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AN INVESTIGATION INTO EFL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN DONG THAP PROVINCE

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Abstract

The present study investigated the perceptions and training needs of high school English as a Foreign Language teachers in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam, regarding Teacher Professional Development, based on the English Teacher Competency Framework of Vietnam. The study employed a survey research design, using questionnaires to collect data from 60 English as a Foreign Language teachers. The results revealed that teachers had highly positive perceptions of Teacher Professional Development as a continuous and systematic process. In addition, a high level of training need was identified across all five domains of the English Teacher Competency Framework, especially in Knowledge of Language Teaching and Practice and Context of Language Teaching. The findings highlight the necessity of designing context-sensitive and practical Teacher Professional Development programs to support teachers in effectively implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

Keywords: EFL teachers, English Teacher Competency Framework (ETCF), Teacher Professional Development (TPD), training needs, Dong Thap province.

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KHẢO SÁT NHU CẦU BỒI DƯỠNG CHUYÊN MÔN PHỤC VỤ PHÁT TRIỂN NGHỀ NGHIỆP CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG TẠI TỈNH ĐỒNG THÁP

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát về nhận thức và nhu cầu bồi dưỡng của giáo viên tiếng Anh tại các trường trung học phổ thông tại tỉnh Đồng Tháp, dựa trên tiêu chí của Khung năng lực giáo viên tiếng Anh Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu khảo sát, với dữ liệu được thu thập qua bảng câu hỏi thu thập từ 60 giáo viên. Kết quả cho thấy giáo viên có nhận thức rất tích cực, xem phát triển chuyên môn là một quá trình liên tục và có hệ thống. Ngoài ra, nhu cầu bồi dưỡng ở cả 5 lĩnh vực thuộc Khung năng lực đều ở mức rất cao, trong đó cấp thiết nhất là lĩnh vực Kiến thức về phương pháp giảng dạy ngôn ngữ và Thực hành và bối cảnh giảng dạy ngôn ngữ. Kết quả nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh sự cần thiết của các chương trình phát triển chuyên môn giáo viên mang tính thực tiễn và phù hợp với bối cảnh địa phương, nhằm hỗ trợ giáo viên triển khai có hiệu quả Chương trình Giáo dục phổ thông 2018.

Từ khóa: Giáo viên tiếng Anh, khung năng lực giáo viên tiếng anh, phát triển chuyên môn giáo viên, nhu cầu bồi dưỡng, tỉnh Đồng Tháp.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, enhancing English language proficiency has become one of the major concerns in Vietnam, and there has been increasing emphasis on the professional growth of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. They require continuous improvement in knowledge and experience to train a more diverse population of students and societies (Tran et al., 2025). As agents of language learning, EFL teachers must refine their skills in areas such as language proficiency, educational techniques, material development, assessment, and research skills (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Therefore, Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is viewed as a continuous and deliberate process that allows teachers to reflect on and improve their teaching practices. This process can eventually result in tangible positive changes in student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Borg, 2018).

In Vietnam, the 2018 General Education Curriculum (GEC) and the ETCF serve as national guidelines and evaluation standards for EFL teachers. The 2018 GEC represents a milestone in the transition from content-focused teaching to competency-based education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Meanwhile, the ETCF serves as a national reference framework for in-service teacher evaluation and professional development. It represents an institutional effort to define and maintain educational quality across five domains: Knowledge of Subject Matter, Knowledge of Teaching, Knowledge of Learners, Professional Attitudes and Values, and Practice and Context of Language Teaching.

TPD initiatives play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the 2018 GEC and meeting the standards outlined in the ETCF. Nonetheless, the implementation of TPD among EFL teachers in Vietnam varies considerably across educational contexts due to factors affecting teachers' engagement in professional development, such as equitable access to PD opportunities, the relevance of PD programs to their professional needs, opportunities for active learning, and financial support (Nguyen & Pham, 2019). Although many TPD programs have been organized by the Ministry of Education and Training through a top-down cascade model, most teachers report that these programs do not adequately address the practical challenges they encounter in local school settings (Ha et al., 2023). Existing research on EFL teachers' training needs has been conducted primarily in urban areas or selected higher education institutions (Le, 2020; Le & Ho, 2022; Ngo et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022). However, there remains a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date empirical evidence on the diverse TPD needs of high school EFL teachers in provincial and rural contexts, particularly in Dong Thap Province.

