

## A REVIEW ON THE EFFECTS OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ON EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> 25/5/2022 <b>Revised:</b> 07/6/2022 <b>Published:</b> 07/6/2022	This paper aims to review prior empirical studies concerning the effects of a professional development (PD) program on teachers' beliefs about English language teaching and their classroom teaching practices to raise the ignored and minimally addressed issues that could provide avenues for the future research in Vietnam. 20 published journal articles and dissertations were cautiously refined for "systematic reviews" that were employed as the only technique for a source of data in this inquiry. Findings from these studies indicated that teachers' pedagogical beliefs and class teaching were found a development or a change in a wide range of studies, whereas no or little impact on teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices as a result of teacher PD programs were uncovered in other research projects. Specially, most of the reviewed previous studies revealed certain limitations regarding research methodology, sample size, unnatural separation between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, and relatively limited studies conducted in the field, particularly at secondary schools in the Vietnamese context.
<b>KEYWORDS</b>	
Professional development (PD)	
Teacher belief	
Teaching/instructional practices	
English language teaching (ELT)	
English as a foreign language (EFL)	

## NGHIÊN CỨU TỔNG QUAN VỀ ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA CHƯƠNG TRÌNH BỒI DƯỠNG CHUYÊN MÔN ĐỐI VỚI TÍN NIỆM VÀ THỰC HÀNH GIẢNG DẠY TRÊN LỚP CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
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<b>TỪ KHÓA</b>	
Phát triển chuyên môn	
Tín niệm của giáo viên	
Thực hành giảng dạy	
Giảng dạy tiếng Anh	
Tiếng Anh như ngoại ngữ	

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher professional development is considered as a key step and an essential component of educational reforms to enhance the quality of education [1], [2]. It generally refers to a cyclical, ongoing, lifelong process and aimed primarily at facilitating changes or development in teachers' professional knowledge, skills, beliefs or attitudes for the growth of teaching profession in their life [3], [4].

Obviously, professional development influences teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices [5]. It is claimed that beliefs about teaching and learning serve as guidelines on the way that teachers teach [6], and exert an impact on their decision-making and planning processes, and that the approaches they employ in their instruction [7].

Teacher belief, one of the key issues in teacher cognition, has played a vital role in teacher education [8]. Researchers in this field have defined similar terms differently and different terms have been used to refer to identical concepts [9]. Bastukmen et al. [10] defines teacher belief as "statement teachers made about their ideas, thoughts and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what 'should be done', 'should be the case', and 'is preferable'" (p. 244). According to Kagan [11, pp. 65-66], teacher belief is conceptualized as "pre- or in-service teachers' implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught." However, beliefs are generally defined in the education literature as a 'conceptual tool' [9] or world views, and "mental models" that guide learning and teaching practices [12, p. 250], and focus on how teachers think about the nature of teaching and learning [13].

Teaching practices can elaborate the practice programs and strengthen the professional quality. As defined by [14], classroom teaching practices are the basic form of class teaching system in which the teachers systematically impart knowledge and develop their students' intelligence basing on provisions of the teaching plan. Classroom teaching practice includes some class teaching methods, such as "attending the lectures, preparing for the courses, teaching methods, writing teaching plans, teaching demonstration, classroom teaching, assessment, correcting the assignments and the like" [14, p.1442].

As explained by Desimone [4], "In essence, examining the effects of professional development is analogous to measuring the quality of teachers' learning experiences, the nature of teacher change, and the extent to which such change affects student learning" [4, p. 188]. Accordingly, in order to measure the effects of PD, Guskey [3] proposed a linear path model in which Guskey posits that changes in teachers' classroom practice as a result of professional development participations can lead to positive changes in students' learning outcomes, and then this can result in changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes.

Desimone [4] developed a conceptual framework embracing five core features of an effective PD program: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation; and serving as a causal chain linking four core elements: (1) teachers first engage in a PD program, (2) this results in an increase of teachers' knowledge and skills and/or changes in their beliefs, (3) leading to improved instruction or classroom practices, and (4), in turn, improved student learning. In her proposed core conceptual underpinning, initial elements, (ie. professional development), provoke changes in consequent elements.

