



Kryukova Ye., Chugai O., Yamshynska N., Svyrydova L. Views on professional development issues from the perspective of ESL teachers. *Osvita. Innovatyka. Praktyka*, 2024. Том 12, № 2. С. 36-44. <https://doi.org/10.31110/2616-650X-vol12i2-006>

Kryukova Ye., Chugai O., Yamshynska N., Svyrydova L. Views on professional development issues from the perspective of ESL teachers. *Osvita. Innovatyka. Praktyka – Education. Innovation. Practice*, 2024. Vol. 12, No 2. S. 36-44. <https://doi.org/10.31110/2616-650X-vol12i2-006>

УДК 378

DOI: 10.31110/2616-650X-vol12i2-006

Єлизавета КРЮКОВА¹, Оксана ЧУГАЙ², Наталія ЯМШИНСЬКА³, Лариса СВИРИДОВА⁴

Національний технічний університет України

«Київський політехнічний інститут імені Ігоря Сікорського, Україна

¹<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7408-9584>

lizacru@ukr.net

²<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2118-8255>

ochugai@meta.ua

³<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0518-3657>

nyamshinskaya@ukr.net

⁴<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9762-4092>

kpi.sviridova@gmail.com

ПОГЛЯД НА ПРОБЛЕМИ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО РОЗВИТКУ З ПОЗИЦІЇ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Анотація: Вчителі та викладачі, як найважливіші елементи системи освіти, постійно знаходяться у процесі професійного розвитку (ПР), спрямованому на вдосконалення їхньої педагогічної та викладацької практики. З огляду на це, багато освітніх систем у всьому світі приділяють особливу увагу розробці курсів, завдяки яким якість викладання та навчання значно підвищується. У цій статті представлено комплексне дослідження сприйняття викладачами англійської мови як другої (ESL) професійного розвитку (ПР). Дослідження має подвійну мету: зрозуміти, наскільки викладачі усвідомлюють необхідність професійного розвитку, оцінити їх готовність брати участь у заходах з професійного розвитку, а також визначити мотивації, ефективні практики професійного розвитку та загальні виклики на шляху професійного розвитку. У дослідженні використано підхід, що базується на опитуванні викладачів із різним досвідом роботи, статтю та рівнем задоволеності професійною діяльністю. Дані, зібрані під час опитування, були оброблені та проаналізовані за допомогою методів описової статистики, а для оцінювання результатів деяких запитань використовувалася шкала Лікерта. Отримані дані свідчать про те, що переважна більшість викладачів англійської мови професійного спрямування визнають необхідність професійного розвитку та демонструють велике бажання брати участь у заходах, спрямованих на підвищення ефективності їх викладання та рівня володіння англійською мовою. Однак дослідження також висвітлює певні бар'єри, а саме, брак часу через велике робоче навантаження та необхідність доступу до високоякісних ресурсів для підвищення своєї кваліфікації. Більшість викладачів безпосередньо пов'язують свою залученість у різного виду активності з професійному розвитку із позитивними результатами учнів. Дослідження виявило значну зацікавленість викладачів англійської мови професійного спрямування у напрямках, пов'язаних із використанні інтерактивних інструментів у навчанні, феномені штучного інтелекту, плануванні уроків, забезпеченні ефективного зворотного зв'язку.

Ключові слова: викладач англійської мови; професіоналізм; мотивація вчителя мови; безперервний професійний розвиток; діяльність з професійного розвитку; виклики; професійне задоволення; професійна кар'єра; впевненість в класі.

Yelyzaveta KRYUKOVA¹, Oksana CHUGAI², Natalia YAMSHYNska³, Larysa SVYRYDOVA⁴

National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Ukraine

¹<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7408-9584>

lizacru@ukr.net

²<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2118-8255>

ochugai@meta.ua

³<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0518-3657>

nyamshinskaya@ukr.net

⁴<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9762-4092>

kpi.sviridova@gmail.com

VIEWS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ESL TEACHERS

Abstract. It is indeed true that, teachers are the most important elements of education who constantly need professional development (PD) activities, targeted to improve their pedagogical and teaching practice. Considering this, many educational systems worldwide have paid special attention to designing courses by which the quality of teaching and learning increases considerably. This paper presents a comprehensive examination of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' perceptions regarding professional development (PD). With the dual objectives of understanding teachers' recognition of PD necessity and gauging their willingness to engage in PD activities, the study identifies key motivations, effective PD practices, and prevalent challenges. The research employs a survey-based approach, targeting teachers with varying teaching experience, genders, and levels of professional satisfaction. The data gathered from the survey was processed and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Likert scale was employed for outcome assessments on some survey questions. The results obtained, when compared with the results of other scholars, involved in the relevant investigation, coincided considerably, although some inconsistencies were observed. The findings reveal that a vast majority of ESL teachers appreciate the value of PD and demonstrate a strong

