



**THE ENABLERS AND BARRIERS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
FOR IN-SERVICE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
(EFL) IN THE VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT**

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## ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development (PD) has become increasingly important for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnamese higher education. This is due to the implementation from 2008 of Language Project 2020, aiming to help students use a foreign language independently after graduation. Project 2020 views PD as essential to improve the quality of foreign language teaching. Since 2008, language teacher PD has received considerable attention from Vietnamese policymakers and language teachers including those in HE. However, factors influencing their participation, remain under-investigated.

This qualitative case study has two primary objectives: to understand the current situation of PD for Vietnamese tertiary EFL teacher PD and to identify factors enabling and hindering their engagement in PD. Data sources are national and institutional documents, survey questionnaires for EFL teachers at a Vietnamese university (n=133), focus groups with EFL teachers (n = 35), and individual interviews with managers (n=4) at the same university. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is used as an analytical framework to categorise factors impacting engagement in PD, while self-determination theory (SDT) is used as a tool to assist in the explanation of how those factors motivate or hinder teachers' engagement.

The findings reveal that all stakeholders—policy makers, managers and EFL teachers—acknowledge the significance of PD processes in improving foreign language teachers' professional knowledge and skill, and the quality of their teaching. PD is seen as a political, cultural and educational phenomenon, with Language Project 2020 as a catalyst to significantly foster managers' and EFL teachers' awareness of the necessity for PD.

Teachers' engagement in PD activities is shown to be motivated by: the desire to become better teachers, career satisfaction, and Project 2020's requirements for educational reform. Highlighted PD activities are those supporting teachers to learn and share their experience in groups, such as workshops, training programs, teacher study groups, teaching festivals, and informal sharing and collaborating with colleagues. It is apparent that the range of PD activities for EFL teachers in Vietnamese higher education is considerably influenced by the Vietnamese top-down leadership style and collectivist culture.

All stakeholders consider the most enabling factors for PD as financial support; compulsory attendance; regulations for teacher evaluation and contract renewal; teachers' personal motivation; and recognition and appreciation from colleagues, managers and students.

Prominent inhibitors perceived by managers are inadequate financial support, and teacher-related factors (beliefs, poor awareness of PD, poor expertise, limited access to PD information or age hindrance), whereas the biggest deterrents perceived by EFL teachers are structural factors (work overload, inadequate financial support, and late issue of regulations). There are also differences between teachers' goals in pursuing PD and managers' intentions in planning for it.

These findings highlight the significance of contextual factors in understanding teachers' engagement in PD and the importance of addressing tensions between manager and teacher objectives and conflict between factors impacting teacher engagement in PD—notably between regulations for PD and teachers' excessive workload—as well as payment policy and time constraints. Recommendations are proposed for taking such tensions into consideration when planning for and supporting PD in similar educational contexts.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PD	Professional development
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
HE	Higher Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
TOEIC	Test Of English for International Communication
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
SDT	Self Determination Theory
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
VSTEP	Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency
CFG	Critical Friend Group

## THESIS DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed:

Adelaide, March 2020

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Rationale for the study

Improving teachers' expertise and teaching competence, enhancing students' learning, and guaranteeing the training quality of institutions are activities which commonly fall under the umbrella of professional development (PD). In this study, teacher PD is understood as any formal or informal learning activities that teachers undertake in order to improve their professional knowledge, attitudes and skills, and which make a significant contribution to their own professionalism, their students' learning outcomes and the institution's development. Based on this understanding, PD is not only vital for supporting novice teachers in their beginning years of teaching, but also for providing experienced teachers with the chance to sustainably improve and update their knowledge of the field and modern pedagogical approaches (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). PD is vital because it not only enhances teachers' professional knowledge, teaching practices, expertise, attitudes and characteristics (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Day, 1999; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fullan, 1995; Garet et al., 2016; Joyce, Howey, & Yarger, 1977; Lee, 2013; Nguyen, 2018; Vo & Nguyen, 2009), but it is also argued to make a significant contribution to improvement in student

performance and student achievements (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Guskey, 1986, 2000, 2002b; Harnett, 2012; Hassel, 1999; Nguyen, 2018; Smith, 2015). In addition, PD not only effectively supports an institution to implement educational reforms successfully, but also helps to develop the institution as a whole (Crevola, Hill, & Fullan, 2006; Fullan, 2007a; Guskey, 2002b; Hargreaves, 2003, 2004; Kaplan & Owings, 2004; Linn, Gill, Sherman, Vaughn, & Mixon, 2010; Nguyen, 2018; Scribner, 1999; Tran, 2009; Wideen & Andrews, 1987). Therefore, teacher PD is perceived as a crucial recommendation for high quality education (Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Mizell, 2010).

#### Language policies and their impacts on language teacher PD

The field of language teaching keeps changing rapidly due to change in educational paradigms and trends or language education reforms which leads to changes in curriculum, tests, and student needs (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Consequently, language teachers are in essential need of regular opportunities for participating in PD activities to update their professional knowledge and skills, so that they can respond to all the changes over time. Le (2013, p. 69) argues that “the training of language teachers is not merely the task of trainers at teacher training colleges, which provides teachers with the basic training, but this must be a long process of training, retraining and also self-learning throughout their teaching life”. When participating in PD, in-service teachers can update themselves on the latest knowledge in the field as well as methodologies and the current standards for teaching (Guskey, 2000; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In the current context of Vietnamese education, PD for language teachers has recently become increasingly significant due to the many changes in foreign language policies and

to the national language project 2020 entitled “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2008-2020” (hereafter referred to as Project 2020) (Le, 2013; Nguyen, 2018; Pham, 2014). Project 2020 was approved by the Vietnamese Prime Minister on September 30th, 2008, in an attempt to regulate the quality of foreign language teaching and learning.

The general goals of Project 2020 indicate that most Vietnamese students will be expected to use a foreign language (mainly English) independently by 2020. This project adopts a six-level proficiency framework, modified from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), as an assessment blueprint, and the locally developed language proficiency test, namely Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP), as an assessment tool (Le, 2019a). University students are required to achieve the third level (B1) before their graduation. Foreign language teachers at university are required to achieve C1 (advanced level) to teach English as a subject (English as a smaller part of the wider degree) and C2 (upper advanced level) to teach English as a discipline (English as the focus of the degree). Accordingly, EFL teachers are put under pressure because they have to improve their English proficiency level to meet the standard requirement and reassess their instructional methods to support their students to achieve the required goal of language proficiency before graduation.

EFL teachers at all levels of education throughout the country have had to undergo a number of English tests to assess their language proficiency. The number of teachers who passed the test to meet the English standard requirement was limited. In 2013, just 8% (5 out of 65) of EFL teachers in one multidisciplinary university met the requirement of English proficiency, and about 45% among 319 college English teachers could not meet the

requirement (Nguyen, 2015). Many EFL teachers felt confused and frustrated when they failed to meet the English requirement and were classified as “substandard or unqualified” teachers (Le, 2019a, p. 13). In order to achieve the goals of the national language project, PD for language teachers is therefore of crucial importance. A number of teachers who have not met the English proficiency standard have been retrained by some pivotal foreign language universities that are engaged in Project 2020. In addition, Project 2020 has developed PD programs for English teachers at high school and tertiary level.

PD for English teachers has become a burning issue in Vietnam, attracting the attention of both managers and EFL teachers in educational institutions since the implementation of Project 2020. EFL teachers have been strongly urged to participate in PD activities to improve their language proficiency level and teaching skills, and other skills such as IT skills, and learner assessment skills which are necessary for teaching. This could be the first time they have officially and seriously participated in PD for specific purposes and goals. Before Project 2020, based on the 15 years experience of myself and my colleagues, EFL tertiary teachers were rarely advised about PD or asked to join regular PD activities such as workshops, conferences, researching, writing articles, or teacher study groups. Therefore, EFL teachers found it challenging to decide what activities to follow and how to do them in order to meet the requirements.

### Personal motivation for the study

Working as an English teacher and an education manager at that time, I was understandably involved in the sphere of Project 2020 implementation with ample matters related to teacher’ quality and the quality of student learning outcomes. Increasingly, I became

passionately interested in studying PD for the teachers in my faculty in particular and English teachers in HE in Vietnam in general.

Before Project 2020, I had no clear idea about PD and its significance. However, my awareness of PD has gradually increased throughout my teaching career and my PD path. In 2001, I graduated from the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS), a famous foreign language teacher training university in the North of Vietnam. I started my teaching career at a university in Hanoi two months after graduation with no first-hand experience of teaching in HE. I employed the general knowledge of teaching methodology gained from my study at university and limited experiences of teaching obtained during the 3-month practicum program at a high school in Hanoi. At the early stage of my teaching career, despite the significance of PD in education, the notion of PD was still quite vague in my mind, and it took me more than ten years to be more precise about it and start to get myself involved in PD issues. However, in my defence, this is understandable as the concept of teacher PD or continuing PD was first used in Vietnam in the 1990s (Le, 2018), and teacher PD has only recently become an emerging research field in Vietnam (Nguyen, Phan, & Le, 2019)

*Working as a novice teacher, rarely approaching PD*

Starting my teaching job with little experience in real teaching, I delivered lessons mostly based on my assumptions about pedagogy. Without any induction and tutoring sessions provided, I had to prepare lesson plans, and do all teaching tasks by myself from the beginning. At that time, I worked with the belief that I had to accomplish whatever tasks were assigned to me. I had no idea of reading the literature to learn more about the field, as the internet was not accessible and no other sources of materials for reference were

available, and most importantly, no one surrounding me talked about that pathway to improve our knowledge and skills. We only attended academic meetings to work with each other, discuss and share our own experiences and opinions, and then come to final agreements on all issues related to our teaching jobs. We found those meetings beneficial but insufficient for us to develop our professional knowledge and skills continuously.

The concept of PD first came to me when the teachers in my division were offered an opportunity to attend a PD course delivered by an Australian expert in 2004 after I had been teaching for three years. This course was our first PD training course. We learned a lot from this program and found it beneficial. Over ten years from the start of my teaching career, I had opportunities to engage in only two more training workshops. Regular activities for us to learn from each other were limited to academic meetings and the annual teaching festival. In academic meetings, we focused on all the issues happening in our faculty and division including both administrative and academic jobs. The annual teaching festival provided me with the chance to attend other teachers' lessons and perform my lessons for other teachers to observe and give feedback and comments. At that time, the teaching experience of other senior teachers and feedback on model lessons were both highly practical for me, a novice teacher.

In short, my PD experience was poor. My teaching experience and instructional skills became richer mostly because of my own self-evaluation and consolidation. The term 'professional development' was not regularly mentioned amongst tertiary teachers until the implementation of the National Language Project at the tertiary level in 2013.

The professional development path and the inspiration for this research project

I became more involved in PD when it became an increasingly prevalent issue. As the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, one of the two faculty managers at that time, I acknowledged the significance of managers' support at the beginning of the teacher PD process, so I intended to organize a PD course on English teaching methodology in HE for my teachers in 2013. However, I could not realise my idea because the Rector of ULIS, the institution in charge of developing that training program in Project 2020, indicated that the training course was not yet available.

A number of teachers in my faculty shared that they wanted to attend some PD activities to improve their expertise, but they did not know what, where, and how to start. I realized that PD for English teachers was indispensable, but that, due to a variety of factors, it was not easy for teachers to participate (Le, 2002; Pham, 2007). Also, I am well aware that teachers' wholehearted engagement in PD activities can be seen as the most important factor in the PD process because of their central role as participants. Therefore, motivating teachers to take part in PD activities is regarded as one of the most significant tasks for educational managers to enhance teacher PD. In addition, in order to facilitate teacher PD, I had an urge to investigate why they participate in PD and why they do not, or what factors influence their PD. When those questions are answered, solutions to enhance teacher PD can be discussed and explored.

As previously mentioned, PD for EFL teachers in Vietnam is crucial to foster the quality of English teaching and learning at all levels of education. It is also essential to conduct studies in this research field to identify effective ways to improve the EFL teacher PD process, its quality and factors influencing teacher PD. The current PD literature in

Vietnam reveals that PD for EFL teachers in Vietnam has attracted many researchers' attention. However, these studies mainly focus on aspects such as types of PD programs for English teachers (Nguyen, 1986); teachers' experiences of different PD activities or models for English teachers in Vietnam (Ho, Nakamori, & Ho, 2014; Le, 2018; Nguyen & Mai, 2018; Tran, 2009; Vo & Nguyen, 2009); the needs for EFL teacher PD (Duong, 2003; Le, 2002; Pham, 2001); and the mutual impacts between educational reforms and the form of EFL teacher PD (Tran, 2016). There is no study which primarily investigates the attitudes of English teachers and managers toward the significance of PD and identifies factors impacting EFL teacher PD. Therefore, the present study was carried out in an attempt to explore factors motivating and hindering EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities and to picture the current situation of EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context.