To bridge this research gap, the research examines how high school EFL teachers perceive the TPD process and how they can be trained in response to the ETCF in Dong Thap province of Vietnam. The findings are expected to provide useful insights and have practical implications on the TPD designers, educational managers, and school administrators to plan and execute the training programs that are authentic enough to suit the professional needs of teachers and the local working environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Professional Development

TPD is broadly accepted as a deliberate, ongoing, and holistic process that focuses on developing teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies to enhance student learning outcomes. TPD is also considered a lifelong learning process that fosters the professional knowledge, attitudes, and practices of teachers, rather than being viewed as a series of short-term, one-size-fits-all in-service training programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Díaz-

Maggioli, 2003; Truong, 2017). Effective TPD programs should acknowledge and build upon teachers' practical experiences while providing opportunities for them to identify and address their own professional learning needs. Moreover, Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice emphasizes that professional expertise in teaching is developed not only through theoretical knowledge but also through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflective teaching enables educators to critically evaluate their instructional practices and classroom interactions, thereby making professional development a self-directed and continuous process (Farrell, 2015; Russell, 2018).

2.2. Teacher Professional Development Models

Various professional development models have been implemented worldwide, each serving distinct pedagogical purposes. Traditionally, professional development approaches such as workshops and seminars have been effective in disseminating new knowledge to large numbers of teachers. However, these approaches have often been criticized for failing to provide sustained support or ensure the effective transfer of newly acquired skills into classroom practice (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). To address these limitations, coaching and mentoring models, which provide individualized support to teachers, have become increasingly popular (Knight, 2007). In addition, action research and professional learning communities promote a more socially constructed learning environment in which teachers collaboratively analyze student data, exchange instructional strategies, and systematically reflect on their classroom practices (Burns, 2019; DuFour et al., 2016).

In the EFL teaching context, the expectations placed on teachers are often multifaceted. Besides playing the role of conveying knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, EFL teachers also serve as language models, communication facilitators, and cultural mediators. This is because language learning involves not only mastering linguistic forms but also understanding how language is used appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. Therefore, EFL teachers require a specialized combination of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competencies to support their professional development (Richards, 2017). One of the persistent professional demands is maintaining and enhancing their own language proficiency, as it directly influences teachers' confidence and their ability to create a rich target-language learning environment (Canh & Renandya, 2017).

2.3. Training Needs Analysis

To ensure that TPD programs align with these complex requirements, a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is essential. TNA is a systematic approach to identifying gaps between teachers' existing competencies and the competencies required to meet educational objectives (Brown, 2009). The three-level model proposed by McGehee and Thayer (1961) provides a foundational framework for conducting TNA, emphasizing the importance of analyzing training needs at the organizational, task, and individual levels. Specifically, the three levels of McGehee and Thayer's model address three fundamental questions: "Where in the organization is training needed?", "What knowledge and skills should be included in the training?", and "Who requires training?". In addition to this classic model, the competency-based approach has become increasingly popular in training needs analysis, particularly in the field of education. This approach involves establishing a competency framework and assessing individuals' competencies against the established standards to identify competency gaps (Dubois & Rothwell, 2004). Once teachers' actual professional development needs are accurately identified and linked to the challenges they encounter in their daily practice, educational managers can design TPD initiatives that effectively address context-specific needs while fostering teachers' commitment to professional growth.