willingness to participate in activities aimed at enhancing their teaching effectiveness and English competency. However, the study also highlights significant barriers such as time constraints due to heavy workload and the need for better access to high-quality PD resources. Most teachers associate their PD involvement directly with positive student outcomes, reflecting a clear link between teacher development and student academic achievements. The research uncovers a pronounced interest in the use of interactive tools in education among ESL practitioners, collaborative learning with AI, lesson planning, and feedback provision. Lastly, the paper delves into the factors impacting motivation for PD and underscores the importance of knowledge sharing and an adequate reward system to foster a thriving PD environment for ESL teachers.

Keywords: ESL teacher; professionalism; language teacher motivation; continuing professional development; professional development activities; challenges; professional satisfaction; professional careers; confidence in the classroom

Introduction. To keep up with the rapidly evolving needs of foreign language learners in the global landscape, English as the Second Language [ESL] teachers are to actively engage in continuous professional development. The demands placed on ESL teachers are multifaceted, requiring a nuanced understanding of linguistic principles, professional terminology of the relevant students' specialties, cultural nuances, and innovative pedagogical strategies. As the ESL student community continues to diversify, educators should continually adapt to address the evolving needs of their learners. Consequently, this paper seeks to elucidate the critical importance of ongoing professional development for ESL teachers, examining the dynamic challenges they face and asserting that continuous learning is not merely a choice but a necessity in the modern educational environment. Thus, the significance of continuous professional development becomes evident as a means to empower ESL teachers with the tools and knowledge required to navigate the complexities of an advancing educational environment.

The notion and aspects of professional development [PD], as well as its interrelation with the effective learning process, have been in the focus of investigation by many researchers, specifically, A. Kennedy, A. Pill, R. Mulvey, T.R. Guskey, R. Mitchell, and many others. The notion of PD is defined as the ongoing process of acquiring and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for individuals to excel in their professional roles [6,10]. In reference to the educational background, one might mention, for instance, Guskey T. and Avalos B. [3] who considered that PD encompasses a range of initiatives, engagements, and procedures tailored for educators to enhance their teaching expertise, knowledge, and attitudes, ultimately influencing students' learning experiences.

Teacher professional development embodies a commitment to lifelong learning and continual growth as an educator, recognizing that the work of a teacher is an ongoing and life-long process.

Analysis of previous studies and publications. The number of studies addressing teacher professional development which leads to the improvement of teaching practices has risen with an increasing demand for high-quality education. Thus, investing in the ongoing training and development of educators becomes increasingly crucial to ensure that they are equipped with the latest pedagogical approaches, technological advancements, and innovative methodologies.

Beatrix Price researched the motives that encouraged English Language Teaching [ELT] professionals through their successful careers as teachers, teacher trainers, or leaders in ELTAs. She claimed that "learning as a social activity takes place through professional development, weaving through the personal histories of career, professional development events, and success". The findings of the study revealed the formula of professional success for teachers. It is the environment where "learning and teaching complement each other continuously". In simple words, only new challenging tasks can help teachers to grow and develop professionally [17].

The idea of continuous PD was also supported by Desimone L. [5]. In her work continuing professional development is stated "to be essential for teachers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills, which will also enhance students' learning". She studied and recommended some measurement instruments to determine the quality of teachers' professional development.

Amy B. M. Tsui [22] outlined the phases or sequences teachers go through during their careers. However, it was determined that these stages of development do not occur in a linear manner. He explained teachers' movement in and out of phases by several factors like personal experiences, social environment, and organizational influences.

Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed Alfaki [1] aimed to explain the concept of professional development and argued for a model of professional development where knowledge and ongoing learning opportunities must be undertaken to improve an individual's ability to do their job and grow as a professional. In the study, various forms of professional development were mentioned through which employees can acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. They can be workshops, degrees, coursework, conferences, training sessions, online podcasts, discussion boards, and classes. It was recommended that "teacher professional development should be seen as a necessity in teacher's growth and student's achievements, and teachers should take part in the responsibility for their professional development".