## 1.2 Research questions

The study therefore aims to investigate two main research questions with associated subquestions:

**Research question 1:** What is the current PD situation for EFL teachers in the Vietnamese higher education context?

Q 1.1: How is the significance of PD for EFL teachers perceived by EFL teachers and managers in terms of enhancing teaching quality?

Q 1.2: What are the common PD activities recently undertaken by EFL teachers?

Q 1.3: What are the goals of teachers' engagement in PD activities and managers' goals for planning teacher PD?

**Research question 2:** What are the factors impacting teachers’ engagement in PD activities from teachers’ and managers’ perspectives in the Vietnamese HE context?

Q 2.1: What are the enablers to EFL teachers’ engagement in PD activities?

Q 2.2.: What are the barriers to EFL teachers’ engagement in PD activities?

### 1.3 Significance of the study

As previously presented, there have been no studies mainly investigating factors either motivating or deterring EFL teacher engagement in PD in the Vietnamese HE context from both teachers’ and managers’ perspectives, so this study is novel. As well as making a contribution to knowledge, at the practical level, this study provides an empirical basis for EFL teachers to opt for appropriate professional learning activities and possibly find an effective way to manage their PD process. In addition, managers or policymakers can draw on the findings to develop practical and effective PD policies, creating a productive learning environment for EFL teachers and promoting teachers’ engagement in PD activities in their institutions.

### 1.4 Methodology overview

In order to address the research questions, a qualitative case study approach was adopted, and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was utilized as the theoretical framework in order to draw attention to influences of cultural, historical, structural and social factors on teachers’ engagement in PD activities. Case study enabled “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real life’ context” (Simons, 2009, p. 21). In order to

gain insight into in-service EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context—the case of this study, a multidisciplinary university in the north of Vietnam, was chosen as the research site because of its prominent characteristics regarding English teaching and learning innovations, efforts, and commitments to improving English teaching quality and enhancing EFL teacher PD.

Data for the present study were collected from multiple sources, both primary (questionnaire for EFL teachers, EFL teacher focus groups, and individual interviews with managers) and secondary (institutional and national documents). First, the questionnaire was sent to EFL teachers online, and the result from the survey questionnaire brought about initial suggestions for me to prepare the interview and focus group protocols. Second, semi-structured interviews with four managers and seven focus groups with 35 EFL teachers were conducted. The individual interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 60 minutes, and focus groups lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. All the interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed.

To analyse the collected data, a qualitative content analysis approach was employed with three main phases: preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). After the preparation phase, the organizing phase dealt with coding and creating categories. I started the coding process by generating categories and subcategories based on the research questions and their sub-questions and the theoretical framework, CHAT. In this study, the data from the interviews and focus groups was analysed as the main data, and the data from the questionnaire and documents was then used to triangulate the results of the interviews and focus group data analysis. A more detailed description of the methodology for this study is provided in Chapter 4.

## 1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis is organized into eight chapters.

Chapter 1 has briefly discussed the rationale for this study, the research questions, the significance of this study, the overview of the methodology, and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 details the background information of the study context including the historical, sociocultural, educational features. This chapter also describes the Vietnamese HE sector, the development of English language in the Vietnamese education system, the teaching and learning of the English language, EFL teacher education, and PD for EFL teachers in Vietnam.

Chapter 3 discusses understandings of teacher PD, traditional and newer PD activities, the contribution of PD to positive change among teachers, students, and organizations, and the characteristics of effective PD activities. In addition, factors motivating and hindering teachers' engagement in PD activities are presented. This chapter also provides a brief introduction of PD for language teachers and PD activities for language teachers.

Chapter 4 justifies social constructivism as a paradigm approach for this study based on ontological and epistemological features that are relevant to this particular inquiry. The theoretical frameworks used in this study are also considered in this chapter. The chapter then describes the research design, which utilizes a qualitative case study approach with multiple data sources: documents, survey questionnaires, semi-structured focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Data collection, the data analysis approach, and ethical considerations are also clarified in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the findings for the first research question on the current situation of PD for EFL teachers in the Vietnamese HE context using all four data sources previously mentioned. The findings for the three sub-questions, focusing on the significance of PD to teaching quality, PD activities recently taken by EFL teachers, and teachers' goals for engaging in PD and managers' goals for planning teacher PD, are specifically illustrated and discussed in four sections of this chapter. The description of initial outcomes of teacher PD is also presented.

Chapter 6 indicates the findings for research question 2, particularly sub-question 2.1, focusing on the enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities using the data collected from EFL teachers and managers. The enabling factors to teachers' participation in PD activities were categorized using a CHAT framework. The chapter also presents a discussion of enabling factors based on the existing literature and the Vietnamese culture and HE context.

Chapter 7 reports the findings on barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities, which refers to subquestion 2.2 from both teachers' and managers' perspectives. Similarly to Chapter 6, this chapter also groups hindering factors using the CHAT framework and discusses the finding in comparison with the literature, the Vietnamese culture, and context.

Chapter 8 makes further discussion on teachers' awareness of PD and PD activities, the similarities and discrepancies between teachers' goals of engaging in PD activities and managers' goals for planning teacher PD. A further discussion of factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities is also made using self-determination theory (SDT). This chapter concludes the thesis with the limitations, contributions, and recommendations arising from the study.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY IN VIETNAM

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### Chapter overview

The present study focuses on factors impacting PD for EFL teachers in the Vietnamese HE context. Therefore, it is essential to understand the cultural, historical, and educational background of this context. Vietnamese history, cultural values, leadership style, and the

Vietnamese HE system are briefly introduced in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Section 2.3 presents three key issues related to English teaching and learning: the history and development of English as a foreign language in Vietnam, the influence of globalization on Vietnamese HE and the roles of English, and the quality of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam. Finally, section 2.4 discusses factors influencing the quality of EFL pre-service teacher education, which make PD for in-service EFL teachers even more crucial. The last section also discusses the importance of PD for EFL teachers and succinctly illustrates the situation of EFL teacher PD in Vietnam in the light of the current educational reforms.

## 2.1. Vietnam: history, people and culture

### 2.1.1. Vietnamese history

Vietnam is a country with more than 4000 years of history which has experienced a number of ups and downs during its development. Some historical events have significantly influenced Vietnamese society in terms of the economy, HE, and foreign language policies (Fry, 2009). Those events and their impacts are discussed as follows.

#### Before the “Doi moi” policy

From 111 BCE to 938 CE, Vietnam was under Chinese colonization. During the period of Chinese feudal domination, education in Vietnam was not developed (Crites, 2005; Sullivan, 1996). Classes were only available for descendants of Chinese ruling mandarins and local notables (Dang, 2006). This situation in Vietnamese education stayed the same until 939 CE when Ngo Quyen won the battle in the Bach Dang River, and defeated the invaders. This was the first time in almost a thousand years that the Vietnamese people had enjoyed national independence. The Chinese domination of nearly a thousand years had extended a significant influence on the educational philosophy in Vietnam, where

Confucian moral philosophy and principles were highly appreciated in the feudal education system.

After the proclamation of national independence in 939 CE, education in Vietnam significantly developed, although school was still solely for the upper-classes and scholar-officials, known as mandarins, who were considered as the upper echelon of society at that time. A number of scholars and intellectuals were trained and provided the national and local administrative systems with competent officials and administrators. Additionally, many scientists, historians, teachers, doctors and writers who made a significant contribution to the development of the country were trained and qualified in this period (Dang, 2006). Confucian philosophy acted as a guide to set up the moral foundation for Vietnamese society and had a significant impact on teaching and learning methods and education focuses. However, Dang (2006) states that Confucian scholars held to a conservative ideology that obstructed innovation trends and held back social development, and educational content was didactic, theoretical, and stereotyped.

In 1858, after nearly a thousand years of independence, Vietnam was colonized by the French (Karnow, 1983). The French colonialists imposed their educational system to replace the feudal one (Crites, 2005; Sullivan, 1996). This led to the end of Confucianism as the state ideology, though it was still used as a code of moral conduct by the Vietnamese (V. C. Le, 2011). The French policy of “obscurantism” meant that Vietnamese education was limited. Only a few French-style institutions were established to train technical workers for the colonial economy (Wright, 2002), and only a limited number of people were offered opportunities to study to assist the French colonial administration. As a result, 95% of the Vietnamese population was illiterate. Although French education was extended,

and a branch of the Alliance Française was developed to promote the learning of French (Wright, 2002), only a small number of Vietnamese spoke French at the level of servants, employees, and workers, and the majority could only use limited vocabulary and simple syntax or so-called Vietnamese/French pidgin (Wright, 2002). The language officially used as a medium of instruction at all levels of education from primary to tertiary was Vietnamese. The domination of French lasted for nearly 100 years with a short period of Japanese occupation (1940-1945) until 1954.

From 1955, as a result of the Geneva Agreement, Vietnam was temporarily divided into two states: the Socialist North managed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the Capitalist South managed by a pro-France Government (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2008). Moreover, during this time, with American intervention, the North–South Vietnam war took place (Karnow, 1983). Accordingly, there existed two parallel educational systems: the national democratic education system in the North allied with the Soviet Union and the education system led by South Vietnam’s government supported by the United States. Consequently, higher education in the North was influenced by the Soviet Union and was centralised, narrowly specialised and theory-based (Pham & Fry, 2004a; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008), while higher education in the South was strongly influenced by the USA and was practical and focused on developing the economy (Pham & Fry, 2004a). Additionally, the foreign languages promoted in these two parts of Vietnam were different. While Russian and Chinese were adopted as the main foreign languages in schools and tertiary institutions in North Vietnam, English and French were selected as the main foreign languages in the South.

The North–South Vietnam war finally ended in 1975; North Vietnam and South Vietnam were united, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in 1976. In the late 1970s, the diplomatic relationships between Vietnam and some other countries were badly influenced and even damaged due to the involvement of Vietnam in the Cambodian war to help “stop the genocide of the Pol Pot regime” (Wright, 2002, p. 237) and to protect the Vietnamese border from Khmer Rouge incursions. Specifically, China started a lightning war on the border of Vietnam in 1979, which resulted in the Vietnamese-Chinese diplomatic relationship ceasing for 12 years from 1979 until 1991. In addition, the US-led trade embargo imposed on Vietnam in 1979 prevented other Western countries from providing financial and technical support to Vietnam. This trade embargo was not lifted until 1994. In terms of education, when the North and South of Vietnam were reunified and supported by the Soviet Union, the higher education system was modeled on the Soviet Union’s education system (Fry, 2009; George, 2010; Le, 1991). The educational focus was heavily theoretical and unable to produce the skilled workforce required by the labour market (Pham & Fry, 2004a). In short, after the war, the country’s economy was heavily damaged, and then with the Soviet-style economic management, the economy was utterly stagnant (V. C. Le, 2011).

In the late 1980s, globalization led to great changes in all aspects of society, including culture (Pieterse, 1995), social networks (Castells, 1996), and communication and transport (Robertson, 1995). Additionally, global economics had a significant influence, being considered “a tidal wave sweeping over the world, crushing local—including national—uniqueness” (Robertson & Khondker, 1998, p.30). At that time, Vietnam closed its doors to the outside world and became one of the world’s five poorest countries (Glewwe, 2004). In

an attempt to respond to the phenomenon of globalization and mitigate its severe social and economic effect, Vietnam and its government then adopted a number of reforms in the economic sector (Bui, 1995; Pham, 2011).

After the 1986 introduction of the “Doi moi” policy

The *Doi moi* policy (the economic renovation) started in 1986 and brought a new life to the country’s economy (Le, 2007). By ending the closed-door policy and introducing the *Doi moi* policy, Vietnam expressed its desire to collaborate with other countries, both regionally and worldwide. When the *Doi moi* policy began, the centrally planned economy was replaced by a market-oriented one, and a number of significant policies were changed in many areas, including the state economic sector and the foreign trade and investment sector (Glewwe, 2004; Pham & Fry, 2004a).

Nationally, ineffective state-owned enterprises were closed, and more autonomy was granted to the remaining enterprises. As a result, the central government deficit was reduced from 8.4 % in the state sector to 1.7 % in 1992 (Glewwe, 2004). A multi-sectoral commodity economy was developed under a market mechanism with state control. This led to the noticeable improvement of all services in terms of both quantity and quality. Industry and investment were considerably improved as well, and the production of consumer goods increased by 14% to 15% a year (Pham & Fry, 2002).