Although the two models revealed certain significant discrepancies terms of the content, design, analysis and evaluation of teacher professional development programs [15], the two proposed models reveal certain similarities. Firstly, they are considered as influential linear path models with focus on single pathways [12]. Secondly, both models seek to work out patterns of change and interrelationships between different components or dimensions of professional development processes. More importantly, they all permits for measuring a theory of teacher change, for instance, professional development facilitates shifts in teacher knowledge, beliefs, or practice [16].

Over the last decades, the field of professional development has witnessed a number of studies on the impact of professional development programs on teachers' beliefs about ELT,

their teaching practices and student learning throughout the globe [3], [4], [8]. Unluckily, studies pertinent to systematic literature reviews on the extent to which professional development courses have actually facilitated changes in the beliefs of EFL teachers' and their instructional practices have been unexpectedly scarce, especially in in-service contexts. To address this gap, the current paper, therefore, reviewed a riotous array of prior research around the world and in Vietnam to explore the effects of a professional development program on teachers' beliefs about ELT and their classroom practices, the current research situations in the field, and its limitations, then provide suggestions for future research directions. Specially, the present study was an attempt to shed more light on the following issues under question.

1. *What are the effects of professional development programs on teachers' beliefs about ELT and their teaching practices?*

2. *What are the limitations of the previous studies?*

## 2. Methodology

In this research, Systematic Literature Review was employed as a principal tool to select and review prior studies in order to examine the impact of a PD program on teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their teaching practices and refine the shortcomings from these studies.

Systematic Literature Review (SLR), or Systematic Review, "a method to identify, evaluate, and summarize the state-of-the-art of a specific theme in the literature" [17, p.2] serves the purpose of the current study as it offers a systematic guideline to analyze the literature, and "allows the collection of literature information restrictively that permits a rigorous methodological analysis with lower bias than the traditional review" [17, p.2], and promotes the "trustworthiness, and arguably the value of the results and recommendations of the study" [18, p.153]. More specially, criteria for a systematic review by Rose et al.'s [18, p. 154] have been adapted for this paper as follows: (1) contain empirical research; (2) include studies based on exhaustive and reliable searching (be published in a peer-reviewed, an academic journal, a book or theses); (3) be connected to the effects of a PD program on teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their teaching practices; (4) be aware of the impact of a PD program on teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their teaching practices, covering this construct in the review of the literature in this paper.

Based on these criteria, the researcher examined various search engines embracing ERIC, Education Research Complete (ERC), Education Source, Academia, Research Gate, and Google Scholar to gather articles and dissertations in response to the purpose of the study. After the literature retrieval, only 20 out of hundreds of published journal articles and dissertations containing the effects of a PD program on teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their teaching practices as were cautiously selected, briefly summarized, and systematically reviewed.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The following section reports the results reviewed previous studies and discussion.

### 3.1. *What are the Effects of Professional Development Programs on Teachers' Beliefs about ELT and/or their Teaching Practices?*

Drawing on Table 1 below, previous studies generally yielded mixed results regarding the effects of a PD program on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their instructional practices. On the one hand, PD programs in these prior inquiries, to some extent, exert positive effects on teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their classroom practices. Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and class teaching have been witnessed a development or a change in a great number of studies as a result of teacher PD programs [1], [2], [4], [6], [8], [10], and [11]. However, it is not very easy for their teaching beliefs and practices to be changed over time in certain circumstances or settings because of their low English proficiency, such as those in Coburns' study, and the testing systems as indicated in some studies in Korea [5]. On the other hand, other studies have

uncovered that ESL/EFL teacher education programs have little or no impact on teachers' beliefs or/and their teaching practices [17] – [20]. The major rationale for resisting changes in teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices is the testing system which focuses on grammar and reading comprehension [19], [20].