Farzaneh Mahmoudia, Yonca Özkana [9] investigated which PDP (e.g. courses/workshops, education conferences or seminars, qualification program) might be much more beneficial for the teachers. The findings of the study showed that mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, reading professional literature,

education conferences or seminars, and observation visits to other schools/institutes respectively were the activities that most experienced teachers participated in and found beneficial in improving their teaching. It is crucial to realize the importance of teachers' participation in such activities for acquiring new knowledge for own professional development and further implementation into the language teaching practices [5].

Astri O. Kuncahya, Basikin [2] outlined four main professional development challenges for Indonesian English teachers, "namely extrinsic motivation, lack of institutional supports, the gap between the teachers' needs and the program, as well as the lack of a sense of autonomy. These findings suggest that the challenges come from both internal and external aspects, and have an important implication for the policymaking in Indonesia".

Kohonen V. [7] provided insights into the factors that contribute to the professional development of ESL teachers. and suggested that because PD experiences arise from the teachers' interests, the teachers are more likely to be committed to them, and the changes that emerge from these experiences are deep and long-lasting and can be transferred to broader contexts such as the language classroom, students' quality of learning, and language teachers' personal lives.

Mora, A., Trejo, P., & Roux, R. [11] suggested that several factors might play a role in the teachers' PD. These include differences in the approach to PD adopted by the school administration, the impact that the PD courses and programs had on them, and their agentic orientations. The analysis then highlights both the complexity of the PD process and the value of the theoretical framework in revealing this complexity.

Opfer, V. D., & Pedder, D. [15] demonstrated how the components of three subsystems (the teacher, the school, and the learning activity) can interact and influence teacher learning when being combined in different ways and with varying intensities. The study revealed that the myriad of elements within and between these systems poses significant challenges for conducting causal studies of teacher professional learning.

After reviewing a lot of in-depth studies carried out by numerous researchers, it has become possible to conclude that effective teacher professional development is not only essential but also a complex, dynamic process on which various internal and external factors can have a great impact. As the educational environment continuously evolves and requires changes, acknowledging and addressing the challenges and complexities associated with PD is crucial for fostering ongoing improvements in teaching practices and, ultimately, enhancing student outcomes.

The purpose of the study. The objective of this paper is to investigate how ESL teachers perceive the necessity of their professional development. To achieve this aim, the following tasks are to be accomplished:

1. To indicate the motives of ESL teachers on professional development and reveal their willingness to participate in various PD activities.
2. To capture the views of ESL teachers on the most effective PD activities based on their experience.
3. To determine the challenges ESL teachers face on their path to professional development.
4. To highlight the inter-relationship between the ESL teachers' continuing professional development being engaged in a variety of PD activities and the academic achievements of their students.

In this study, we hypothesize that the majority of ESL teachers are concerned about their professional development and are willingly engaged in PD activities. However, we suppose that it is crucial to raise this issue to encourage teachers to enhance their professional level and provide insight into the challenges they encounter while elevating their professional expertise.

Research Methods. To collect feedback and get more information from ESL teachers about the issues concerning their professional development it was decided to design a survey. A survey is considered the most effective way to obtain quick responses and provides their easy analysis. Opinions and comments were collected from 65 ESL teachers of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". The questionnaire included 13 questions of two types: multiple choice (prompts 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 13) and a Likert scale (prompts 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12) with its varied set of responses allowing to find out responders' attitudes, indicating the level of agreement with some statements, concern about some issues related to the professional development and satisfaction with PD activities they are engaged in. The survey was expected to provide a deeper understanding of the ways professional development is pursued and the recognition of teachers' needs and learning opportunities.

The survey was conducted with the help of Google Forms service. The responders were proposed to choose from the suggested variants or range values from the smallest (minimum) to the largest (maximum) ones. To display the distribution of responses on the Likert scale we used a bar chart and calculated the median (Mdn) and the Interquartile Range (IQR) intending to measure a central tendency.