2.4. Vietnam English Teacher Competency Framework

The most recent educational reforms in Vietnam, particularly the implementation of the 2018 GEC, have highlighted the urgent need for systematic needs assessment and teacher professional development. Consequently, teachers are expected to assume the roles of facilitators and organizers of learning rather than merely transmitters of knowledge (Hoang, 2022). To support this educational transformation, the Ministry of Education and Training introduced ETCF, which serves as an official guideline for defining, promoting, and assessing the quality and professional competencies of EFL teachers. The framework is organized into five major domains. The first domain, Knowledge of Subject Matter, encompasses linguistic knowledge and curriculum knowledge. The second domain, Knowledge of Teaching, focuses on pedagogical strategies that support language learning and enhance student engagement. The third domain, Knowledge of Learners, addresses teachers' understanding of learners' developmental characteristics and prior experiences that influence their learning. The fourth domain, Professional Attitudes and Values, emphasizes lifelong learning and professional collaboration. The final domain, Practice and Context of Language Teaching, highlights teachers' awareness of the contexts in which English is used and learned, particularly within the Vietnamese educational setting. The ETCF provides a comprehensive framework for identifying professional development needs and competency gaps among Vietnamese EFL teachers in the context of contemporary educational reform.

2.5. Teacher Professional Development Needs in EFL context

Although there are obvious national systems, the actualization of TPD and the achievement of the training demands are not equal in all regions. On the international level, research always shows that EFL educators are highly interested in receiving training that does not focus on grammar-translation but on Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching (Richards, 2013; Yaqobi, 2022). In some researches carried out in Thailand (Poonpon, 2021), as well as in Egypt (Ahmed, 2023), there is a great need to develop stronger language skills and modern pedagogical skills at a high level of digital technology incorporation. Interestingly, in Philippine context, Crispino and Moyani (2023) found that teachers had a high level of needs in learning environment, diversity of learners. On the same note, domestic researches in Vietnam are indicative of these international trends but also illustrate local problems. Studies by Le (2020) and Nguyen et al. (2022) indicate that Vietnamese teachers are in dire need of effective training on teaching language skills, managing the mixed-ability classes, and planning active learning sessions that will correspond to the 2018 GEC requirements. Moreover, current literature also reveals that Vietnamese educators highly appreciate individualized and collaborative approaches such as Communities of Practice. However, these approaches may not always be relevant to the current classroom setting (Nguyen & Phan, 2025; Pham & Bui, 2019).

An overview of the literature reveals that there is a research gap in relation to the specific needs of teachers in rural areas of the country in terms of their professional growth. Although there are national policies to provide shared set of competencies, there is a lack of empirical evidence that refers to the actual TPD requirements of EFL teachers in specific local contexts such as Dong Thap province. The conducted researches have been focused mainly in scales of large cities or higher education institutions (Le, 2020; Le & Ho, 2022; Ngo et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022). In contrast, there has been considerably lacked experimental data on the actual PD needs of high school English teachers in specific local contexts that include both urban and rural settings like Dong Thap. In addition, most of the existing TPD programs are put in place through top-down approach without integrating the voice of teachers and self-identified needs systematically according to ETCF. Thus, it is necessary to conduct new

empirical studies with an updated focus on the convergence of the perceived TPD processes with the specific training needs of teachers in the five domains of ETCF. By filling this gap, the current study will provide a sound and data-based base upon which educational administrators can create flexible, context-sensitive, and applicable professional development efforts that, in fact, enable EFL teachers navigate the pressures of the present-day educational reform.

3. Data and Research Methods

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to collect quantitative data from EFL high school teachers in Dong Thap province. This design is described by Creswell and Creswell (2018) as providing a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. Specifically, this research design is considered to best address the research problem as it enables a comprehensive examination of teachers' perceptions of TPD and their training needs in response to Vietnam's ETCF. In order to accomplish demographic representativeness and richness of understanding, 60 EFL high school teachers were chosen through stratified random sampling in order to complete the survey. Stratified random sampling refers to stratification of the population under study into different subcategories prior to conducting the sampling process at random. In this study, stratification was done according to whether the individuals hail from urban areas (wards and townships) or rural areas (communes). It comprised 17 male and 43 female respondents with 25 and 35 based in urban and rural areas respectively. 25 participants were from urban areas and 35 from rural areas, which corresponds to the higher number of schools and teachers working in rural settings in Dong Thap.