Internationally, after the foreign investment law was implemented in 1988, more than 40 countries directly invested in Vietnam with registered licensed capital of over US\$4 billion (Pham, 2011). This meant that Vietnamese people could have the opportunity to choose both domestic and imported goods in the market (Le, 2003). The policy changes provided

Vietnam with opportunities to join in the international economy (Glewwe, 2004). Vietnam became a member of many regional and international organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1995, the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1996, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006. In the 1990s, Vietnam signed 39 bilateral investment treaties and 26 treaties for the avoidance of double taxation on income and capital (Pham, 2000). In 2001, Vietnam signed a bilateral trade agreement with the United States, the “solo balancer of power” in many world organizations (Tehrani & Tehrani, 1997, p. 147). In 2015, Vietnam had economic relations with more than 220 countries in the world (Quynh Hoa, 2015).

As a result of the economic changes, a number of significant changes in the education system, especially the higher education system, occurred in Vietnam. The changes resulted in increasing enrolments at all levels of education. According to Nguyen (2002), the Vietnamese government’s statistics of net enrolments at all educational levels between 1993 and 1998 increased from 87% to 91% at primary (grades 1 to 5, aged between 6-11 years), from 30% to 62% at lower secondary (grades 6 to 9, aged between 12-15 years), from 7% to 29 % at upper secondary (grades 10 to 12, aged between 16-18 years); and, most significantly for this thesis, tripled from 3% to 9% in higher education (aged between 18- 21 years).

### 2.1.2. Vietnamese Culture

The history of Vietnamese development shows that Vietnam relied on and was significantly impacted by its Chinese and French colonists for a long time before its current Communist one-party rule. As a result, the Vietnamese culture was not only influenced by different factors including the country’s geographic features and the people’s living conditions, but

also by Chinese cultural values from Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Nguyen, 2002; Tran, 2008), and Western cultural values through the period of French domination and globalisation (Pham & Fry, 2004a). In order to fully understand the factors that motivate or hinder EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context, it is crucial to understand Vietnamese cultural values affecting activities of teaching and learning in Vietnamese education. The following section will discuss some related cultural values including collectivism, and respect for knowledge and teachers.

### Collectivism

In general, collectivism is in opposition to individualism (Hofstede, 1980). Collectivist cultures are group-oriented (Gudykunst, 2004), but individualism emphasizes personal goals, with less concern and emotional attachment to the in-groups (Park, Rehg, & Lee, 2005; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). The collectivist culture in Vietnam has been highlighted by many researchers (Borton, 2000; Ellis, 1995; Pham, 1999). Unlike Western culture, which highly values the individual, “Vietnamese culture emphasizes the community” (Borton, 2000, p. 21).

The collectivist culture in Vietnam was the result of the influence of Confucian norms and values, which strongly emphasize the collective community in which each person is not an independent individual (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). Although many things have changed, the spirit of community is still imprinted in Vietnamese people’s minds (Borton, 2000; Ellis, 1995; Pham, 1999). The spirit of community working enables teachers to support and learn from each other when they are engaged in group activities. The critical values of collectivism in terms of organizational culture are loyalty, harmony, cooperation, unity and conformity (Hofstede, 1991; Park et al., 2005; Truong, 2013). In Vietnam,

collectivism is manifested in different corners of Vietnamese people's lives, such as the management of groups, high appreciation of group loyalty, strong relationships in groups, and face-saving (Phan, 2017). As collectivists, Vietnamese people often look for harmony in their community and expect each individual in the community to focus on common benefits (Nguyen, 2002).

The country's geographic features and Vietnamese people's living condition makes a significant contribution to the formulation of collectivism for the Vietnamese. Like other Asian countries, Vietnam mostly depends on its wet-rice agriculture, which is strongly influenced by nature (To, 2010b). As a result, Vietnamese people became fully aware that cooperating is the best way to protect their crops from frequent bad weather and many unexpected natural calamities in tropical areas such as floods and storms (To, 2010b). The sense of collectivism was gradually formed as people built up their own community bonds (Nguyen, 2002). The Vietnamese usually use 'we' as the personal pronoun when stating a personal idea, and they feel more comfortable working as a team member (Burns, 1998; Phan, 2008). This may explain why Vietnamese teachers often like working in groups or prefer to participate in PD activities in a group.

#### Respect for knowledge and teachers

Confucian philosophy has had a significant influence on teaching and learning in Vietnam. Vietnamese people tend to have a great love for knowledge and respect and admiration for educated people (Dang, 2009; He et al., 2011; Li et al., 2011; London, 2011; Ngo, 2015; Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006), which are features of Confucianism. In Vietnam, knowledge and education are considered more valuable than wealth and material success, and can significantly change people's values and their lives. Vietnamese people strongly

believe that knowledge is the key that helps people to create everything (Tran, 2006).

Vietnamese people are likely to admire and respect poor and educated people rather than those who are rich but uneducated.

In Vietnamese society, people associated with knowledge such as scholars and teachers have been given great respect, not only by learners but by other people as well. According to Confucian philosophy, teachers are not only teachers but also models of correct behavior for students to respect and follow (Confucius, 1947; Shim, 2008; Wang, 2003). As stated in the Vietnamese Education Law (Vietnamese Government, 2005), teachers must keep learning to constantly improve themselves in order to set shining and inspiring examples to learners. According to Nguyen and Mcinnis (2002), teachers can be expected to be responsible for students' intellectual and moral lives, and teachers are often placed in the most honourable position, which even precedes the father. As a result, a Vietnamese teacher is expected to be a knowledgeable person who should know almost everything, and can answer all questions from students. This expectation is likely to motivate teachers to engage in on-going professional development to satisfy their students' need.

### 2.1.3. Leadership styles

In Vietnam, leadership styles can have a significant impact on how managers influence their teachers' working and learning habits, and the way in which they share their opinions with their managers (Truong, 2013). Vietnamese leadership styles are primarily affected by the Vietnamese political structure and Confucian values.

Vietnamese leadership culture is significantly influenced by the Vietnamese political structure. The Communist Party of Vietnam is the Party that operates the Government and

State of Vietnam. Particularly, the Communist Party guides the national policy-making process, and consensus is always considered a crucial factor in its decision-making process. Vietnam's decision-making process is theoretically described as consensus-based (Lucius, 2009). However, it is questionable whether true consensus is ever reached in Vietnam, as only those inside the decision-making process know if legitimate issues have been considered and addressed (Lucius, 2009). Lucius (2009) adds that people who are involved in the meeting and decision-making process seem to be advised about the final choice beforehand. In other words, decisions are made by a few leaders in advance of the actual process of consensus by the many.

Vietnamese leadership style is also strongly affected by Chinese Confucian values. As a result, the power distance in Vietnam is high, and the culture of hierarchical orders is accepted. Power distance refers to the differences in status and power which are perceived as natural and legitimate in a society (Truong et al., 2017). Power distance is a cultural factor that can distinguish different societies (Hofstede, 1991). The power distance or hierarchical culture posits people in different positions with different roles and different power to control the situation. The hierarchical structure has an impact on Vietnamese families, organizations, and society (Borton, 2000; Jamieson, 1993; Pham, 1999).

Confucian principles enforce absolute respect and obedience of subordinates to superiors and subjects to master, such as the obedience of children to parents, wives to husbands, and students to teachers. Respect and obedience are strict principles to build up the relations between people of different positions and roles (Truong et al., 2017). The power distance or hierarchical order in leadership style in Vietnam is illustrated in Article 13, Decree 71/1998 of the Vietnamese constitution (Vietnamese Government, 1998):

Trong khi thi hành nhiệm vụ, công vụ, cán bộ, công chức phải phục tùng sự chỉ đạo và hướng dẫn của cấp trên. Cán bộ, công chức có quyền trình bày ý kiến, đề xuất việc giải quyết những vấn đề thuộc phạm vi trách nhiệm của mình khác với ý kiến của người phụ trách trực tiếp, nhưng vẫn phải chấp hành sự chỉ đạo của người phụ trách trực tiếp, đồng thời có quyền bảo lưu ý kiến và báo cáo lên cấp trên.

[While on duty, staff and employees must comply with the directives and instructions of seniors and leaders. Staff and employees have the right to express their ideas and propose solutions which are different from the opinions of the person in charge to the problems within the scope of their responsibilities, but they still have to follow the directives of the person-in-charge and state their opinions to their higher leader later.]

The features of the Vietnamese leadership style are also presented in a study by Truong (2013) which focuses on school leadership in the Vietnamese context. This study applied a qualitative research approach that employs four methods of data collection: interviews (individual and focus-group interviews), observations, document analysis and questionnaires. The participants were three principals and four vice-principals and teachers from three schools. It is illustrated in this study that the administrative structure is hierarchical, and most of the principals held the dual positions of principal and school secretary, even though these should be separated to balance power and avoid the abuse of power by school leaders. In addition, the study also shows that the prominent leadership style in Vietnamese schools is autocratic and dominant, and control and hierarchy are typical in exercising power. The leaders tend to utilize their positional power to “manage, lead and run their schools” or to “impose their ideas on staff to establish order and obedience” (Truong, 2013, p. 193). Due to this leadership style, the staff’s habit of obedience becomes entrenched. School leaders mainly make decisions, and staff are expected to obey their leaders’ decisions strictly. It is also emphasized that compliance and

obedience are viewed as indispensable features of effectiveness in the process of exercising power, and it is obligatory or compulsory for subordinates to show obedience and compliance towards their leaders. As a result, there is a tendency for teachers to show obedience to leaders' decisions "even though they might not completely agree with their leaders" (Truong, 2013, p. 241). The teachers explained that obedience was to show consensus, but obedience and consensus should not mean that they agree with a decision. In summary, as can be seen from the findings of this study, school leaders are viewed as decision makers, and teachers are viewed as decision implementers. Teachers are not involved in the process of decision making, but are required to strictly follow what their leaders ask them to do.

In summary, based on the political structure under one-party operation, Confucian culture, and an empirical study of leadership style in Vietnam it is apparent that the leadership style in Vietnam is top-down. The decision-making process is based on a group of leaders who are regarded as superior thinkers. The subordinates or staff are seen as the doers and are required to respect and fully comply with their superiors' decisions.

## 2.2. Higher education in Vietnam

### Before the "Doi moi" policy in 1986

Before 1986, Vietnamese higher education is said to have been profoundly foreign reliant (Harman, Hayden, & Pham, 2010; Pham & Fry, 2004b; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008).

Higher education in Vietnam began its history in 1076 when the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu Quoc Tu Giam), the first higher education institution, was built under the Ly dynasty in feudal times, resembling China's higher education sector (Pham & Fry, 2004b). From its beginning to 1858, this Royal College was mainly accessible to 'the sons of dignitaries' in

the feudal dynasty (Nguyen, 2002; Sloper & Le, 1995), and exclusively used to train officials for the feudal regime.

During the French colonial period from 1858 to 1954, only a few French-style universities and colleges whose enrolments did not exceed 1000 students, were established to train technical workers for the colonial economy (Dang, 2006; Wright, 2002). Higher Education in this period was primarily based on French programs and content, and focused on three main areas: teacher training, medicine and pharmacy, and the sciences (Dang, 2009).

Courses at the university were delivered in both Vietnamese and French. However, Vietnamese gradually became the academic language, and French materials were translated into Vietnamese and adapted to the local curricula (Dang, 2009).

From 1954 to 1975, Vietnam was divided, with the North allied with the Soviet Union and the South supported by the United States. The medium of instruction in higher education in the North was Vietnamese and French until 1966 and French, Vietnamese and English in the South (Pham & Fry, 2004b). With around 50 universities and colleges, including the newly established institutions and those established during French colonization, enrolment in higher education was still limited to a small number of people, notably children of wealthy families or political state officials (Dang, 2009; Pham & Fry, 2004a; Pham, 2006; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). According to Pham (1999), up to 1975, around 200,000 out of the population of over 4 million were enrolled at all higher education institutions.

After liberation and independence in 1975 when the North and the South of Vietnam were reunified and supported by the Soviet Union, the higher education system was strongly influenced by the Soviet systems and mostly focused on mono-disciplinary institutions

(Dang, 2009; Fry, 2009; George, 2010; Le, 1991). The universities' curricula and programs were mostly modeled on those of the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, as a number of teachers were trained in Eastern bloc countries (Dang, 2009). The only program which was still modeled after the French education system was medicine. Between 1975 and 1986, only people with outstanding academic records or a good political background could enroll in higher education (Ngo, 2015). Besides Vietnamese as the primary language of instruction at universities, Russian and Chinese became the second medium of instruction (Dang, 2009). The educational focus was heavily theoretical and could not meet the need of the labour market for a skilled workforce (Pham & Fry, 2004a). The weakness of higher education in Vietnam was vividly demonstrated after the implementation of the "Doi moi" policy in 1986, as the requirements from the labour market were even more demanding. As a result, it was impossible for the higher education sector to produce the highly-skilled workforce that Vietnam's economy and society demanded. In an attempt to mitigate this mismatched situation, the Vietnamese government carried out a number of reforms for higher education in 1986.