The questionnaire with open-ended questions was designed and included 12 questions. Experiences and comments were gathered from 110 students of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". The overall results were summarized in Tables I, II, III, IV. A mixed-method research design was utilized in the study to gather, analyze, compare, and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings obtained from the survey. The participants were 110 ESL students who were able to give their responses to 12 questions of the survey. Three types of prompts were used in the survey: multiple choice

(prompts 1, 10, 11, 12), ranging (prompt 6), and a Likert scale (prompts 2,3,4,5,7,8,9) with its varied set of responses to find out responders' attitudes, indicate the level of the agreement and likelihood. The survey was conducted with the help of Google Forms service. The respondents were proposed to choose from the suggested variants or range values from the smallest (minimum) to the largest (maximum) ones. To display the distribution of responses on the Likert scale we used a bar chart and calculated the median (Mdn) and the Interquartile Range (IQR) intending to measure a central tendency.

Summary of the main research material. According to the survey results, most of the respondents (85,7 %) had more than 10 years of experience teaching English. It is indeed good news because experienced teachers are committed to providing the highest level of teaching and have a huge pack of knowledge to share with their colleagues and students. Our respondents are mostly females (88,1%) and a minority of them are males (9,5%) and those who didn't want to identify a gender (2,4%) (Figure 1,2).

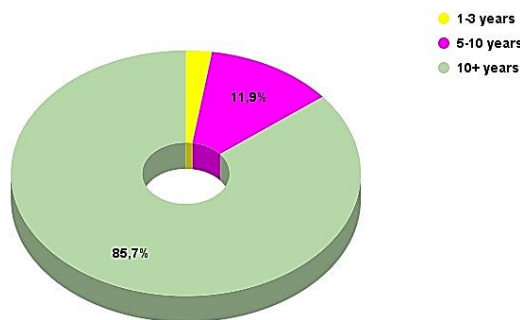


Fig. 1. Indicating teaching English experience of the respondents

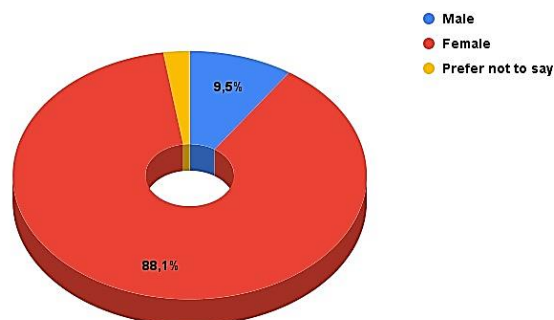


Fig. 2. Indicating the gender of the respondents

The third question about the level of satisfaction with the current level of proficiency as an ESL teacher displays that most of the survey participants (54,8%) are satisfied, whereas 26,2% are neutral and the minority (4,8%) are dissatisfied with it (Mdn=2, Iqr=1) (See Table 1). According to these findings, we can conclude that the majority of respondents possess a level of professional knowledge that allows them to feel confident in providing effective lessons. Teachers who experience a high degree of satisfaction in their current proficiency as ESL educators are more likely to get inspired or motivated to enhance their professional level regularly and continuously.

The majority of "VERY WILLINGLY" (46,3%) and "WILLINGLY" (43,9%) answers to the question about participation in professional development initiatives are very impressive but at the same time predictable. (Mdn=2, Iqr=1) (See Table 1). This predictability might be seen as a positive sign of uniform commitment. Moreover, it assures us that respondents are eager to take many relevant courses and other activities in which they are directly concerned with the aim of promoting their professionalism in the ESL teaching field.

The calculation of median (Mdn) and the Interquartile range (Iq) shows that more than half of the participants (58,5%) expressed their strong agreement that confidence in English proficiency is a consequence of ESL teacher's professional development and experience. (Mdn=1 and Iqr=1) (See Table 1).

These findings align with the conclusions made by Deniz Ortactepe and Ayse S. Akyel [16]. Their study presented evidence and indicated the positive impact of the in-service teacher education program on teachers' efficacy and their teaching behaviour.

However, the results of the study conducted by Lie, A., Tamah, S. M. & Gozali, I. [8] revealed that initial English proficiency is the determining factor of the confidence of teachers in the use of English in the classroom. Thus, it can best serve the achievement of foreign language learning and teaching. Those teachers who are proficient in English more likely to enhance their English proficiency through participating in a wide range of professional development activities. On the other hand, those with lower proficiency or who are not confident about their English tend to avoid using English and thus deprive themselves of the opportunities for necessary practices.

The answers to question number six show that approximately half of the respondents (48,8%) rate their access to high-quality professional development sources as average and slightly less (43,9%) as above average. (Mdn=2 and Iqr=1) (See Table 1).