To collect the target data, a structured questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview were employed. The 53-item questionnaire, which had a measurement scale based on the scale of five points on the Likert scale, was adapted in accordance with the standardized frameworks and past researches (Ministry of Education and Training, 2013; Le, 2020; Ahmed, 2023) to investigate the perceptions of the teachers regarding TPD concepts and benefits and TPD areas (13 items) and the concrete training requirements of the teachers based on the five core domains of the ETCF framework (40 items). After the data from the questionnaire was collected, the semi-structured interview was used to gain qualitative data as well as triangulate the collected data from the questionnaire. The participants had the opportunity to express their professional issues and special training needs. The instruments were thoroughly tested before they were used to collect the data, either by digital means or by individual interview recordings. There were two experts in EFL at Dong Thap university testing the validity, and in the pilot study with 20 teachers, the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of 0.973 was highly acceptable (Pallant, 2020) while the test-retest proved the reliability of the instruments.

The SPSS version 20.0 was used to conduct descriptive statistics in order to establish the mean scores and standard deviations of quantitative responses. Then the qualitative data that had been transcribed was subjected to inductive analysis using the thematic analysis framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), and the answers were sorted out to reflect relevant themes that related to the ETCF domains. Significantly, the ethical principles were also adhered to during the research process. This included ensuring that the participants had given their consent as well as guaranteeing their anonymity and confidentiality (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. EFL teachers' perceptions on the TPD process

a. Teachers' perceptions on TPD concepts and benefits

The first section of the findings focuses on the teachers' profound understanding of TPD concepts and the professional benefits they derive from such activities. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics corresponding to these perceptions.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' perceptions on TPD concepts and benefits

Items	Mean	SD
1. TPD is a continuous and long-term learning process.	4.48	0.87
2. TPD is a systematically planned process to improve teaching practices.	4.52	0.87
3. TPD includes various forms such as workshops, mentoring, peer observation, professional learning communities, and self-directed learning.	4.45	0.87
4. TPD improves teachers' professional knowledge and teaching skills.	4.48	0.87
5. Effective TPD enhances teachers' motivation and commitment to teaching.	4.37	0.90
6. TPD contributes to improving students' learning outcomes.	4.30	0.91
7. TPD supports collaboration and professional learning among teachers.	4.32	0.89
8. TPD helps teachers align their teaching practices with school improvement goals.	4.42	0.89
Total	4.42	0.82

Table 1 shows a high overall mean ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.82$), indicating positive with regards to perceptions of TPD concepts and benefits. TPD was almost rated as a systematically planned process ($M = 4.52$) with the continuous nature and ability to enhance teaching skills close behind ($M = 4.48$). Various forms of TPD were appreciated by the participants ($M = 4.45$), with mentoring and self-directed learning emerging as key approach forms that serve as key modifications in the contemporary, tech-savvy classroom.

b. Teachers' perceptions on TPD areas

In order to outline the particular areas of professional development that teachers focus on more, the research evaluated the perceptions their teachers had towards different areas of TPD. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of these areas.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of EFL teachers' perceptions on TPD areas

TPD areas	Mean	SD
1. English language proficiency	4.40	0.64
2. Pedagogical content knowledge	4.50	0.70
3. Classroom management and learner engagement	4.42	0.70
4. Assessment literacy	4.45	0.72
5. Digital competencies and technology integration	4.40	0.72
Total	4.43	0.64

Table 2 data indicate that all listed TPD areas are deemed as very important and the overall mean score of the data is 4.43 (SD = 0.64). The most valued area turned out to be pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which received the greatest mean result of 4.50. This shows that teachers most value the relationship between subject matter knowledge and the teaching plan, which is the most basic aspect in the TPD. The next most valued TPD areas are assessment literacy, which had a average score of 4.45, classroom management and learner engagement, which had an average score of 4.42. The scores in the areas of English language proficiency and digital capabilities were obtained, which is 4.40 in both areas.