#### From 1986 to date

Vietnamese higher education has made an essential contribution to the national economic development and the industrialization and modernization process of the country (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2009a). Higher education has provided millions of well-qualified labour resources that enhance socio-economic development, greatly facilitate the international globalization process, and ensure the success of the national modernization and industrialization process. Only after 1986 did the Vietnamese government independently develop a HE system for the country. In the 20-year reforms from 1986 to

2005, the Vietnamese government attempted to carry out a number of significant reforms in the HE sector (Pham, 2011).

The first notable change is that the government started to diversify the availability of HE training and the types of degrees offered by institutions (Fry, 2009; Hayden & Lam, 2010; World Bank, 2008). Before 1986, all HE institutions in Vietnam were specialised universities, focusing on a single area of studies such as forestry, economics or law. Today, many institutions are multidisciplinary, offering a wide range of academic programs (Fry, 2009). Fry (2009) classifies Vietnamese universities and colleges into seven basic types: (1) Specialised universities, (2) Multidisciplinary universities, (3) Open universities, (4) Private universities which are not state-funded, (5) Public junior colleges, offering 2-3 year practical curricula in fields like teacher training or banking (Nguyen & Truong, 2007, as cited in Fry, 2009), (6) Private junior colleges, and (7) International universities. The diversification of HE institutions resulted in a dramatically increased number of HE institutions and university students across Vietnam. The number of tertiary institutions in 2009 was nearly four times as many as in 1987 (376 institutions and 101 institutions respectively) (MOET, 2009a). Accordingly, the number of university students has continuously increased, from 34,110 students in 1987 to 503,618 students in 2009 (MOET, 2009a) and 2.36 million in 2015 (Le, 2017). The number of students and institutions continues to go up, with approximately 2.12 million students in 445 institutions in 2015 (Trines, 2017). According to the Vietnamese Prime Minister's decision 37/2013/QĐ-TTg (2013), by 2020 Vietnam aimed to have up to 460 tertiary institutions, including 224 universities and 236 colleges. However, based on MOET's statistics, in 2017 there were

already 235 universities throughout the country, more than 10 universities above the planned number (Thuy Linh, 2018).

The next significant change is that state-owned HE institutions ceased to be fully funded by the government, and many different actors became financially involved in the sector (Fry, 2009; Pham, 1998). Before the reform, there existed only the form of state-owned and state-fully-funded institutions. After the reform, the public institutions were allowed to levy tuition fees (Hayden & Lam, 2010), and to charge for other goods and services sold to the public (George, 2010; Kelly, 2000).

Since 1986, significant progress has been made in the HE system, including increasing the size and diversity of HE institutions. However, the quality is variable and considered to be inadequate in comparison to international standards, and some areas, such as programs, curricula, teaching methods, academic staff qualifications, and physical infrastructure, display weaknesses (Harman et al., 2010). Since 2005, Vietnam's HE system has been significantly influenced by globalization and continues to change (Pham & Fry, 2004a).

In 2006, when Vietnam became a member of the World Trade Organization, HE was required to prepare an internationally competitive labour force. As a result, the government promulgated the Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA) for the period of 2006 to 2020, with its vision of what the HE system should become in the next 15 years. Its main goal was to prepare Vietnamese HE to attain an advanced level by regional and international standards, highly competitive and appropriate to the socialist-oriented market mechanism by 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2005a). There are two significant areas emphasized in

HERA — the internationalisation of the HE system in Vietnam, and the development and standardization of academic staff.

Internationalisation in HE can bring both opportunities and challenges. Firstly, Vietnamese higher institutions could be offered opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from other institutions in the world. It was hoped this would lead to quality improvement in Vietnam's HE institutions (Le, 2008; Pham & Fry, 2004a). On the other hand, Vietnamese HE has had to face a number of challenges. According to Pham and Fry (2004a), it is difficult for Vietnam to satisfy the international level for quality of teaching and learning, learning and teaching facilities, and training programs. This means that it is impossible for the Vietnamese HE “product” to be competitive in the global market. A number of researchers (Di Gropello, 2007; Lam, 2011; Le & Barnard, 2009; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008a) have emphasized that tertiary students' low level of English proficiency is the main factor that hinders them from international training programs and accessing available sources in the outside world, as they are mostly written in English (Crystal, 2003; Hoang, 2014). Students' poor skills in English can be considered one of the major weaknesses of Vietnamese HE.

In addition, academic staff need to improve as they do not meet standards required by globalization and internationalization. In 2012, about 63% of academic staff in HE had postgraduate qualifications, but primarily Masters degrees (46%), and only 14% had achieved a doctoral degree (Trines, 2017). According to MOET statistics, in 2018, the number of academic staff in HE increased to nearly 75,000, with 27% holding a doctoral degree and nearly 60% holding a Masters degree (MOET, 2019). Additionally, academic staff found it challenging to engage in on-going PD due to a number of barriers such as

high teaching loads, high student numbers, lack of facilities, and lack of financial support (Le, 2002; Pham, 2001; World Bank, 2008). Consequently, academic staff rarely engage in research activities like writing journal articles or other kinds of publications and have limited access to other PD activities to update professional knowledge in their own field, including both teaching methods and academic knowledge (World Bank, 2008). As a result, teaching methods remain poor and do not focus on practical skills and career orientation. The government proposed that by 2020, at least 60% of academic staff hold a Masters degree, and at least 35 percent have a doctoral degree. It is vital for HE institutions to invest in the development of their academic staff to achieve high-quality status, and thus also increase the learning outcomes for their students.

In summary, significant historical events, the country's economic innovation, and globalization have greatly influenced the Vietnamese HE system. In 2007, when Vietnam could have access to the international market as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Vietnamese students' and graduates' unsatisfactory English proficiency was one of the biggest challenges influencing their involvement. Vietnamese students' limited level of English proficiency is attributed to a number of reasons and one significant reason is EFL teachers' poor and inappropriate teaching methods such as traditional form-focused instruction rather than interactive teaching approaches (Le, 2013; Le, 2007), teachers' limited ability in classroom management (Nguyen, Warren, & Fehring, 2014); and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011). In order to understand why EFL teachers' teaching could not meet the requirement of HE reform and could not adequately support students to achieve a good level of English

proficiency, it is necessary to look at the broader context of EFL teacher education and PD in Vietnam.

## 2.3. English teaching and learning in Vietnam

### 2.3.1. English as a foreign language in Vietnam

“Foreign language teaching in Vietnam has strong political, economic, and social bearings” (Le, 2007, p. 168). Amongst a number of foreign languages having been taught in Vietnam, Chinese, French, Russian, and English are the four which have been prominent at different periods of the country’s history.

Chinese and Russian were the most prominent languages during the anti-American war from 1954 to 1975, as Vietnam received significant military and civilian support from China and the former Soviet Union (Nguyen, 2011; Pham, 2014). The use of Chinese then dropped away and it was considered the language of the enemy because of a land invasion into Vietnam by China in the late 1970s. Russian became the most popular foreign language in Vietnam after 1975 due to the import of technologies from the Soviet Union and to policies on sending a number of scholars, professionals, politicians, and military officers to the Soviet Union for further study (Le, 2007). The targets set for foreign language education at high school in these early years were 60% studying Russian, 25% studying English and 15% studying French (Denham, 1992). Russian was placed in the first option of foreign languages until the early 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed (Pham, 2014).

After the country’s unification in 1975, French was reintroduced in Vietnam when Vietnam was recognized as a member of the Francophone zone in 1979 (Pham, 2014). During this

period of time, English and French were the most popular foreign languages in Vietnam. In the post-1986 period, when the Vietnamese government started implementing its open-door policy to pave the way for increasing investments in Vietnam from other countries in the world, many more foreigners came to Vietnam, so there was an increasing demand to use English as a means of international communication. As a result, “English language fever” (Le, 2007) was created, especially in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and English became the preferred foreign language in Vietnam (Bui, 2005; Denham, 1992; Do, 2006; Wright, 2002). The status of English was further improved when the Prime Minister, in the 422/TTg Order of 1994, required government officials to be able to use at least one foreign language, mainly English, to interact directly with foreigners. Since then, English has become the most prominent foreign language in Vietnam.

### 2.3.2. Impact of globalisation on the roles of English and foreign language policy in Vietnam

In a globalised context, a country’s HE institutions should meet international standards for quality of teaching and learning, learning and teaching facilities, and training programs, to be competitive in the global market (Pham & Fry, 2004a). Pham and Fry (2004a) argued that it is difficult for Vietnam to meet these standards because its HE system has a number of weaknesses. Of these weaknesses, a number of researchers (Di Gropello, 2007; Lam, 2011; Le, 2004; Le & Barnard, 2009) have highlighted that Vietnamese students’ lack of proficiency in the English language is a particular hindrance (K. Harman & Nguyen, 2010). When parents and students lose their trust in domestic education, an increasing number of wealthy families desire to send their children to English speaking countries to study, to master content knowledge and English language skills (Le, 2017, 2019a).

English is identified as a global language which is used as a medium of communication within international organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Crystal, 1997). The English language plays a significant role in the development of the Vietnamese economy in particular and in the development of the country in general (Pham, 2014; To, 2010a). English may help Vietnam to promote international relationships and economic cooperation (To, 2010a). The increasing significance of English in the political, economic, and educational contexts gradually made English one of the major concerns of all stakeholders in the educational system such as educational managers, educators, students, and their parents. Consequently, “English language fever” developed throughout the country (Le, 2019a, p. 9)

Acknowledging the importance of English, Vietnam has highly valued the role of English in the education system and human resources employment policy. The Vietnamese government regards English as the most important foreign language at all levels of education in Vietnam (Lam, 2011; Nguyen, 2011), and as a result, English has become a compulsory subject from primary school to university. The English programs for students at all levels were reformed with many more hours of English lessons added to the English curriculum (Hoang, 2008a; Le, 2013). In addition, English is one of the six national examinations that students have to pass to be awarded the High School Certificate (Hoang, 2008a). At the tertiary level, as stated in the prescription of the Ministry of Education and Training, 180 hours of foreign language are allotted over three semesters, but the foreign language hours have been increased up to 240 hours in some universities (Le, 2007). In addition, an English requirement has been set for undergraduates and postgraduates before

their graduation (Vietnamese Government, 2008). Undergraduates must achieve a TOEFL score of 400 points, and postgraduates must have a TOEFL score of 450 points for Masters level and 500 points for doctoral level (MOET, 2009b). Furthermore, English has become an essential requirement for Vietnamese learners and professionals to study abroad or study at home. The most challenging requirement for students to meet if they want to be granted a scholarship is achieving good proficiency in English (Phan, 2009). English is also essential for students who are studying science and technology, as the scientific literature is mostly written in English and scientific conferences are usually conducted in English as well (Silvera et al., 2014).

English proficiency also has a significant impact on employment opportunities, both in the domestic and international labour markets (Phan, 2009). Besides good skills, one crucial requirement that employers seek in their job candidates is proficiency in English (Do, 2006; S. T. Le, 2011; Phan, 2009). Employers consider English as an essential criterion in their recruitment checklist, and most companies use a compulsory English test for those seeking job promotion (Tran, 2017). In addition, Vietnamese industry has become increasingly important, attracting mainly foreign investment and technical assistance (General Statistical Office, 2006). According to Silvera et al. (2014), 65% of students in that study chose the industry sector to work after graduation. Consequently, Vietnam needs a more English-competent workforce to work in science and engineering to learn modern techniques, and to understand manuals and instructions written in English (Phan, 2009; Silvera et al., 2014).

### 2.3.3. English teaching and learning in Vietnam

After English re-emerged as the leading foreign language, the number of students studying English increased dramatically. The number of students opting for English as a foreign

language accounts for about 97% (Do, 2000). According to statistical figures in MOET (2006 as cited in Le, 2007 ), 93% of tertiary students studied English, but only 3%, 2%, and 1.5% selected French, Russian, and Chinese respectively. The boom in English learners was met by a severe shortage of English teachers. To mitigate this problem, extension (tai chuc) English language courses were offered to those who could not pass the national university entrance examination (Le, 2007). These courses then provided local schools with many English teachers. Additionally, there was a redundancy of Russian teachers who had been sent to the Soviet Union to study. Many of those Russian teachers switched to studying English in evening or extension classes and then became English teachers (Pham, 2014). The quality of English teachers was therefore very poor, and this significantly contributed to the low quality of English teaching and learning at all levels of education in Vietnam.

