature on the relevant topic, this methodology was deemed particularly appropriate.

Data Sources, search strategy and inclusion criteria

To collect relevant studies, searches were primarily conducted from multiple sources such as Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect and other scientific databases. Four key search terms were applied in this process, namely “communities of practice,” “teacher perceptions of CoP,” “teacher practices of CoP,” and “Vietnamese studies of CoP.” To enhance the precision and avoid redundancy, the results were restricted to studies published within the last decade, except for foundational studies on the concept of CoP.

Furthermore, the selected studies were evaluated to ensure credibility and relevance with some inclusion criteria. First, the content were proofread to ensure the relevance of the studies in the field of education or English language teaching. Second, the studies were published in peer-reviewed journals. Finally, there must be the alignment between the studies with the key search terms identified for this review. Overall, a total of 31 studies were included in the review. The following table demonstrates the retrieved studies with their sources.

Table 1. Sources of the retrieved studies

Sources	Number of Studies	Studies
Google Scholar	27	Brooks (2010), Ekici (2017), El Masry & Saad (2018), Ha (2013), Jiménez-Silva & Olson (2012), Joseph & Mitchell (2018), Kourkouli (2018), Lave & Wenger (1991), Mai et al. (2020), Mortier (2018), Msimanga et al. (2021), Murugaiah et al. (2013), Ngo & Nguyen (2023), Nguyen (2016), Putri & Damayanti (2023), Sadek (2020), Shaw et al. (2022), Shields & Murray (2017), Smith (2019), Snyder et al. (2003), Snyder & Wenger (2010), Tran & Nguyen (2022), Tran (2022), Vygotsky (1978), Wenger (1998), Wenger (2011), Wenger et al. (2002), Wenger et al. (2011), Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015), Wilson et al. (2020), Xue et al. (2021)
ERIC	1	Jiménez-Silva & Olson (2012)
ScienceDirect	3	Ekici (2017), Mortier (2018), Msimanga et al. (2021)

Data Analysis

After being screened for appropriateness, the retrieved studies were analyzed, extracted, and synthesized using a thematic analysis approach. This process resulted in the formulation of four main themes. The first theme was communities of practice with foundational studies to provide theoretical insights into the CoP notion. Following this, the themes of teachers' CoP perception and

teachers' CoP practice were applied. The two themes consisted of studies on how teachers perceived CoP and implemented CoP in their professional contexts. The final theme, Vietnamese studies of CoP in ELT, revolves around context-specific studies focusing on CoP within ELT field in Vietnam. Each theme was structured by summarizing the results of the corresponding related studies. The table below shows the applied themes and the corresponding studies.

Table 2. The applied themes and the corresponding of studies

Theme	Number	Studies
Communities of Practice	16	Wenger et al. (2002), Wenger (2011), Wenger (1998), Snyder et al. (2003), Wenger et al. (2011), Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015), Lave and Wenger (1991), Vygotsky (1978), Kourkouli (2018), Mortier (2018), Murugaiah et al. (2013), Snyder and Wenger (2010), Ekici (2017), Mai et al. (2020), Shaw et al. (2022), Brooks (2010)
Teachers' Perceptions of CoPs	6	Jiménez-Silva & Olson (2012), Shields & Murray (2017), Joseph & Mitchell (2018), Sadek (2020), Wilson et al. (2020), Msimanga et al. (2021)
Teachers' Practices of CoPs	5	Murugaiah et al. (2013), El Masry & Saad (2018), Smith (2019), Xue et al. (2021), Putri & Damayanti (2023)
Vietnamese Studies of CoPs in ELT	5	Ha (2013), Nguyen (2016), Tran and Nguyen (2022), Tran (2022), Ngo and Nguyen (2023)

3. Results

3.1. Communities of practice

CoP is a concept that has been increasingly popular in the academic community. In common, CoP can be clarified as groups of people with shared concerns, difficulties, or passions about a certain field interact regularly to increase their knowledge and experience (Wenger et al., 2002; Snyder et al., 2003; Wenger et al., 2011; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Moreover, Wenger et al. (2011) state that CoP members share the same belief that it is beneficial to learn from each other's practical experience as a source of knowledge. Hence, there should be a basis of interaction, a commitment to the common goal of improving the current practice, and a shared interest in a particular domain among participants in CoP. Based on this premise, in the field of English language teaching (ELT), CoP could be groups of EFL teachers with the same concerns meeting regularly to practice and develop their repertoire of practice. Their practices can be related to discussing their teaching practices, sharing resources, collaborating on projects, exchanging problems and solving them together.