4.1.2. EFL teachers' training needs in response to the Vietnam's ETCF

a. Knowledge of language, language learning, content, and curriculum

The first area measures the necessity of the teachers to improve their linguistic clarity, the knowledge of the language learning theories, and the knowledge of the given curriculum. Table 3 shows the statistical findings of this domain.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of training needs in domain 1

Items	Mean	SD
1. Improving my English proficiency to meet teaching requirements (C1 level)	4.52	0.60
2. Understanding and applying CEFR descriptors relevant to my students	4.43	0.62
3. Teaching English sounds, word parts, word meanings and word order effectively	4.57	0.56
4. Applying knowledge about how second/foreign languages are learned to my teaching	4.47	0.60
5. Including English-speaking cultures in my English language teaching	4.47	0.54
6. Using English language literature to teach language and content	4.27	0.66
7. Using cultural texts (websites, songs, TV, etc.) to teach language and content	4.45	0.57
8. Using English academic texts to teach language and content	4.30	0.67
9. Understanding the English curriculum I am required to use	4.53	0.60
10. Using textbooks and required curriculum objectives when planning lessons	4.55	0.53
Total	4.46	0.43

Domain 1 was found to have a meaningful training need (M = 4.46, SD = 0.43). The most urgent ones were very practical and those were effective teaching the English linguistic elements (M = 4.57) and precisely matching the lessons with the curriculum objectives (M = 4.55).

b. Knowledge of language teaching

Domain 2 covers pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and assessment techniques. The data concerning these specific teaching skills are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of training needs in domain 2

Items	Mean	SD
1. Using many strategies and techniques to integrate the four skills for authentic communication	4.55	0.57
2. Using language teaching methodology to integrate the four skills to teach different kinds of learners	4.58	0.56
3. Designing effective lessons, assignments and activities for authentic communication	4.53	0.57
4. Creating a supportive and engaging learning environment	4.62	0.52
5. Managing classroom activities to maximize student participation	4.60	0.56
6. Using formative and summative assessment tools and techniques appropriately	4.57	0.59
7. Designing and using age-appropriate assessment tools to measure student progress	4.47	0.68
8. Using and adapting textbooks effectively for my teaching	4.52	0.54
9. Selecting and adapting supplementary teaching materials to suit students' needs	4.52	0.57
10. Having basic computer literacy and using basic computer programs	4.55	0.57

As the instructional delivery is considered to be of paramount importance, Domain 2 scored a high overall mean ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.46$). The highest priorities were the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere ($M = 4.62$) and the control of classroom activities to make the most out of the participation ($M = 4.60$).

c. Knowledge of language learners

Domain 3 deals with the cognitive, emotional, and cultural background of the students. Table 5 describes how the teachers perceive their needs in this area of significance.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of training needs in domain 3

Items	Mean	SD
1. Understanding students' intellectual and emotional development	4.48	0.62
2. Knowing about different learning styles	4.48	0.62
3. Knowing about different stages of language development	4.52	0.62
4. Adapting lessons to motivate students with different proficiency levels	4.58	0.59
5. Giving appropriate feedback on students' language errors	4.60	0.56
6. Understanding how my cultural background affects my teaching	4.53	0.62
7. Understanding how students' cultural background affects their English learning	4.48	0.65

Items	Mean	SD
8. Practicing creativity and critical thinking in my learning and teaching	4.52	0.62
9. Developing students' creativity and critical thinking in English learning	4.50	0.62
Total	4.52	0.54

The overall mean score of this domain ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.54$) shows that teachers are very conscious of the multifaceted nature of their students and their developmental requirements. The statement of giving appropriate feedback on students' language errors is the most important priority ($M = 4.60$). This demonstrated that the educators understood the importance of language acquisition as a process that should be stimulated by feedback. Modifying lessons to encourage learners with different levels of proficiency came in second in the ranking of needs ($M = 4.58$), which accounts for the daily difficulty of dealing with mixed-ability classes.