At the tertiary level, despite a much more significant role for English in the foreign language teaching program for the last few decades, positive results of English teaching and learning are still rare (Hoang, 2008a, 2013; Tran, 2013). The teaching of English in Vietnamese universities is still ineffective and disappointing (Tran, 2013) and a number of undergraduates do not meet the requirements of recruiters due to their low levels of English proficiency (Le, 2013). Hoang (2008b) revealed that 50% of the students in his research failed to communicate in English in simple conversations. In Do's study (2012), approximately 90% of the participants did poorly on the Test of English for International Communication (TOIEC) and scored 360-370 of 990 points, which fell well below employers' minimum requirement of 550 points.

The poor English teaching quality can be attributed to several reasons noted by a number of researchers, such as overly large class size (Hoang, 2008a; Le, 2007;. Pham, 2014); lack of authentic context for language study (Le, 2007; To, 2010b); outdated teaching methodology focusing on form rather than interactive teaching approaches (Le, 2007, 2017); hierarchical relationship between teachers and students (Tran, 2013a); low English levels of the majority of students when entering university (Nguyen, 2007); teachers' limited ability in classroom management (Nguyen et al., 2014); and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011). Le (2007) states that lack of well-trained teaching staff and lack of support in intensive instruction and supplementary resources are two main reasons for the weakness of English language education in Vietnam. In many areas of Vietnam, English teachers were not well trained in the past, and recently they have only had a few chances to be retrained (Le, 2013). In addition, the majority of English tests were paper tests which were composed of only multiple-choice questions and did not include listening, speaking, and writing skills (Le, 2019a). The English tests have been designed to recheck students' knowledge of grammar rules, vocabulary, structures, and reading comprehension (Hoang, 2008b; Le, 2019a). As a result, there is a tendency for English teachers to focus on teaching grammar and sentence patterns and vocabulary separately from real contexts merely to prepare their students for the paper exam (To, 2010b; Tran, 2013a). This may partly explain why students cannot use English to communicate in real situations.

## 2.4. EFL teacher education and professional development

### 2.4.1. EFL teacher education

The literature indicates that the quality of EFL teacher training is affected by different issues related to the teacher training process—EFL student teachers' English proficiency, EFL teacher educators, and the curriculum.

Firstly, EFL student teachers' limited level of English proficiency is a significant challenge. In Vietnam, students who want to enroll in EFL teacher training institutions have to pass a competitive national entrance examination including three tests of English, math, and Vietnamese literature. However, the English paper cannot test all language skills and systems; it merely tests the candidates' knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, and reading and writing skills. Although the candidates have undertaken more than 700 periods (equal to 525 hours) of EFL learning at school before entering EFL teacher training institutions, their English proficiency at the beginning of their student life is usually only equivalent to elementary level (Hoang, 2001). Moreover, students have very varied levels of English proficiency due to their different backgrounds and English learning experiences before entering university. Students from big cities are better at English than those who come from the country or remote areas, as the former have had more chance to be exposed to English and a better English learning environment. This variation then triggers some difficulties in getting all students involved in English. According to Hoang (2001), most newly enrolled EFL students have only mastered a number of grammatical rules and a limited number of English words; they find it difficult to work with English pronunciation and intonation. These students have to start their EFL learning at university from fundamental courses in English speech and English language skills which are delivered in

1920 periods (1440 hours) over four years of studying at university. As a result, it seems unfeasible to train a student with an elementary level of English to become a qualified EFL teacher, given the shortage of teaching and learning resources and facilities and the lack of an authentic and supportive English learning environment (Dang, 2006). Additionally, EFL student teachers are not instructed on how to study effectively at the tertiary level, and they are likely to apply the passive way of learning that they used at high school, only following what they are required to do by their teachers. Students may, therefore, fail to successfully study English, as they need to actively study and practice by themselves to master the systems and skills of a language.

Secondly, EFL teacher training institutions not only have to deal with their students' limited level of English proficiency but also that of teacher educators. Frequently, EFL teacher educators are experienced and well-qualified based on the fact that they are graduates from EFL teacher training institutions (Dang, 2006; Le, 2002). Dang (2006, p.29) showed that although in one EFL teacher training university, there were 56 educators, including 5 (9%) with PhDs and 42 (75%) with Masters qualifications, another EFL teacher training university had 150 educators, including 4 (3%) associate professors, 12 (8%) PhDs, and 70 (46%) having a Masters degree.

However, an ongoing issue is that “though well-qualified and in many cases highly motivated, they are unable to consistently employ communicative methodologies in their teaching, and so often do not provide modeling or visible input for trainees” (Le, 2002, p.33). One of the reasons for EFL teacher educators' failure in applying an advanced teaching approach is the lack of sound teacher training and teaching development opportunities (Pham, 2001). Lecturers are paid meager salaries, so they often teach extra

classes outside the institutions to supplement their income. Their tight working schedule has made them become “teaching machines” who teach “five hours in the morning, five hours in the afternoon, and two more in the evening” (Pham, 2001, p.3).

Finally, the EFL teacher education training curriculum plays a vital role in the quality of would-be EFL teachers. In Vietnam, EFL student teachers take a course of three years (in teacher training colleges) or four years (in teacher training universities). During the training, student teachers must complete the curriculum, which covers three different strands of knowledge: foundational knowledge and communication skills (about 38 %), professional knowledge (teaching methodology and a six-week practicum, 16-18%), and subject-matter knowledge (English linguistics) (V. C. Le, 2011). Nguyen’s (2013) research presented that another university’s curriculum significantly emphasized the development of EFL preservice teachers’ English proficiency and communication skills with a ratio of 33.5% and 40%, respectively. The greater focus on English linguistics rather than professional knowledge can be explained by the fact of EFL student teachers’ low level of English proficiency when they enroll. Le (2002, p. 33) explained that “Because their entry level of proficiency in English is generally low, most time is devoted to improving English knowledge and skills”. As a result, “undergraduate courses are often based on linguistics and literature and deal very little with teaching practice” (Pham, 2001, p. 2), and there is no link between training and the contexts in the real trainee teachers’ potential teaching schools (Le, 2002, 2004). Throughout the four years of study, Vietnamese EFL student teachers have just six weeks to experience a real teaching environment with a small number of hours under the supervision and mentorship of practicing school teachers who receive no training in mentoring skills (V. C. Le, 2011; Nguyen, 2013). Additionally, it is not

convenient for student teachers to learn and gain experience for their teaching job in the future from the practicum due to limited resources (Le, 2014, 2019a; Nguyen, 2015). As a result, most EFL teachers are not sufficiently prepared with classroom practical skills to perform the task of teaching when they start their teaching career (Le, 2019a). Meanwhile, novice teachers have to face the same challenges as their experienced colleagues, such as planning effective lessons, conducting effective lessons, assessing students' progress and proficiency, and creating a supportive learning environment (Farrell, 2012).

Furthermore, Hoang (2008b, 2013) notes that EFL teachers are not trained to teach English as a subject for non-English major students. As EFL student teachers, they are taught the approach of teaching English as a discipline (English as the focus of the degree). English major students not only learn four language skills, but also have to acquire further knowledge of some aspects of English such as phonology, grammar, semantics, and discourse analysis (Hoang, 2008b, 2013). A significant difference acknowledged between English major, and non-English major students is the students' level of English proficiency. While non-English major students know little or nothing about English, English major students may use English to communicate with teachers in class, as they have been learning English as a key subject for at least seven years before entering university. In EFL teacher training institutions, teachers can speak English most of the time without confusing their students. After graduating, some EFL teachers emulate their teachers and apply an inappropriate teaching method in order to teach non-English major students. Particularly, these teachers either habitually speak too much English or focus on explaining the knowledge of grammar or lexicology (Hoang, 2008b, 2013). This ultimately makes non-English major students frustrated as they find it difficult to follow the teachers. In short,

inadequate teacher training has been claimed as a factor that hinders the high quality of English language teaching (Chang & Goswami, 2011).

With the inadequate and irrelevant factors in EFL pre-service teacher training programs mentioned above, EFL student teachers are not sufficiently trained in terms of linguistic competence, communicative competence, and professional competence before graduation to start their teaching career (Ngo, 2001). In this case, PD for in-service EFL teachers may perform a decisive role in either preparing teachers for their teaching or improving their teaching job. However, it is not easy for in-service teachers to engage in PD (Le, 2002; Pham, 2007).

#### 2.4.2. EFL teacher professional development

The literature shows that PD plays a decisive role in a successful, effective, and high-quality education (Fullan, 1995; Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hirsh, 2009; Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Mizell, 2010). It provides teachers with essential opportunities to exchange their experience and learn from other people and different sources, and teachers' professional skills and knowledge will then be improved. However, PD in Vietnam is still a big challenge for teachers. This section will reveal how PD is perceived in Vietnam, what PD activities have been conducted, and why PD is still a big challenge.

##### Importance of PD for EFL teacher

The importance of PD in Vietnam for teachers in general, and EFL teachers in particular, has been identified in both national documents and literature.

As stated in a number of documents such as the Education Law (Vietnamese Government, 2005b), The University Charter (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2010), Educational Reform

Agenda (Vietnamese Government, 2005a, 2013), Higher Education Law (Vietnamese Government, 2012) and tertiary teachers' working policies (MOET, 2008), teachers have to regularly study to improve their expertise and pedagogical skills, to update their qualifications, and to meet the standards of tertiary teachers. Professional development is indispensable to help teachers improve their knowledge in the field and increase their teaching competencies to realize current educational innovations (Vietnamese Government, 2013). Teachers are required to spend 500 hours on research annually, and they need to conduct at least one inquiry at the institutional level, and publish research findings in a scientific journal in Vietnam or overseas, or produce at least one article which is reviewed and published in a scientific journal (MOET, 2008). Moreover, teachers are expected to be involved in research and development, and technology transfer as well (Vietnamese Government, 2012). Teachers are not only required to complete their teaching tasks properly, but also engage in PD activities including developing curricula and syllabi, designing tests, building question banks, developing teaching materials, or joining regular meetings of Teacher Support Groups (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2010). As stated in the regulations on PD for tertiary teachers (MOET, 2013), PD is considered a good opportunity for teachers to update knowledge and skills in their field, the comprehensive reform of HE in Vietnam, and their duties in a new academic year.

Additionally, PD for EFL teachers is viewed as a key to improving the quality of English teaching and learning and ensuring the success of the reforms (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2012). A number of researchers have argued that sustainable PD is significant for the improvement of teachers and the training quality (Duong, 2003; Le, 2002; Pham, 2001).

Due to the recognized inadequacy and irrelevance of preservice training, it is extremely

necessary for novice teachers to participate in PD to be competent in their teaching jobs (Le, 2002, 2011; Pham, 2001). There is no preservice training course, long-term or short-term, which can provide learners with all the knowledge and skills they need for their job or solve all problems arising in their institutions (Pham, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005). By participating in PD, teachers will not only improve their pedagogical skills and learn new teaching approaches in their worldwide field but also become familiar with the new trends in education in Vietnam. Duong (2003) stated that teachers not only learn new theories and teaching approaches, but also learn how to put the knowledge gained from PD activities into practice, and how to properly employ the new teaching methods in their own contexts.

#### Situation of EFL teacher professional development

Despite the regulations on teacher PD and the strong need for PD among EFL teachers, from my own experience as an EFL teacher at a university for nearly 15 years, teachers are rarely offered any chances for PD and rarely participate in any PD activities. Teachers mostly participate in teacher study group meetings (Sinh hoạt chuyên môn) with their colleagues at their institution to share their teaching experience. Teachers have “very limited access to expert theories of practice, or published scholarship and research, and have to rely largely on their own and others’ experiential knowledge” (V. C. Le, 2011, p. 27). A small number of key EFL teachers from different provinces can be sent to participate in teacher in-service training provided by a number of international providers during the summer vacation (V. C. Le, 2011), and these training courses usually last a couple of days to a couple of weeks (V. C. Le, 2011; Pham, 2000). However, these teachers tend to apply the knowledge gained from the workshop in their real contexts in a strictly formulaic way, and find it not applicable to their students. Consequently, they think that the knowledge

they obtained is only relevant to teaching and learning contexts in other countries (Pham, 2000).