The explanation of the sixth prompt requires some additional information. The modern fast-paced world constantly changes the demands for professional and soft skills graduates should possess. It naturally leads to significant changes in teaching methods and approaches with which teachers should be equipped. Due to the technical innovations and the development in the educational field, there are a lot of courses and other tools available for ESL teachers that can aid in excelling at their professional level and finally make the teaching experience even more engaging, imaginative, and motivating for students. The respondents of the study outlined the openness to such initiatives.

The calculation of the median (Mdn) and the Interquartile Range (IQR) indicates that the majority of respondents are sure that the effectiveness of teaching practices greatly contributes to notable improvements in both student learning and achievements (Mdn=1 and Iqr=1) (See Table 1).

The conclusions made by Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. [4] claim that well-designed and implemented PD should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning that supports students to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to thrive in the 21st century.

As argued by Afzal Sayed Munna, Md Abul Kalam [12], an active learning environment promotes inclusivity and improves the faculty and student academic performances.

The findings of the study and our suggestions stress the importance of professional development for ESL teachers which allows them to acquire and enhance their skills and knowledge about innovative approaches to delivering lessons effectively. Besides, only in the case when teachers know the benefits of the teaching strategies and how to implement them in the classroom it will lead to good student outcomes.

Considering the reasons for their participation in professional development activities, the majority of the respondents indicated the sake of developing professionally to equip themselves to teach better in the classroom and increase their competence in English (45,9%) and (41,2%) accordingly. Only a small percentage of respondents (9,4%) pointed out that they participate in such programs because it is an institutional requirement (Figure 3).

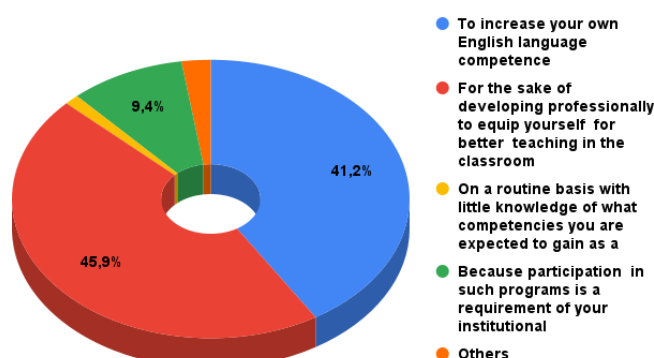


Fig. 3. Indicating the reasons for the participation in professional development activities

In this context, the findings of the study by Jiaming Qi and Ali Derakhshan [18] are very interesting. They revealed a positive and strong correlation between teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and their desire to attend PD programs.

Taking into consideration the findings of the previous questions of the survey and this one, it is important to admit that the respondents are determined to pursue their career path and express an intention to achieve the progression plan that an individual follows in their professional journey. It is in line with our hypotheses that ESL teachers are aware of the necessity for continuous professional development. These teachers might go through different stages in their teaching careers, however, they have individual expectations, which might be their main motives to grow professionally.

This is in contrast with the results of other studies by Tinoca, which revealed that ESL teachers do not voluntarily participate, but are often mandated and obliged to attend the workshops. Thus their motivation level is rather low, they can't demonstrate the effectiveness of their work and don't outline the desire to increase their professionalism [21].

In this regard, to elevate the level of interest in ESL teachers to be engaged in various PD activities, Salas, A. [20] recommended that teacher trainers investigate teachers' priorities, prior knowledge, school curriculum, and students' needs carefully before organizing any PD program.

Murray A. [13] claimed that professional development is an ongoing process, one that evolves as you assess and reexamine your teaching beliefs and practices. She classified PD approaches into some categories: those that can be pursued individually while others prove to be more beneficial if done collectively. Some activities can be done informally (journals, study groups, etc.) and some follow more traditional formats (e.g., workshops, conferences).

To get a much clearer understanding of the professional development issues for ESL teachers we enquired the respondents about the types of PD activities they actively participate in or have recently participated in intending to expand the horizons for their professional development and further demonstrate better performance in the classroom. The obtained results showed that the majority of the survey's participants (23,3%) prefer attending external workshops/ conferences and watching educational videos (20,8%). Approximately the same amount of respondents (17%) divided their preferences among reading professional journals and consulting online sources (Figure 4).