d. Professional attitudes and values in language teaching

Domain 4 evaluates the needs of teachers as regards to their professional ethics, collaboration, and life-long learning. Table 6 represents the descriptive results.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of training needs in domain 4

Items	Mean	SD
1. Promoting the importance of English learning among students and society	4.50	0.62
2. Maintaining professional behavior and ethics in teaching	4.68	0.50
3. Collaborating with colleagues in teaching and professional activities	4.48	0.60
4. Teaching students cooperation and collaboration skills	4.60	0.56
5. Participating in professional learning communities	4.52	0.57
6. Engaging in self-directed professional development	4.50	0.57
7. Sharing teaching experiences and ideas with other teachers	4.52	0.57

The aggregate mean ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.49$) in this field was very high. It is interesting to note that the highest score in the questionnaire was obtained in keeping professional behavior and ethics ($M = 4.68$) in the 40 items, which indicates the strong commitment to the professional accountability and moral norms. Also, the skills of cooperation and collaboration ($M = 4.60$) and the presence of professional learning communities ($M = 4.52$) were prioritized greatly.

e. Practice and context of language teaching

The final domain explores the necessity of adapting to broader educational contexts and engaging in reflective practice. The relevant data are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of training needs in domain 5

Items	Mean	SD
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1. Updating knowledge of current trends in English language teaching	4.65	0.52
2. Connecting English learning to real-life contexts and other subjects	4.45	0.59
3. Reflecting on my teaching to improve my professional practice	4.62	0.52
4. Using reflection to guide my future learning and teaching	4.50	0.62

Domain 5 was the closest to Domain 2 in terms of the overall mean score ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.47$). The most pressing need that was noted in this category was the importance of updating the knowledge about the current trends in English language teaching ($M = 4.65$). This means that there is a strong motivation among educators to take the lead in the area of pedagogical developments and methodological breakthroughs. Another area with the highest rating to reflecting on teaching with the aim of becoming a better teacher also rated high ($M = 4.62$), and this is the importance that teachers have in self-assessment as a driving force of constant improvement.

Table 8 presents the overall mean scores and standard deviations of the five domains of ETCF to give a comprehensive picture of the priorities of professional development of the teachers.

Table 8. Mean and standard deviations of training needs' domains

Domain	Mean	SD
1. Knowledge of language, language learning, content & curriculum	4.46	0.43
2. Knowledge of language teaching	4.55	0.46
3. Knowledge of language learners	4.52	0.54
4. Professional attitudes & values in language teaching	4.54	0.49
5. Practice & context of language teaching	4.55	0.47

The summary data shows that the range of 4.46 to 4.55 is very narrow and very high, which means that the EFL teachers in Dong Thap province have a comprehensive and urgent need to be trained in the entire range of professional skills. The highest priority was identified in Domains 2 (Knowledge of Language Teaching) and 5 (Practice and Context of Language Teaching). This result in statistical parity was further confirmed by the feedback, as, whereas the necessity of subject knowledge (Domain 1) is recognized as a prerequisite, the immediate, day-to-day challenges in the application of the 2018 GEC require an eminent focus on practical teaching methodologies. These findings confirm the need for comprehensive TPD programs, which cover, at the same time, the methodological implementation, contextualization, and profound knowledge of learner diversity.

4.2. Discussion

The current research indicates that the perception of the high school EFL teachers in Dong Thap province on TPD is positive. This finding is consistent with the worldwide agreement regarding the necessity of practicing TPD as an inseparable part of teacher efficacy and student performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Borg, 2018). These statistics were further explained in the qualitative insights as the teachers are no longer considering TPD as an administrative compliance but as a crucial and continuous professional habit. It is also important to change the mindset within the framework related to existing educational environment in Vietnam. The rationale for this is that the implementation of the 2018 GEC

has drastically changed the pedagogical expectations from the teachers, as they need to refresh their knowledge to avoid stagnation in their profession.