**Table 1.** *A Summary of the Selected Prior Studies (n = 20)*

Authors	Focus	Participants	Instruments	Major Findings
<b>1. Changes in teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their instructional practices</b>				
1 OECD [19]	Effects of teachers' professional development on their beliefs, attitudes, teaching practices	23 participating countries	Survey questionnaire	Changes were found in teachers' teaching practices regarding student-oriented practices and enhanced activities, and structuring practices
2 Rajabi, Kiany & Maftoon [20]	Effects of an ESP in-service teacher training program on Iranian teachers' beliefs, & their classroom practices	423 ESP teachers at Iranian and Azad universities	Survey questionnaire	Dramatic changes were found in the beliefs and instructional practices.
3 Soe [21]	Impact of teachers' professional development on their instructional practices	2379 lower secondary school teachers in Finland	Survey questionnaire	PD programs significantly affect the teachers' classroom practices regarding structuring practice and students-oriented practices.
4 Borg [8]	Impact of an intensive in-service teacher education program on the beliefs of language teachers	6 English language teachers in the UK	Semi-structured interview	The program had a significant impact on the teachers' beliefs. The teachers changed their prior beliefs they held about aspects of language teaching and learning.
5 Yook & Lee [22]	Impact of EFL teacher education programme on Korean teachers' classroom teaching.	6 in-service secondary-school teachers in Korea	Semi-structured interviews	In-service teacher education programmes exerted a significant influence on the teachers' classroom teaching practices. However, the teachers' low English proficiency and the wash-back effect of the Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test impeded the maintenance of the changes.
6 Kurihara & Samimy [23]	Impact of a U.S. teacher training program on teaching beliefs and practices	8 secondary school Teachers of English in Japan	Questionnaire Interviews	The program had a positive influence on the teachers' teaching beliefs: reshape their teaching beliefs; and their daily teaching practices: used more English in class, exposed their students to English language and also made their classroom more communicative.
7 Jakhaia [24]	Impact of a professional development on EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching writing and their writing instruction	38 private and public school teachers of English in Georgia	Questionnaire Interviews	Teachers experiencing the PD program obtained higher self-efficacy in their writing instruction as well as their beliefs about teaching writing in terms of teacher's qualification and knowledge.
8 Uddin and Kabir [25]	Whether training brings changes in teacher's belief in teaching	Secondary Teachers in Bangladesh	Questionnaire Interview	Training facilitates changes in teachers' teaching beliefs, and makes teachers proficient.
9 Ortaçtepe & Akyel [26]	Impact of a professional program on Turkish EFL teachers' efficacy and their actual classroom practice of CLT	50 EFL in-service teachers at 8 secondary schools in Turkey	Questionnaire Classroom observations	In-service teacher education program promoted their instructional practice of CLT regarding teacher control, student involvement in classroom activities, use of group work activities, and a meaning rather than form.
10 Wu [5]	PD and change in teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices	197 English teachers in five US local school districts	Questionnaire Class observations	Teachers experienced changes in their beliefs and their classroom practices regarding teaching English language learners. However, inconsistency was

Authors	Focus	Participants	Instruments	Major Findings
				identified in changes between the teachers' beliefs and their practices.
11 Coburn [27]	The PD of English language teachers: The impact of a national in-service EFL teacher education course	33 in-service primary school teachers in Norway	Questionnaire Interviews, Classroom observations	Teachers experienced increased competence as EFL teachers, used more English in class significantly, became less dependent on textbooks, and encouraged more pupil activities.
12 Sheidaei & Tahriri [28]	Effects of a professional development program on EFL teachers' teaching practices	18 junior school English teachers	Questionnaire Reflective journals	Teachers implemented a significant positive change in their instructional practices, such as designing, planning and giving instructions.
13 Ha & Murray [29]	Impact of a professional development on EFL teachers' beliefs about oral corrective feedback	10 EFL teachers from two high schools in Vietnam	Interviews Written reflections	Teachers experienced slight changes in their beliefs pertaining to CF significance and targets and sources; and certain significant changes in terms of CF types and timing.
14 Sierra-Piedrahíta [30]	Effects of a professional development program on an EFL teacher's instructional practices	1 high school teacher of English in Columbia	Interviews Classroom observations Document analysis	Teachers demonstrated major changes in her teaching practices regarding new patterns of teaching behavior and methodology despite minor changes.
15 Ashrafuzzaman [16]	Impact of in-service training on English teachers' classroom practices	15 teachers at the English in Action intervention schools	Semi-structured & focus group Interviews Classroom observations	Teachers experienced significant changes in their teaching practices regarding the use of classroom activities, such as playing games, using visual aids, or writing a paragraph via mind mapping; and the more frequent use of English in class like giving instructions in English.
16 Cheung [31]	How an in-service professional development program affects the writing teachers' teaching attitudes and their teaching practices	28 secondary school English teachers in Singapore	Survey questionnaires Portfolios and instructors' course evaluations	The course promoted positive changes in the teachers' attitudes towards their teaching of writing and their instructional practices regarding the employment of useful pedagogical skills for the teaching of writing.
<b>2. Limited or no changes in teachers' beliefs about ELT and/or their instructional practices</b>				
17 Phipps [32]	The impact of a course on an English teacher's beliefs about grammar teaching	1 English teacher in Turkey	Questionnaire	While showing the overall positive impact of the programme, during the period of the study, "there were few tangible changes to existing beliefs, but many existing beliefs were confirmed, deepened and strengthened".
18 Kerekes [33]	The effects of an SLA course on in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and their teaching practices.	22 experienced teachers	Questionnaire Observations Interviews	Two exhibited significant reversion to initial beliefs held before they took the SLA course, while four remained greatly stable in their beliefs.
19 Lee [34]	Influence of in-service EFL teacher training programmes on teachers' instructional behaviours and attitudes	122 in-service teachers in Korea	Survey Interviews Reflective journals	Despite the fact the teachers experienced their instructional and attitudinal shifts, such shifts were short-lived, and the wash-back effect of the Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test.
20 Kim [35]	The impact of several in-service training programs on a Korean EFL teacher's beliefs about grammar teaching	1 EFL teacher in Korea	Interview Class observations	The teacher demonstrates no change in her beliefs despite her participation in some training programs about CLT. A main factor hindering the change was the Korean testing systems with excessive focus of grammar and reading comprehension.