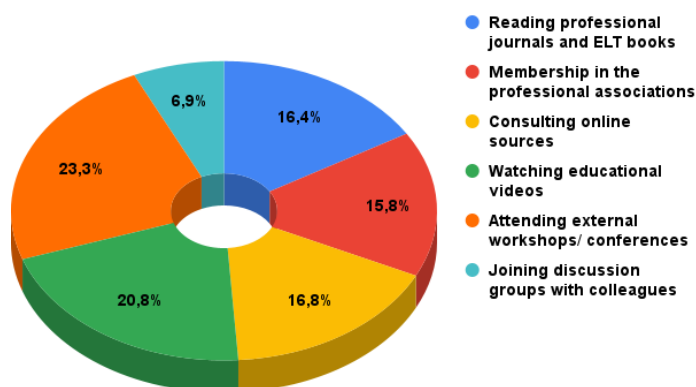


Fig. 4. Types of PD activities ESL teachers prefer to enhance their skills and professional knowledge

Another study by Nguyen, D. B. et. al [14] identified another tendency among Chinese ESL teachers. They preferred the following PD activities: in-house meetings, discussions with colleagues, and self-reading materials. On the other hand, PD activities conducted beyond the teachers' school settings seemed to attract minimal attendance. These include belonging to a TESOL association, conferences, and observing teachers in other schools.

According to the results of the research the areas of professional development that significantly draw the interest of the respondents include Collaborative Learning with AI: (Opportunities and Challenges and Application of Interactive tools in ESL Classrooms. It was very interesting to find out that these two activities were chosen by the same number of respondents. (71,4%) (Figure 5).

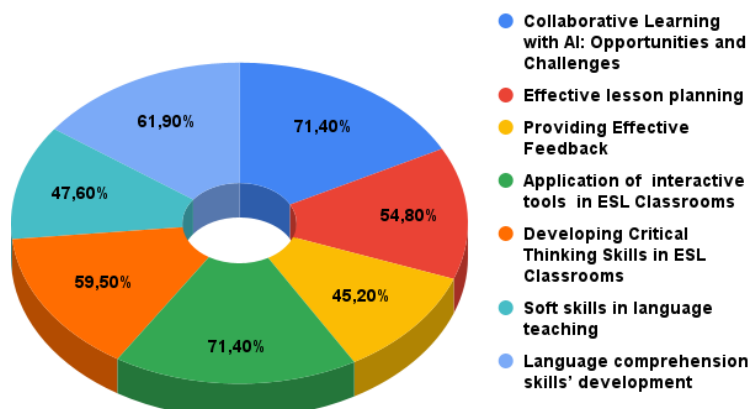


Fig. 5. Indicating the areas of professional development that significantly draw the interest of the respondents

Nowadays these topics are really popular among teachers and capture their significant attention. Indisputably, the integration of AI and interactive tools allows us to transform the way we learn, teach, and engage with knowledge. Moreover, AI enables us to provide personalized learning experiences for students based on their individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

On the question about satisfaction with the PD activities the majority of respondents (81%) expressed their satisfaction, and only a small amount (9,5%) indicated their neutral attitude to PD activities they participate in regularly. It is a good sign that there were no ESL teachers from the respondents of the survey who were not satisfied. (Mdn=1 and Iqr=0) (See Table 1).

It can be concluded that PD activities are effective and useful for those ESL teachers who attend them and can bring them professional satisfaction if ensure the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. In addition, these findings support the idea of the correlation between teacher quality and teachers' engagement in PD.

The analyses of responses to the next question showed that more than half of the respondents (54,7%) outlined a great desire and readiness to share knowledge acquired from professional development activities with their colleagues. Only a small percentage of participants (10%) indicated their low desire to do this. The authors support the claim that knowledge transfer is a crucial moment in professional development and can justify how your skills and knowledge have developed over a period of time. (Mdn=2 and Iqr=2) (See Table 1).

Table 1.