The term CoP was introduced to the public around three decades ago. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the situated learning theory, and CoP was mentioned as a model in this theory. Moreover, the theory of situated learning is built on Vygotsky's (1978) cognitive theory. With this inheritance, situated learning theory emphasizes the importance of knowledge presentation within authentic situations, where the knowledge is involved in social interaction and collaboration (Kourkouli, 2018). CoP is versatile due to its ubiquity in various areas. The model of CoP can be applied in many areas ranging from business, organizational design, government, professional associations, development projects, and civic life to education (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This illustrates the flexibility, usefulness, and practicality of CoPs in many aspects of life.

The key dimensions of communities of practice

Like other models for CPD, CoP is also established based on specific criteria. Wenger (1998) points out three main CoP dimensions which are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared

repertoire. In another study, Wenger et al. (2002) indicate that all CoPs should revolve around three key elements namely the domain, the community, and the practice. Then, in a CoP study, Mortier (2018) regards the joint enterprise as the domain, the mutual engagement as the community, and the shared repertoire as the practice. Therefore, despite some variations in the called names, these dimensions are identical in contents. In this study, the dimensions of CoP are listed based on Wenger's (1998) classification, and below are more detailed clarifications of these dimensions.

The mutual engagement (or the community) is the first dimension that shapes a CoP. The mutual engagement "encourages a willingness to share ideas, expose one's ignorance, ask difficult questions, and listen carefully" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28). In other words, when members engage in CoP, they must be immersed in discussing, sharing and supporting each other. While interacting, participants can be able to build new relationships, which enables mutual learning to happen. However, according to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), participants do not need to work together in CoP as long as there is mutual learning happening through interaction, which means that they can connect asynchronously. In short, this dimension is viewed as a collective maxim, which emphasizes the key role of interaction in the operation of CoP.

The joint enterprise (or the domain) is another dimension of each CoP. Wenger (2011) indicates that CoP members do not just gather to connect or to build a network, they must have things in common, which is the commitment to a particular concern or interest for the joint enterprise. Therefore, the members maintain a shared interest and a shared competence in a particular field. Moreover, due to the joint enterprise, participants share the same goals as momentum for their CoPs (Mortier, 2018), which makes the CoP members different from outsiders and differentiates one CoP from another. Noticeably, CoPs are built on voluntary participation, not the contextual force because members are less likely to exchange knowledge, develop trust, or implement the community's repertoire in a forced involvement (Snyder et al., 2003). This means that members engage in CoP because of their need to fulfill their goals and personal interests.

The last dimension of CoP is the shared repertoire (or the practice). The shared repertoire is regarded as the result of practice (Wenger, 1998), which also lies in the name of the term CoP. More specifically, Wenger (2011) indicates that in the shared practice, members of CoPs exchange their experiences, stories, tools, and problem-solving skills to build a repertoire of exchanging resources. This shared practice is also self-conscious with time and interaction involvement. To put it simply, the shared repertoire refers to "the specific knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 29).

It can be articulated that CoP is multidimensional entities. These dimensions are the distinctive characteristics of CoPs, which are criteria to identify CoP from other teachers' communities. The three dimensions also serve as the framework for establishing CoP, so they should be maintained in the operation of CoPs (Wenger 1998; Murugaiah et al., 2013).

Types of communities of practice

CoPs can be classified according to their purposes and professional practice. Snyder and Wenger (2010) suggest that activities in CoP might be organized from in-person to online protocols, formal to informal forms, and public to private forms. Therefore, this study allocates CoPs based on operating modes.

First, CoP can be operated in the traditional mode. Throughout the history of human beings' development, there have been many communities with participants meeting and working together at physical locations. Therefore, even before the introduction of CoP, many communities based on the dimensions of CoP have also been formed and operated in the traditional mode. These days, many EFL teachers still meet face-to-face when practicing in their CoPs.

Apart from the traditional mode, the virtual mode of CoP is also popular. The advent of the Internet has brought many benefits to human life, and EFL teachers also have more opportunities for CPD thanks to this. Therefore, an intertwining between technology and CoPs results in online CoPs (Ekici, 2017; Mai et al., 2020). Nowadays, members of virtual CoPs can utilize any common online platform to exchange experiences in their professions (Shaw

et al., 2022). The shift has provided more spaces for new CoP members regardless of spatial barriers, but participants might endure less in-person interaction and the risks in cyberspace.

Finally, to satisfy the ample needs of participants, the blended mode of CoP has been initiated by combining the traditional mode with the virtual mode of CoP. This mode is regarded as a mediation between virtual and face-to-face ones. Brooks (2010) states that the mode is beneficial to the socialization, flexibility, and accessibility of schools, making it easier to build rapport among CoP participants. Therefore, the hybrid approach of CoP proves how CoPs are flexible in real-life operations.