PD for EFL tertiary teachers was not seriously addressed until the implementation of the National Language Project 2020 (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b). The project presented the specific requirements of English proficiency level, teaching methods, and information technology skills for EFL teachers.

A six-level proficiency framework was developed by modifying the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for use as an assessment criterion. Additionally, a great amount of money was spent on developing a local language proficiency test, namely the Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) which is used as an assessment tool (Le, 2019a). The new requirements make it possible for EFL teachers to know precisely who they are and where they are in comparison with new requirements, but many EFL tertiary teachers cannot satisfy the requirements, as previously mentioned in Chapter 1. Project 2020 has recognized teacher PD as the key tool to support teachers' professional and personal growth as learners who can encourage student learning and enhance students' level of English proficiency (Nguyen, 2018). As a result, the term "professional development" has been increasingly discussed among both EFL teachers and managers.

In Project 2020, teacher development was an essential need to address besides curriculum revision and textbook innovation, and about 85% of the Project 2020 budget was used for PD (Nguyen, 2018; Parks, 2011). A number of EFL teacher PD activities have been carried out, and much money has recently been invested in PD courses. These activities were

organized in the form of workshops or training courses in Vietnam or universities in English speaking countries such as Australia, England, or the United States. Amongst those activities, training courses which offered the participants international certificates were highly recommended (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b). A comprehensive curriculum for teacher PD focusing on improving teachers' English proficiency, pedagogical skills, IT application skills, action research skills, and other activities was developed (Nguyen, 2018; The National Language Project, 2014a). In particular, PD programs focusing on pedagogical skills and IT skills for EFL college and university teachers were completed in 2013 and used to train teachers from different institutions in Vietnam (The National Language Project, 2014a). Hundreds of EFL teachers from different colleges and universities went to leading universities such as the University of New South Wales and the University of Queensland, the University of Victoria in New Zealand, and Indiana University in the United States. During their time there, they studied short courses on testing and assessment, pedagogical skills, or applying IT in English teaching. Thousands of language teachers have attended different teacher PD courses to upgrade their knowledge and renew teaching methods in Vietnam. However, the impact of these courses has been marginal and not as beneficial as expected, and students' English proficiency has not been much improved (Mai, 2018).

## Chapter conclusion

The brief introduction to Vietnam's history, culture, and leadership styles in section 2.1 indicated that the country is strongly influenced by Confucianism, resulting in the Vietnamese collectivist culture, high appreciation of knowledge and teachers or expectations of teachers as good models in terms of knowledge and morality, and the top-

down leadership style. In addition, the top-down leadership style values power distance and hierarchical orders, emphasizing managers' role as decision-makers and teachers' roles as doers or decision-implementers and the respect and obedience of teachers to the authorities. All of these cultural values are likely to influence teachers' learning motivation and the PD activities they engage in.

This chapter has also provided information about Vietnamese education, particularly its HE system, and the development of foreign languages, notably the English language, in the education system, and it has briefly pictured the situation of EFL teacher education and PD. Historical changes, the *Doi moi* policy, and globalization significantly contribute to the increasing significance of English in the political, economic and educational fields, making English a dominant foreign language in Vietnam now, leading to the crucial role of EFL teacher education and EFL teacher PD. The problems of EFL teacher education, new requirements of educational reforms and foreign language education policies have made PD for EFL teachers crucial in Vietnamese education. Accordingly, Project 2020 has carried out a number of PD initiatives in order to enhance in-service EFL teachers' English proficiency levels and teaching competence.

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### Chapter overview

This chapter reviews the literature on issues related to teacher PD and the factors impacting on teacher participation in PD activities. In the first section of this chapter, various definitions of teacher PD and PD activities are discussed and the definition used in this study is ultimately presented. Additionally, the first section investigates the significance of teacher PD in education, particularly its contribution to teachers' professional improvement, students' learning outcomes, and the development of institutional quality. Finally, the features of effective PD activities are also presented, based on different researchers' viewpoints. The second section focuses on the factors impacting on teacher

participation in PD activities, covering both enablers and barriers. These are presented separately, with the factors categorised into two main groups: (1) internal (personal) factors and (2) external (environmental) factors. The last section discusses PD specifically for language teachers, in which PD for EFL teachers in Vietnam is also briefly mentioned.

## 3.1. Teacher professional development

### 3.1.1. Definitions

Professional development is understood and defined in various ways and the concepts of PD have been understood differently over time, from a very narrow view to a much broader perspective by different researchers. This section discusses PD in its connection to the development of teachers as distinct from other professionals.

The research literature, over some decades, has established that PD refers to formal and informal activities that educators engage in for the improvement of themselves as educated people, and professionals, and the competence to perform their role (Joyce et al., 1977). Day (1999) and Bell and Gilbert (1996) similarly address the focus of teacher PD as the development of personal, social, and occupational aspects in the context and policies of their institution. Thus, PD promotes teachers' development in both their personal and professional lives as well as improving the development of the organization. Overall, professional development is viewed as systematic and intentional processes and activities designed to enhance educators' professional knowledge and skills, and change their attitudes so that the learning outcomes of the students will be improved (Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hirsh, 2009; Mizell, 2010). Similarly, Hassel (1999) and Diaz-Maggioli (2004) define PD as a career-long process in which teachers learn to improve their skills and professional competencies to meet students' needs, which Fullan (1995) refers to as

improving teachers' knowledge, skills, expertise, attitudes, and characteristics, which make a significant contribution to their performance at work. From all these definitions, it can be interpreted that the ultimate focus of PD is to improve students' learning.

Broadly speaking, PD refers to a variety of activities that help teachers to “increase their knowledge, skills, and improve teaching practices, as well as contribute to their personal, social, and emotional growth as teachers” (Desimone, 2009, p. 182). Accordingly, these PD activities can be formal, structured PD activities such as seminars, workshops, professional training courses, and professional meetings, or informal activities such as reading, self-learning, or informal discussions amongst teachers about their teaching technique (Desimone, 2009; Glatthorn, 1995). More narrowly, PD is defined as staff development or in-service training which is offered through special short-term events such as one-off workshops or conferences, short courses or training, lectures by guest speakers, and staff meetings (Kwakman, 2003; Scott & Scott, 2010; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). These traditional forms of PD would provide teachers with new information about their work or update and refresh their knowledge and skills (Kwakman, 2003; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) distinguish the traditional forms of teacher PD from 'reform' PD activities. The traditional teacher PD approach held the assumption that one-off workshops can effectively solve the problem of the inherent deficit and gap in teachers' knowledge and skills (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Schleicher, 2011). In addition to workshops, traditional teacher PD emphasized the significance of training programs and formal postgraduate courses (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). However, traditional teacher PD is criticised as being shallow and fragmented (Aminudin, 2012; Hawley & Valli, 1999) and having limited influence on increasing

teachers' knowledge and fostering teachers' positive change (Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love, & Hewson, 2009). The traditional forms of teacher PD proved to be ineffective because, although they could foster teachers' awareness in improving their professional knowledge and skills (Boyle, While, & Boyle, 2004), they rarely changed teachers' practice and had minimal effects on students' learning outcomes (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Workshops can provide a considerable amount of information or input from experts, but little time is given for teachers to familiarize themselves with those topics and apply new knowledge to their own actual teaching contexts (Lee, 2013; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Moreover, workshops are fragmented and rarely effectively support teachers to prepare for challenges they face throughout their teaching career (Schleicher, 2011). Therefore, according to Boyle et al. (2004), the traditional approach alone is deficient in enhancing teachers' professional learning to improve their knowledge, skills and teaching practice.

The reform PD activities refer to "a variety of PD activities that accompany continuous inquiry into one's instruction practice" (Huberman & Guskey, 1995, p. 270), for example, study groups, teacher networks, mentoring, individual learning, individual research projects or teacher learning communities (Birman et al., 2000; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). In other words, the reform type includes formal and informal PD activities, from individual to collaborative activities, which support teachers to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and teaching performance. Unlike the traditional one-off workshops or conferences, the reform PD activities are longer and more content-focused, so participants have opportunities for active learning and become familiar with the new knowledge and skills (Birman et al., 2000). The reform types of PD activities are believed

to be more responsive to teachers' needs and goals and have more influence on teacher's change (Darling-Hammond, 1995, 1997; Little, 1993; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

In Vietnam, educators began to know the concepts of teacher PD or continuing PD in the 1990s (Le, 2018). Teachers are traditionally familiar with the terms *bồi dưỡng giáo viên* (training in-service teachers), *phát triển chuyên môn* (developing one's expertise) or *bồi dưỡng chuyên môn* (enhancing one's expertise) regarding teacher PD. The traditional PD activities include structured training courses and workshops that are taught by experts or senior teachers in the field. *Sinh hoạt chuyên môn* (academic meetings of teachers within a division or faculty or teacher study group meetings) can also be understood as a PD activity for teachers to improve their expertise. In these meetings, teachers work together to discuss problems related to aspects of their teaching such as preparing lesson plans, developing teaching materials, developing tests, or just sharing teaching experiences or effective teaching techniques. The term *tự bồi dưỡng chuyên môn* (self-learning to improve one's expertise) is also used as teacher PD, and the PD activities for this kind of PD comprise learning activities that teachers do by themselves to improve their expertise such as reading books, reviewing the literature of the field, practicing language skills to improve their English proficiency, or self-evaluating their teaching after each lesson. In summary, teacher PD in Vietnam can be understood as those activities in which teachers participate to learn new professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their capacity to meet the requirements for teaching and to function as competent professionals (Gall & Renchler, 1985; Tran, 2016).

Despite using various terms to define PD, most researchers share the idea that teacher PD comprises formal and informal learning that educators pursue to improve their professional

knowledge, attitudes, and skills which make a significant contribution to students' learning outcomes and institutional development. This shared understanding of teacher PD is employed in this study. It should be noted that this is an operational definition and does not relate to factors influencing teachers' engagement in PD, which will be the focus of this study.

### 3.1.2. Significance of teacher PD in education

Many researchers agree that teacher PD is essential for the improvement and development of teachers, students and organizations. Professional development for teachers is considered an effective way to improve education quality, and PD for teachers is highly recommended as one of the measures of high quality education (Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Mizell, 2010). Furthermore, teacher development can help in-service practitioners to become familiar with the latest knowledge in the field and methodologies and to stay up-to-date with the current standards for teaching (Guskey, 2000; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Richards & Farrell, 2005). According to Richards and Farrell (2005), on-going PD is not a response to inadequate training; it is a response to the fact that no teacher training institution can provide pre-service teachers with everything they need for their teaching career, as the knowledge base in education expands continuously. In addition, Guskey (2000) highlighted that educational reforms lead to changes in the roles and duties of educators, so both teachers and administrators need PD to learn their new roles and successfully perform them. Professional development activities enable the educator to further understand content knowledge and improve instructional strategies and leadership ability within the classroom (Lee, 2013). There is thus a direct relationship between PD activities and teaching

practices. PD makes a significant difference in education through promoting change in teachers, improving students learning outcomes, and enabling institutional development.

#### Promoting change in teachers

There are a variety of terms used to refer to teacher change, such as ‘teacher learning’, ‘teacher development’, ‘teacher growth’, ‘implementation of innovation or reform’ and ‘cognitive and affective change’ (Richardson & Placier, 2001 as cited in Kubanyiova, 2012, p. 6). According to Kubanyiova (2012), teacher change refers not only to teachers’ improvement in conceptual understanding, but also their change in teaching practice which brings about significant change in the learning opportunities for their students.

Studies in the literature show that PD supports teachers to increase their professional knowledge, instructional skills based on their professional needs, their students’ needs and expectations, and their working contexts, leading to change in teachers’ classroom practices and their attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 2002b; Lee, 2013).

Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) made a review of 11 studies published between 1990 and 2005 on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. All 11 research articles highlighted the contribution of professional learning communities to teacher change in teaching practice. Amongst them, five studies provided details of teacher change and the remaining studies generally indicated changes in teachers’ practice without explicit detail. As cited in Vescio et al. (2008), teachers’ specific changes included applying new teaching techniques in literacy instructional practices such as implementing a new group story format and using choral reading strategies (Sue Englert & Tarrant, 1995), higher levels of pedagogy (Louis & Marks, 1998), more student-centered

teaching approaches (Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000), stronger instructional norms (Strahan, 2003), and using new techniques such as visualisation to teach low achieving students (Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins, & Towner, 2004). Additionally, as stated in Vescio et al. (2008), the other researchers reported in their studies that teachers who participated in PD noticed changes in their instructional practices, even though they provided no detailed description of the changes.