### ***3.2. What are the Limitations of the Previous Studies?***

It is evident from Table 1 that most of the studies reviewed reveal certain limitations. First of all, many of the research projects investigating EFL teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices are methodologically limited. Some employed only one technique or method of data collection, such as questionnaire/survey [1] - [3], [5] or interview [4], [5], whereas few studies combined questionnaire and interview instruments [6] - [8]. These instruments, either individually or in combination, are not sufficient to examine the effects of PD programs on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. Therefore, a more appropriate qualitative approach should be required for methodological triangulation using diverse techniques of data collection and analysis [36]. As argued by Borg [7], lacking such triangulation may lead to the low validity of the results and thereby their implications. It seems that Coburn and Kereke avoided this disadvantage.

Secondly, given that some researchers conducted a case study that focused on only one teacher [17], [20] or several teachers [4], [5] to gather information about teachers' beliefs and/or their teaching practices, it would be unlikely for them to generalize their findings to other cases.

Thirdly, some research made an investigation into the impact of a professional development on only teachers' beliefs or on only teachers' instructional practices [5], [10], [13], [17]. As pointed out by Borg [7], a study isolating teachers' beliefs from their classroom practices produces an unnatural separation. Therefore, to deal with this problem, the researcher should deliberately concentrate on measuring the impact of teacher PD on both teachers' beliefs and their class practices. Accordingly, the breadth of the overall findings will be made possible because of this holistic focus.

Finally, to my knowledge, there, currently, exist only a few research projects carried out to evaluate the impact of a PD program on the beliefs of EFL teachers about ELT and their teaching practices from the global context, especially from schools in Vietnam.

### **4. Implications and Conclusion**

In summary, certain contributions to the existing literature regarding patterns of changes in teachers' beliefs about ELT or/and their teaching practices as a result of their active engagements in professional development programs, and major shortcomings have been explored from the systematic review on the previous studies. Specially, the reviewed studies have highlighted certain implications for further research directions in the world as well as in Vietnamese context.

First, methodologically, questionnaire or/and interview was highly favored in many prior studies for a data source suggests that a mixed-methods approach embracing quantitative and qualitative data (e.g., journals and observations) should be adopted to attain triangulation of the data. Second, some reviewed studies merely with a small number of participants implied that future research projects should require a greater sample size that is more likely to enhance the finding generalizations to other contexts. Finally, although research projects pertaining to teacher professional development has aroused substantial attention worldwide and in Vietnam over many decades, there have, to the best of our knowledge, been few studies concerning the impact of a PD program on the beliefs of EFL teachers about ELT or/and their teaching practices in schools in Vietnam until now. Therefore, this research field should be a "fertile ground" for researchers in Vietnam.

Overall, it can be concluded that professional development programs for EFL teachers, to a greater extent, positively affect teachers' beliefs about ELT and their classroom practices, and are, therefore, needed for teachers to grow their teaching profession and enhance learners' learning outcomes. Additionally, it is suggested that further empirical investigations should be delved into this field to benefit researchers, teachers and stakeholders.

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