3.2. Teachers' perceptions of CoP

An overview of studies related to CoP indicates that researching CoP in education in general and in ELT, in particular, is of interest to researchers. Worldwide, many academics, ranging from America, Oceania and South Africa to Europe, have delved into uncovering how teachers perceive CoP.

Jiménez-Silva and Olson (2012) investigated the perceptions of pre-service English teachers regarding the Teacher-Learner Community as a CoP in a qualitative study. The data was collected through 33 reflections, and 26 course evaluations from participants. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 pre-service teachers. The results indicated that participants regarded their CoP as a positive, beneficial and strong source of support. Furthermore, the participants also reported a strong sense of community among their CoP. Furthermore, CoP increased participants' sentiments of confidence, safety, empathy, and belonging in their CoP.

Shields and Murray (2017) undertook a qualitative study to explore beginning teachers' perceptions of their mentors and their access to CoP. Ten beginning teachers in Australia participated in semi-structured interviews to reveal their experiences with their mentors, their understanding of CoP, and the barriers when getting access to CoP. A significant finding from the study revealed that while the participants perceived CoP as beneficial tools for collaborating and learning, they often faced barriers such as time constraints and their low sense of community. The study highlighted the mentors' roles in improving novice teachers' access to CoPs.

Next, Joseph and Mitchell (2018) conducted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study to discover teachers' perceptions and their reflexives of identities as members of CoP. 112 teachers ranging from primary to tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago participated in a survey and open-ended interviews. The results revealed that the teachers positively perceived CoP as a means of collegiality, interactions, and practices beyond the classrooms. Therefore, CoPs were regarded as support to decrease their psychological issues and develop their professional knowledge and capabilities, but there were also concerns about stress and workload while participating in CoP.

Furthermore, Sadek (2020) employed an exploratory qualitative study to investigate Egyptian EFL teachers' perceptions of their professional identities, CoPs, and the influence of CoPs on teachers' professional identities. Twenty-six teachers at a private tertiary institution participated in semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that teacher role, appreciation and connection, competence and self-efficacy, and future trajectories were the four main areas affecting teachers' professional identities. The study also suggested that participants understood the three dimensions of CoP differently, and they also perceived CoP as a possible way for EFL teachers to progress in their careers and enhance their professional identities.

Wilson et al. (2020) examined the perceived benefits of a CoP from the use of it in higher education and how different demographics of academics engage with this CoP. Utilizing the quantitative method, the study employed 142 participants as academics in a higher education institution in the United Kingdom. The findings revealed the positive perceptions of participants towards the CoP and its benefits as well as more prominent participation from junior academics than the senior ones. Specifically, the participants perceived the CoP as a means for them to acquire new knowledge, gain motivation, confidence and new perspectives on teaching and practice. Overall, the study suggested the potential of CoP to foster a culture of mutual learning in higher education CPD, especially for junior staff.

Msimanga et al. (2021) aimed to clarify PGCE student teachers' perceptions of CoP in their work-integrated learning at a South African university. 230

PGCE teachers engaged in a phenomenological study. The thematic analysis method was used to analyze data collected from reflective group discussions and summaries. The results showed that participants held positive perceptions of CoP. That is, CoPs were sustainable, collaborative, and beneficial for their teaching practices and school management. In addition, further recommendations and implications for the South African educational context were also made in the study.

By reviewing the above studies, it is suggested that teachers generally held positive perceptions towards CoP in education, including ELT (Jiménez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Joseph & Mitchell, 2018; Msimanga et al., 2021; Sadek, 2020; Shields & Murray, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). The researchers utilized quantitative, mixed-methods, and predominantly qualitative approaches to explore their scientific problems. The overview of these studies highlights the perceptions of teachers towards CoP as a means to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and reflective practice among participants. Therefore, this is again of significance to raise the awareness of teachers and stakeholders in education to perceive the importance of participating in CoP in their CPD programs.

3.3. Teachers' practices of CoP

The ways teachers engage in CoP is also a topic of concern among researchers. The overview of teachers' practices of CoP was made to specify the diverse aspects of their practices related to how they do, learn and collaborate in their CoPs as follows:

Murugaiah et al. (2013) investigated the presence of CoP dimensions through the practices of three CoPs for teachers in the same cohort and verified whether the presence of these dimensions was enough for the development of online CoPs. The data were collected through the comments and discussions posted on teachers' blogs and focus group interviews. Then, the data were analyzed thematically based on the CoP dimensions and the underlying categories within each dimension. The findings revealed that many members seemed uninterested and lacked commitment to the group goals due to time constraints and fear. The study also indicated that the presence of CoP dimensions was not sufficient for the CoP development, other problems needed tackling in the cultivation of CoPs.