A more recent study, conducted by Garet et al. (2016), focused on identifying the impact of PD on teachers' maths content knowledge, their instructional practice, and their students' achievement. The study involved 165 grade four teachers from 73 schools who were randomly assigned to a treatment group of teachers who received PD, and a control group of teachers who were not provided with PD. The final findings of this project emphasized that the PD program had a positive impact on teacher knowledge and instructional practice. In terms of teachers' instructional practice, the full PD program had a positive impact on student participation in mathematics and on errors and imprecision. The negative impact on errors corresponds to a decrease in errors and imprecision.

Similarly, the study by Vo and Nguyen (2009) investigated the experiences of a group of Vietnamese EFL teachers who participated in a Critical Friends Group (CFG) to identify their attitudes towards CFGs and their perspectives on the impact of CFGs on their teaching performance and their PD. Four teachers were chosen as participants for the study and engaged in CFG to observe their partners' classes and give feedback and comment on lessons during a ten-week semester. At the end of the semester, the researcher interviewed all four participants about their experiences with CFG. The findings showed that teachers' motivational skills and their teaching performance were greatly improved after their

participation in CFG. In particular, one teacher “became more flexible and used more techniques when planning a lesson” with the ideas initiated by the CFG partners’ ideas (p. 210). The other teachers provided more exceptional care for students when teaching and prepared better for their lessons. In short, teachers became more active in adopting and adjusting various teaching techniques in order to deliver interesting lessons.

In summary, all these studies show that teachers can considerably benefit from PD activities. Teachers can not only improve their professional knowledge and teaching methods but also master techniques for classroom management and working with students. The knowledge and skills that teachers acquire from PD activities enable them to successfully perform their teaching practices and support their students to achieve better learning results. In other words, teacher PD can indirectly promote students’ learning achievement.

#### Improving students’ learning outcomes

A major goal of teachers’ engagement in PD is to improve teachers’ behaviours and, in turn, positively impact student performance and student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hassel, 1999; Smith, 2015). New knowledge and skills that teachers have learned from PD can make teachers more confident and less reluctant to develop and employ a new teaching philosophy that can improve their teaching practice and enhance students’ learning outcomes (Guskey, 1986; Harnett, 2012; Smith, 2015). Similarly, Hassel (1999), Diaz-Maggioli (2004) and Nguyen (2018) define PD as a career-long process in which teachers learn to improve their skills and professional competencies to support student learning and students’ achievement.

Vogel (2006) confirmed that teacher PD has a greater impact on student achievement than do smaller teacher-student ratios.

In Vescio et al.'s (2008) review, eight out of eleven studies investigated the relationship between teachers' engagement in PD and improvement in student achievement. Three studies indicated that teacher PD led to significant improvement in student achievement (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Phillips, 2003; Strahan, 2003). In particular, achievement scores of students at one middle school increased dramatically over three years when teachers engaged in the learning community and aimed at improving low and underachieving students (Phillips, 2003). To be specific, the percentage of students who passed subject area tests in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies increased from 50% in 1999-2000 to 90% in 2001-2002. The study by Berry et al. (2005) also indicated the improvement of students at a rural elementary school over four years. The results of students' grade level testing illustrated the student change from just 50% performing at or above grade level to more than 80% of students meeting the grade level standard. In Strahan's (2003) study, student test scores on state achievement dramatically increased from 50% proficiency to more than 75% over three years when teachers engaged in PD. In the other four studies by Bolam et al. (2005); Louis and Marks (1998); Supovitz (2002); Supovitz and Christman (2003), student achievement correlated to teachers' engagement in professional learning communities. It was concluded in Bolam et al. (2005) that the more teachers participated in professional learning, the higher was the level of student performance and progress in both primary and secondary school (p. 132). As stated in these four studies, the results of student achievement were considerably influenced by the strength of the professional learning communities in the school (Bolam et al., 2005;

Louis & Marks, 1998; Supovitz, 2002; Supovitz & Christman, 2003), or the focus and effort of communities of teachers (Louis & Marks, 1998; Supovitz, 2002; Supovitz & Christman, 2003).

A more recent study conducted by Sedova, Sedlacek, and Svaricek (2016) identified the impact of a teacher PD program which focused on the implementation of dialogic teaching practice. Student talk with reasoning is one of four indicators of dialogic teaching which were assessed in this study. Eight Czech teachers from five lower secondary schools participated in a one-year action research program developed and implemented by the researchers. During the program, these teachers were trained to transform their teaching practice in four workshops that included group discussions. Between the four workshops, the teachers were expected to realise in their teaching practice the elements of dialogic teaching that they gained from the workshops. Nine teachers' lessons, including two classes before the PD program, two classes after the program and five classes during the program were video recorded. In addition to video recordings, audio recordings of group discussion in the workshops and at least seven interviews with each teacher were made before, during, and after the program. Also, questionnaires and tests were administered to students at the beginning and the end of the program. The results of the research after analysing and comparing all sources of data showed that the number of students whose utterances involved reasoning significantly increased. To be specific, the nature of student talk in the lessons of the participant teachers positively changed and "became richer in argumentation" (p. 23).

In short, teacher PD can make an enormous contribution to students' improvement in learning. Teachers who engage in PD activities can foster students' learning, get them

involved in interesting lessons, and support them to improve their learning outcomes.

Moreover, students' performance in class is also developed in terms of logical and critical thinking.

#### Enabling institutional development and educational innovations

Teacher PD not only contributes to teacher change and plays a significant role in student change, but also is considered one of the pivotal agents for institutional change and improvement and a key facilitator for the implementation of educational reforms.

According to Fullan (1991), teacher PD and school development are in an inextricably close relationship.

Hargreaves (2003, p. 9) emphasizes that PD plays a significant role in supporting teachers' emotional intelligence and emotional understandings, which greatly help them to improve their work performance in relation to the moral purposes of teaching, personal relationships and the development of the organization. The changes in the way teachers learn, work, and cooperate can be the manifestation of "specific instructional change," or "basic organizational change" (p. 319). Teachers are vital to achieving the goals set by policymakers in any educational setting (Fullan, 2007b; García & Menken, 2010), and consequently relevant PD for teachers can be regarded as a key to guaranteeing the success of educational reforms (Crevola et al., 2006; Fullan, 2007a; Guskey, 2002b; Nguyen, 2018).

Additionally, PD can also help to develop a positive school climate that would lead to increasing numbers of effective teachers (Hargreaves, 2004; Wideen & Andrews, 1987).

Moreover, by providing teachers with PD opportunities, schools can attract and retain

effective teachers who, in turn, make a significant contribution to their school's improvement processes (Scribner, 1999; Tran, 2009). As a result, it is advisable for administrators to develop their educators in order to enhance the quality of education, student learning, and school development (Kaplan & Owings, 2004; Linn et al., 2010).

PD can help to promote collegial interaction and relationships among professionals, develop professional learning communities, change the professional culture of a school, and develop school capacity (King & Newmann, 2001; Vescio et al., 2008). Sykes (1996) indicated that teacher learning must be considered the key to any educational improvement, as the improvement in student learning is mainly attributed to teachers. In addition, Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) and Little (1993) agree that PD must both offer benefits to individual teachers and enhance 'the organizational capacity of the school' (Newmann et al., 2000, p. 2) in order to optimise students' achievement.

Borko, Elliott, and Uchiyama (2002) expressly indicated the link between PD and a state-wide educational reform effort in Kentucky. The study investigated how four case study schools developed and carried out their in-house PD to improve the capacities of both teachers' and schools. At the end of the study, the four schools all agreed on the importance of ongoing PD to teacher learning and building school capacity, which enabled both teachers and schools to realise educational reforms as required. The study also indicated that a multi-faceted PD program "enabled schools to address multiple reform goals in an efficient, effective manner" (p. 985).

Starkey et al. (2009) investigated the function of teacher PD in the implementation of assessment reforms in a senior secondary school in New Zealand. The study focused on the

embedding stage of reform and identified an effective PD model for the successful implementation of an educational change. The study involved 28 schools throughout New Zealand, including 11 case study schools and 17 comparison schools. Data were collected from several sources, such as pre- and post-PD teacher surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The prominent data findings indicated that significant factors that should be considered for effective PD include “personalizing learning, networking with subject area colleagues, and skilled and sensitive facilitation” (p. 188). In addition, it is crucial to consider the primary purposes of the reform and teachers’ PD needs at each stage of reform implementation to design the appropriate content of PD initiatives.

To sum up, teacher PD has proved to be essential for changing the work culture of a school and increasing school ability. Teacher PD promotes not only professional learning communities, collegial relationship and collaboration but also effective teachers who can significantly contribute to their schools’ improvement process. Furthermore, PD enables institutions to realise educational reforms by updating both teachers and administrators on the new requirements and implementation methods.

The studies reviewed above explicitly illustrate the significance of teacher PD in the improvement and development of teachers, students, and organizations. How, then, can the benefits of teacher PD to all those stakeholders be optimised? And how can the effectiveness of PD activities, which can lead to positive changes in teachers, students, and institutions, be enhanced?

### 3.1.3. Effective professional development

Teacher PD is considered the most crucial factor in determining teaching and learning quality in formal education in comparison with other factors, including syllabuses, methodology, teaching materials and evaluation processes (Le, 2002). Thus, the question of characteristics of an effective PD activity has been particularly considered in the literature. As a result, there exists a consensus about effective PD characteristics, namely sufficient time, content focus, active learning, collective participation, school-based and classroom practice, evaluation or reflection procedures, a combination of theory and practice in real contexts, and continued support and follow-up. These features of effective PD have been analysed and discussed by different researchers.

Garet et al. (2001) investigated the impacts of different characteristics of PD on teachers' learning. Six key characteristics, which were hypothesized to improve teachers' instruction namely form, duration and collective participation (grouped together as 'structural features'), and content focus, active learning and coherence (grouped together as 'core features'), were used to analyse the data (see Table 3.1)

*Table 3.1: Characteristics of effective professional development (Garet et al., 2001)*

Categories	Characteristics	Definition
<i>Structural features</i>	Form	The form of the activity (i.e., whether it is a reform type such as a study group, teacher network, mentoring relationship, internship, individual research project, in contrast to a traditional workshop, course, or conference)
	Duration	The total number of contact hours that participants spend in the activity, as well as the period over which the activity takes place (whether PD activities are long enough for teachers to acquire the content and translate

Categories	Characteristics	Definition
<i>Core features</i>		new knowledge into practice in the classroom and obtain feedback on their teaching practice)
	Collective participation	PD activities or programs designed for groups of teachers from the same subject, grade, faculty or school in order to develop an interactive learning community which helps to foster discussion on concepts and problems arising during their PD experience
	Content focus	The degree to which the activity is focused on improving and deepening teachers' content knowledge
	Active learning	The extent to which the activity offers opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in the meaningful analysis of teaching and learning, for example, by reviewing student work or obtaining feedback on their teaching.
	Coherence	The degree to which the activity promotes coherence in teachers' PD, by incorporating experiences that are consistent with teachers' goals, aligned with state standards and assessments, and encourage continuing professional communication among teachers

The study shows that the structural features of PD activities significantly affect teacher learning, and the core features of PD activities make a great contribution to the increase of teachers' knowledge and skills and positive changes in classroom practices. In other words, PD activities that have the characteristics shown in this research will have a “meaningful effect on teacher learning and foster improvements in classroom practice” (Garet et al., 2001, p. 937).

Guskey (2003a), after analysing 13 lists of the characteristics of effective PD, pointed out seven effective PD features that were the most frequently mentioned. The first is the enhancement of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge. It was significant for PD to enable teachers to understand better the content they teach and students' ways of learning, so teachers could apply effective methods to optimise the students' content acquisition. The

second feature is the provision of sufficient time and other resources. It was highlighted that teachers need sufficient time for PD activities, so they can deepen their understanding, analyse students' features, and appropriately apply new approaches in their own contexts. The third characteristic is the promotion of collegiality and collaborative exchange. Guskey (2003a) points out that teachers are in favour of working together, sharing, and exchanging strategies and experiences. The inclusion of specific evaluation procedures is the fourth characteristic and refers to the necessity of recording and revising formative information for improvement the next time (Guskey, 2000, 2002a). The other three characteristics are the need for PD activities to be aligned with other reform initiatives and to model high-quality instruction, building leadership capacity, and being school or site-based.