The results of the Likert Scale Survey Questions

LIKERT SCALE SURVEY QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	Median	IQR
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied		
Prompt 3. To what extent are you satisfied with your current level of proficiency as an ESL teacher?	9	36	18	4	0	2	1
Prompt 11. How much are you satisfied with the PD activities you participate or have recently participated in?	6	53	6	0	0	2	0
	Very willingly	Willingly	Neutral	Unwillingly	Very Unwillingly		
Prompt 4. How willingly are you to participate constructively in PD (professional development) initiatives?	30	28	5	2	0	2	1
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
Prompt 5. How much do you agree that confidence in English proficiency increases as a result of ESL teacher's professional development and experience?	38	27	0	0	0	1	1
	Excellent	Above average	Average	Below average	Very poor		
Prompt 6. How would you rate your access to high-quality professional development sources from the perspective of the increased responsibilities delegated to teachers today?	5	28	32	0	0	2	1
	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all			
Prompt 7. In your opinion, to what extent does the effectiveness of teaching practices contribute to notable improvements in both student learning and achievements?	44	19	2	0	0	1	1
	Fully prepared	Very prepared	Not at all prepared	moderately prepared	Slightly prepared		
Prompt 12. How prepared do you feel to share knowledge acquired from professional development activities with your colleagues?	13	24	3	19	6	2	2

With the last question, we intended to uncover the factors that may loosen respondents' motivation to participate in PD activities. Our results demonstrated that a significant portion of the participants (30%)

consider the absence of an adequate reward system a factor that can have an impact on their reduced engagement in professional activities.

Less than a third of the respondents (18,7%) highlighted the factor of a low level of students' appreciation and roughly the same number of respondents (17,5%) selected the perception of teaching as an unimportant job, indicating potential challenges and barriers to accessing opportunities for continuing education and professional development for ESL teachers.

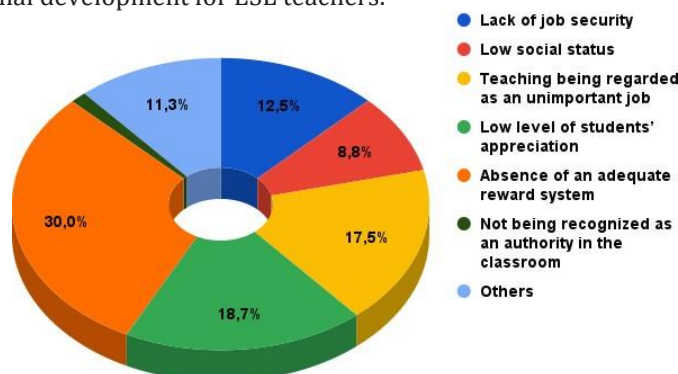


Fig. 6. Indicating the reasons for low motivation for professional development

The findings of the research by Tinoca defined another problem. The author stated that ESL teachers are not voluntarily participating, but are often mandated and obliged to attend the workshops where the programs are characterized by the 'one size fits all' approach, and topics are totally unrelated and are too broad to be applied in classroom settings.

There is important data from other studies made by O'Brien, Wangsopawiro. They claimed that ESL teachers are unmotivated to participate as they are not equipped with a platform or opportunities to express their needs and interests as well as the problems they face in the classroom [19].

According to the analyses of the questionnaire, there is evidence that EFL teachers have a genuine desire to take part in PD activities. However, there is a recurring need for encouragement to engage in these opportunities consistently. This highlights the need for teacher trainers to be cautious about teachers' priorities, their existing knowledge, curriculum, and the student's needs before organizing a PD program.

Conclusion and prospects for further research. This paper demonstrates the challenges and opportunities that ESL teachers experience in relevance to their engagement in professional development activities. Based on the results of this study, it was revealed that ESL teachers are highly committed to their professional development, recognizing its critical role in improving their teaching skills along with their command of the English language. The vast majority of respondents demonstrated their eagerness to keep up with the latest trends of innovative teaching, having chosen from the list of areas for their professional interests those which are focused on the use of artificial intelligence in language teaching and collaborative teacher-student learning via interactive technologies. While they have a strong motivation to engage in PD activities and exhibit a willingness to adopt innovative approaches and tools, challenges such as lack of adequate rewards and perceived undervaluation of the teaching profession can dampen their enthusiasm. Therefore, educational institutions and stakeholders must address these barriers by offering high-quality PD resources, fostering a supportive environment for knowledge sharing, and implementing a recognition system that values teachers' efforts in professional advancement. By doing so, ESL teachers can continue to pursue a path of lifelong learning, ensuring their teaching keeps pace with the demands of a rapidly changing educational landscape. Still uncovered issues remained, namely, the interrelationship between the ESL teachers' engagement in continuing professional development and the academic achievements of their students. This is a challenging issue that requires further investigation on a larger scale.

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