In another case study, El Masry and Saad (2018) aimed to explore five EFL pre-service teachers' experiences from their practices during the five developmental stages in their CoP cultivation. Moreover, the researchers also targeted to identify the obstacles the student teachers faced in these stages and how socialization helped them to go through these obstacles. Through interviews and observations, the data were collected and analyzed inductively. The findings suggested that participants experienced a variety of tensions, especially time constraints and the feeling of loneliness, and some tensions remained until the finish of their practicum. The study recommended that CoP members should collaborate, reflect and socially interact with each other for their learning to be successful.

Smith (2019) explored the impact of using a collaborative (LCoP) on school leaders' perceptions of trust, self-awareness, and self-efficacy in a qualitative action research study. Eight participants participated in semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews and reflection journals whereas a field journal was also kept simultaneously by the researcher. The findings suggested that as a result of their engagement in the LCoP, the members increased their feelings of mutual trust, the awareness of each other's needs and the effectiveness in communication. Furthermore, in their LCoP, the participants focused more on finding solutions, sharing best knowledge and practices, building trust, and collaboratively solving problems rather than just discussing their difficulties or working alone. Despite some challenges in collaboration, the participants still expressed optimism in the evolution of the LCoP to strengthen their relationships, confidence and commitment to fulfill their school demands.

Xue et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to explore the dynamics of the online CoP and its contribution to teacher learning in the practices of Chinese higher education teachers by using the social media platform WeChat to create an online CoP for PD. The data were collected from four teachers through WeChat conversations, their reflections, classroom observation and interviews. The results suggested the three dimensions of CoPs were also present in their cultivation of their CoPs. Specifically, they built close rapport and effectively spread information through the online platform,

and they also developed shared goals, shared ways of engagement and a shared repertoire of practices. Moreover, the perceptions of the teachers regarding the CoP were positive. Overall, the online CoP provided a valuable platform for teachers to support their CPD in a virtual environment.

Putri and Damayanti (2023) examined EFL teachers' learning in a virtual CoP for their CPD through a case study. The discussions of CoP members on WhatsApp were collected and analyzed thematically based on the framework of CoP dimensions. The findings revealed the presence of CoP dimensions and the sub-categories of these dimensions in the teachers' practices. The study also indicated the patterns of their learning within this program. That is, their learning happened when the teachers received questions and feedback from mentors, exchanged resources and raised teaching issues in their CoPs.

The overview of studies related to teachers' practices of CoPs suggested diverse practice patterns of teachers within their CoPs. Interestingly, the design of these studies was predominantly qualitative. In analyzing the data, the framework of CoP dimensions was widely used by researchers (El Masry & Saad, 2018; Murugaiah et al., 2013; Putri & Damayanti, 2023; Xue et al., 2021).

3.4. Vietnamese studies of CoPs in the field of English language teaching

Apart from the body of research focusing on teachers' perceptions and practices in international settings, in Asia, with Vietnam as a case in point, some studies related to CoP in the realm of ELT were found over the last decade (Ha, 2013; Ngo & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen, 2016; Tran, 2022; Tran & Nguyen, 2022).

Ha (2013) examined a CoP implemented at a higher institution in a qualitative case study in a northeastern province of Vietnam. Data were collected from 25 EFL tertiary teachers through observation, audio recording, interviews, and journal reflections, then analyzed based on the framework of CoP dimensions. The findings highlighted that most of the participants fully engaged in CoP-based activities, perceived their CoP positively and highly evaluated the values of the CoP. The study also revealed that among the three dimensions of their practices, mutual

engagement was slowly established, and the other two dimensions observed a development throughout the CoP implementation. The study also indicated the significance of stakeholders' engagement in CoP to make the model feasible.

Nguyen (2016), in a multiple-case study, investigated how primary EFL teachers participated in various communities for their practice and identity enhancement in the Vietnamese pedagogical context. Data were collected through narrative interviews of four teachers and analyzed by within-case and cross-case analysis. The findings indicated the need for primary teachers to join various crossed-boundary CoPs and that engaging in these multi-communities constructed new practices and identities for the participants.