Discussing the particular training requirements in response to the ETCF, the outcomes reveal the compelling and urgent necessity in all the five areas, with Knowledge of Language Teaching (Domain 2) and Practice and Context of Language Teaching (Domain 5) becoming the most urgent requirements. It means that a professional concern of teachers has been changed considerably: no longer to learn the theoretical content (what to teach) but to find the ways to cope with the sophisticated techniques of imparting in real life (how to teach). The training needs, as evidenced by the demand in designing of learning supportive conditions, classroom management instructions, and the latest knowledge on the latest trends in English Language Teaching (ELT), are the immediate challenges that teachers experience when implementing the active learning requirements of the 2018 GEC. In turn, educators desperately need equipping with practical and hands-on TPD programs that help to close the existing rift between such abstract pedagogical theories and the complex realities of classroom practice (Schön, 2017).

Moreover, the high demand of training on Knowledge of Language Learners (Domain 3) highlights the sensitive nature of changing demographics of students in the educators' eyes. Educators directly mentioned that the mental and emotional profiles of modern students, respectively, differ in several key characteristics. The qualitative descriptions underlined that these students possess a limited attention capacity, alternate ways of processing information and excessive dependence on the electronic stimuli. As such it does not just mean that making lessons engaging to the students of different levels of proficiency and ensuring that the necessary psychological support is offered is an additional set of skills, but the very basis of successful teaching in the present-day era. This observation echoes the claims of Crispino and Moyani (2023), who had a high level of needs in diversity of learners.

Lastly, the heavy emphasis also placed on Professional Attitudes and Values (Domain 4). This entails a willingness to participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) and work cooperatively with others. The teachers in rural or semi-urban regions like Dong Thap province may be dependent upon support groups to share resources and negotiate changes in textbooks and curricula. The results of preference of collaborative and self-managed forms of TPD support the results of Nguyen and Phan (2025), who have discovered that long-lasting engagement in PCs has a substantial positive impact on teacher morale and paradigm quality. Finally, the overall training requirements derived in this work imply that the future TPD programs should not be based on top-down and one-size-fits-all situations. Rather, the policymakers and educational administrators will need to develop contextualized, ongoing, and cooperative TPD models that enable teachers to reflect on their practice, adjust to the unique psychological needs of their students, and learn how to implement the current ELT methodologies in practice.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions and specific training needs of TPD among high school EFL teachers in the Dong Thap province through the ETCF. Teachers form a rich, mature perception of TPD, seen as an essential, lifelong professional obligation instead of an administrative mandate. Most importantly, the study found that demand of continued training within the five domains of ETCF is exceptionally high and urgent. An impressive paradigm shift was evident: now teachers pay much more attention to practical implementation, including the knowledge of language teaching and capacity to adapt to the different educational settings, rather than theoretical linguistic competence. This change is largely inspired by the everyday difficulties in using the 2018 GEC (Ministry of Education

and Training, 2018), as well as the need to use modern and tech-savvy children, the cognitive and emotional profiles of which are radically different compared to the past generations.

These empirical conclusions have a number of crucial policy implications to educational stakeholders and school leaders. To start with, the local educational authorities have to re-think traditional TPD delivery models critically. The historical reliance on top-down, intermittent, and conceptual seminars should be replaced by continuous, localized, and context-dependent professional learning schemes. Second, regarding to Domain 4, it is strongly suggested to create and make formal PLCs both on a school level and an inter-school level. Since teachers are greatly willing to collaborate with peers, PLCs offer a permanent, non-stressful system of exchanging professional ideas. Lastly, further training programs should be clearly focused on the realities of the modern classroom, which include direct assistance in the digital technology integration, formative assessment strategies, and differentiated instructions. As a result of creating a favorable, cooperative, and practical professional development climate, it is possible to empower the EFL teachers to survive the continuous changes in education reforms, thus assuring long-term quality in the instruction, and improving student learning achievement in Dong Thap province.

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