The need to understand barriers hindering participants' engagement and construction of CoPs was fulfilled in a mixed-methods study by Tran and Nguyen (2022). 116 EFL teachers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam were involved in answering a questionnaire before 7 out of them headed to the semi-structured interview round. From the findings, the participants were impeded from participating and constructing CoPs due to intrapersonal hindrances related to culture and psychology, and organizational hindrances related to school leaders' power and policies. The authors also suggested that CoPs should be propagated more, and CoP managers or school leaders should take responsibility for facilitating the implementation of CoPs.

Tran (2022) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the implementation of a CoP as a platform for EFL teachers' development in higher education and how the CoP impacted on their teaching practices and professional identities. Multiple sources of data such as interviews, recordings, reflective writing journals and artifacts were obtained from eight participants. The discourse analysis method was employed in the analysis phase. The findings indicated that a variety of types of discourse affected teachers' identities and practices, but the CoP served as a welcoming place for the teachers in collaboration and mutual engagement. Moreover, the presence of CoP elements such as mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise was also found in the study through the teachers' participation.

Targeting the online forms of CoP, Ngo and Nguyen (2023) investigated how EFL teachers in Vietnam utilized a social network group as a CoP named Teach and Tech on the Facebook platform in their PD. In this case study, digital artifacts in the groups such as posts, comments, shares, and reactions were collected and analyzed thematically. The findings suggested that participants' motivation was high, and the online CoP was a safe place for mutual learning to happen in terms of social and professional development. Therefore, the researchers emphasized that school principals should pay more attention to online CoPs.

Overall, the above studies offered several insights into studies of CoP in the Vietnamese context. Specifically, CoPs positively impact EFL teachers' CPD, their teaching practices, and identity. However, challenges and barriers due to cultural, psychological, and organizational factors also hindered their full participation in CoPs. From these results, several pedagogical implications were withdrawn for stakeholders in ELT.

4. Discussion

These reviewed studies have provided valuable findings from international to Vietnamese contexts. In foreign settings, the findings revealed that teachers generally held positive perceptions toward CoPs (Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Joseph & Mitchell, 2018; Msimanga et al., 2021; Sadek, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2021). While the positive perceptions of teachers on CoP in foreign contexts were recorded, EFL teachers' perceptions of CoP in the Vietnamese context have been hardly researched. In addition, these studies achieved the consensus that CoP effectively enhances teachers' CPD experiences. As such, this yields the need to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of CoP in Vietnam as a means to develop their profession. Moreover, teachers' practices of CoP were mainly researched based on the CoP dimensions to reveal the internal practices and experiences of teachers within their CoPs (El Masry & Saad, 2018; Murugaiah et al., 2013; Putri & Damayanti, 2023; Xue et al., 2021). However, almost no studies in Vietnam delved into examining EFL teachers' practices of CoPs. Despite the existence of studies regarding CoP in Vietnam, the researchers have conducted their studies with various

focuses (Ha, 2013; Ngo & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen, 2016; Tran, 2022; Tran & Nguyen, 2022), but there is a scarcity of studies delving into this topic among EFL teachers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This leaves a research gap in investigating these research problems in the region.

Furthermore, when carrying out their studies of CoP, the researchers mainly selected qualitative design to discover their scientific problems on the target topic. Only a few studies employed the mixed-methods design, but they were related to teachers' perceptions of CoP, their reflexives of identities as CoP members (Joseph & Mitchell, 2018) and the barriers hindering EFL teachers' participation in CoP (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Therefore, there is a scant of mixed-methods studies on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP in both international and Vietnamese contexts at the current time. To obtain more comprehensive insights into the research problems, applying the mixed-methods approach to examine EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP within the ELT context in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam is essential.

All in all, this narrative overview has consolidated key findings from relevant studies in both educational and ELT fields to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP. With the inclusion of foundational and recent studies, the study offered a robust understanding of the topic and laid the groundwork for future research. Moreover, the categorized themes highlight both global and context-specific results on teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP to gain insights into existing literature and reveal a research gap in the Mekong Delta region.

5. Conclusion

The article provides an overview of the current research on teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP for CPD. Several studies concerning the topic were reviewed and analyzed thematically to present the important findings. The review has shed light on the concept of CoP, teachers' perceptions and practices of the model as a means of their CPD. Nevertheless, based on the discussion of the previous work, the significant finding was the identified research gap related to EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of CoP in the context of the Mekong Delta of

Vietnam, highlighting the need for studying teachers' perceptions and their practices of CoP in this context. Therefore, it is suggested that prospective researchers should study EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of CoP with the mixed-methods approach to unveil the dynamics of their perceptions and practices within CoP. Doing so is hoped to enable stakeholders in ELT to develop CoP in future CPD programs effectively.

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