The features of effective PD activities analysed by Garet et al. (2001) and Guskey (2003a) are mainly related to four critical issues of PD: content, duration, forms, and organization of PD activities (conduct and follow-up evaluation and support). It is vital for effective PD to focus on practical and relevant contents for participants, integrate participants' prior knowledge and experience, link theory and practice, specifically provide participants with opportunities to practice in real contexts, and be participant-led (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Piggot-Irvine, 2006). Teachers are adult learners, so they tend to use their experience as a rich source for learning and become more interested in learning when they find the contents beneficial for solving their problems at work (Tennant, 1986). In Vietnam, where in-service training courses are often top-down, mandatory and designed using a one-size-fits-all approach, the contents of PD should be seriously considered in order to make PD activities effective because such training courses have failed to address teachers' expectations, their specific contexts and their real problems

(Le, 2018). Tran (2016) argues that effective PD should be based on teachers' needs and applicable to their teaching contexts, so it is relevant and meaningful for their learning.

In addition, effective PD activities must be long enough for participating teachers to deeply acquire the new knowledge and pedagogical approach and to effectively apply them in actual contexts with follow-up consultations, feedback and support. The appropriate length of PD activities is especially critical when PD is a newly emerging field, as in Vietnam after the implementation of Project 2020 (Nguyen et al., 2019), where teachers could be overwhelmed because they had had limited exposure to innovative theories and models of teaching (Le, 2018). Therefore, PD training courses or workshops should be of an appropriate length to facilitate teachers to understand the knowledge while learning thoroughly, and to confidently apply the knowledge and skills obtained to solve their problems in their local context if supported.

According to Truong (2017), PD management, leadership and school support are also emphasized as essential features of effective PD in the context of Vietnam. A PD management unit that is in charge of planning and implementing PD is crucial in order to make the teacher PD process effective (Tran, 2009; Truong, 2017). PD management units focus on exploring the primary goals of PD, how to achieve the goals, and how to examine whether or not the goals set have been achieved. Furthermore, at the institutional level, the role of managers in supporting teacher PD is significant. In particular, when planning and implementing teacher PD, principals' provisions play a decisive role in guaranteeing the effectiveness of the teacher PD process (Daloglu, 2004; Truong, 2017). Moreover, institutional support to reduce teacher workload as well as continuous inspiration and

appreciation from managers can be reviewed as vital factors to enhance teachers' participation in PD (Truong, 2017).

In conclusion, if a PD activity is seen as being effective or of high quality, it can foster teachers' learning and support them to improve their professional knowledge and skills and their teaching practice. Effective PD activities can considerably influence teacher professional learning. However, despite the impact of effective PD activities, teacher engagement in PD is also motivated or hindered by many factors.

### 3.2. Factors influencing teacher professional development

As already indicated, many researchers have investigated and concluded the positive influence of PD activities on teacher PD and change (Desimone et al., 2002; Dunne et al., 2000; Garet et al., 2016; Hollins et al., 2004; Lee, 2013; Louis & Marks, 1998; Strahan, 2003; Sue Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Vo & Nguyen, 2009). However, teacher participation in PD activities is a central concern, because without engaging in PD, teachers will not gain any advantages from PD activities made available. Teachers' decisions to engage in PD can be influenced by a range of factors.

The grouping of factors impacting on teacher participation in PD is based on variable methods. These include: distinguishing factors in teachers' personal and professional lives, distinguishing intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Roux, 2013; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004), distinguishing external (situational) and internal (dispositional) factors (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965), personal characteristics, task factors, and work environment factors (Kwakman, 2003); and personal and environmental factors (Lohman, 2000, 2005, 2006).

Arguably, impacting factors can largely be categorized into two main groups: internal

(personal) and external (environmental) factors (Bayar, 2013; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Lohman, 2006).

Internal (personal) factors refer to teachers' inner emotions and cognition, involving teachers' awareness of and attitudes towards PD activities, teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' self-motivation and teachers' interest (Bayar, 2013; Geijsel, Slegers, Stoel, & Krüger, 2009; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2006; Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011). Self-efficacy is defined as

people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Accordingly, teacher self-efficacy is defined as "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4), or "a teacher's expectation that he or she will be able to bring about student learning" (Ross & Bruce, 2007, p. 50).

External (environmental) factors are those related to the surrounding contexts and the environment in which teachers live and work. External factors can refer to teachers' personal life, working life and social life (Badri, Alnuaimi, Mohaidat, Yang, & Al Rashedi, 2016; Bayindir, 2009; Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Drage, 2010; Fullan, 1995; Lohman, 2000, 2005, 2006; Roux, 2013; Starkey et al., 2009). They can include:

(1) mediating factors such as funding, payment policy, financial incentives or other financial supports, facility, or PD strategies (Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Drage, 2010; Le, 2002; Lohman, 2006; Pham, 2001; Starkey et al., 2009)

- (2) community factors: the communities where teachers live and perform their work, such as their institution, faculty, classroom, or family, and their relationship with individuals in those communities, including family members, colleagues, students, or school administrators (Bayindir, 2009; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Lohman, 2006; Roux, 2013)
- (3) structural factors such as division of labour, and rules and regulations (Badri et al., 2016; Bayindir, 2009; Drage, 2010; Le, 2002; Lohman, 2000; Pham, 2001; Roux, 2013; Starkey et al., 2009)
- (4) cultures including school culture and social cultures (Hargreaves, 2004; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000)
- (5) time (Guskey, 2003b; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2003; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009).

All these factors are explicitly presented in the following sections on factors enabling teacher engagement in PD (3.2.1) and barriers to their engagement (3.2.2).

### 3.2.1. Factors enabling teacher engagement in PD

Internal (personal) factors

#### *Teachers' motivation and self-efficacy*

Teachers' intrinsic motivation refers to their innate desire to derive satisfaction from the activity they participate in and to seek challenges for "their own reward" (Rendos, 2005).

Teachers' desire to learn and become better teachers is regarded as one of the major personal factors affecting PD participation (Guskey, 2002b; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011).

In other words, teacher engagement in learning and improving themselves is inspired and controlled by their own goals and purposes (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Loucks-Horsley et

al., 2009; Musanti & Pence, 2010). Teachers' autonomous motivation leads them to participate in PD activities to gain personal development, which then supports them to perform the teaching task better. Peers, Diezmann, and Watters (2003) emphasized that teachers' willingness to engage in PD substantially contributed to their professional growth.

Engaging in PD helps teachers to learn and update further understanding of content knowledge (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Lohman, 2006; Scribner, 1999), and to adopt pedagogical approaches which can then work productively in classroom practice and improve student learning outcomes (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Scribner, 1999). Finding a better way to help students to achieve better learning outcomes is the primary reason for teachers to engage in PD activities (Guskey, 2002b; Lohman, 2003, 2006; Scribner, 1999). Additionally, teachers can take part in learning because of intrinsic motivation stipulated by a commitment to lifelong learning (Guglielmino, 2008). Such intrinsic motivation is encouraged and manifested by interests and hobbies such as volunteering, tutoring, or socializing, and networking (Meister, 2010; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004). Teacher engagement in PD may also be simply because of their curiosity for new things, or they may find it interesting (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014).

### *Teachers' self-efficacy*

Many studies have considered the importance of self-efficacy in education in general and in teacher PD in particular (Guskey, 1988; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2003, 2006; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Teachers' sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to teach their students and bring about positive change in their students significantly enhance participation in PD (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Guskey, 1988; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Knight, 2000; Kwakman,

2003; Lohman, 2003, 2006; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). In fact, teachers' expectations and desire to support students to achieve the best learning outcomes motivate them to constantly improve their knowledge and skills through participation in PD. This, in turn, leads to teachers becoming more confident with their teaching capability and having a greater sense of self-efficacy.

#### *Teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward PD activities*

Each individual is a unique entity with their own attitudes, so teachers' own opinions and feelings toward PD activities can be key factors influencing their participation (Bayar, 2013; Torff & Sessions, 2008, 2009). PD activities can give rise to positive attitudes in some teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). For example, when teachers find PD activities useful and relevant to their needs and area, they have positive attitudes about those activities and are motivated to engage in further PD activities (Silane Ruberto, 2003). In addition, some researchers have investigated the connection between teachers' self-directed learning (SDL), which refers to the responsibility they take for their own learning, and their participation in PD (Fisher, King, & Tague, 2001; Guglielmino, 2008; Liu, Jehng, Chen, & Fang, 2014). In addition, individuals' attitude, abilities, and personal characters decide how much responsibility for PD they would take (Fisher et al., 2001). It is agreed in these research' studies that individuals with higher SDL capacities would be more aware of the knowledge and skills they need to become better teachers (Fisher et al., 2001; Guglielmino, 2008; Liu et al., 2014). Better professional awareness leads to highly motivated teachers who participate in PD.

Similarly, teachers' beliefs about the practical value and effectiveness of PD activities directly affect their engagement in PD. Many studies have shown that teachers' beliefs about impractical and irrelevant PD activities considerably decrease their participation in those activities (Drage, 2010; Kwakman, 2003; Scribner, 1999; Wan & Lam, 2010). Some teachers doubt the relevance to their own teaching purposes of mandated PD programs (Garet et al., 2001; Musanti & Pence, 2010). As a result, a number of teachers in some studies became frustrated, worried, and unwilling to participate in mandated PD activities (Hargreaves, 2004; Lohman, 2003; Scribner, 1999). These teachers were frustrated when they had to follow the mandated PD program and activities because they were not spending time on their own PD goals, but on administrators' or other community members' goals.

External (environmental) factors

*Mediating factors*

Mediating factors are understood as factors that could facilitate teacher PD, such as financial policies, facility supports, or the quality of PD activities. Many studies have shown the significance of mediating factors in encouraging teachers to participate in PD activities.

Funding or monetary reward or incentives for teachers has proved to be one of the most important motivators for teacher engagement in PD (Birman et al., 2000; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Liu et al., 2014; Lohman, 2006; Rendos, 2005; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004). In addition, several studies emphasized that salary increases or salary supplementation could have the potential to significantly encourage teachers to participate in PD activities (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Wan & Lam, 2010; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009).

In addition to funding, other mediating factors such as facility support and the relevance of PD activities to teachers' needs also play a significant role in enhancing teacher engagement in PD activities. If the institution can offer organizational facilities for comprehensive PD activities such as training courses, workshops, or conferences, teachers will be provided with better opportunities to participate (Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns, & Gerrichhauzen, 2011). Furthermore, teachers become increasingly interested in PD activities which are practical and support their professional growth. According to Postholm (2012), practical PD activities are those whose content is strongly connected to teachers' daily work activities, and the appropriateness of PD activities to teachers' expectations encourages their PD participation.

### *Community factors*

Teacher participation in PD is affected by the communities where they live and perform their work — their institution, faculty, classroom, or family — and their relationship with individuals in those communities, including family members, colleagues, students, or school administrators (Roux, 2013). Besides the motivation to enhance student achievement (Garet et al., 2001; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Guskey, 2002b; Kennedy, 1996; Rendos, 2005; Supovitz & Turner, 2000), relationships with colleagues, school administrators, and family members may also affect teacher participation in learning.

The strength of the collegial relationship can motivate teachers' engagement in PD in a number of ways. Collegial cooperation and support positively encourage teachers to take part in PD activities, and teachers can also obtain vital information about PD opportunities from their colleagues or their network of teachers from other institutions (Hargreaves,

2004; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000; Wan & Lam, 2010). Many studies have presented findings on the strong impact of the collegial relationship on teacher participation in PD activities. For example, collegial relations at elementary schools help teachers to improve their sense of professional growth (Rosenholtz, Bassler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 1986), and peer support enables teachers to engage in professional learning activities (Kontoghiorghes, 2001). Collaboration with colleagues is essential for teacher PD as it can provide teachers with the necessary learning support, and trigger new ideas and challenges (Evers, Van der Heijden, & Kreijns, 2016; Kwakman, 2003). Teacher collaboration directly affects teachers' decisions to participate in PD, so collaboration with colleagues can be regarded as a motivating factor (Geijsel et al., 2009).

Teachers are not only affected by their colleagues but also especially affected by school administrators and school organizational contexts, which can facilitate their professional learning (Richards & Farrell, 2005). University administrators not only directly influence the design, delivery, and content of teacher PD in their institutions, but assess the PD as well (Bredeson, 2000). University administrators also play a vital role in creating and sustaining a healthy and positive learning environment in their institutions (Bredeson, 2000; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2003). This was illustrated by Hargreaves and Dawe (1990), who attributed an effective PD system to administrative leadership and facilitation. The support of the school administrator is essential to enhancing teacher PD (Kwakman, 2003; Song, 2008). According to Danielson (2006), the principal plays a vital role in encouraging and promoting teacher PD and supporting teachers' contributions to PD. The encouragement of principals strongly influences teachers' engagement in PD activities

(Rendos, 2005), and the teacher becomes positive towards the professional learning process when the principal is supportive (Nir & Bogler, 2008).

Teacher participation in PD is also affected by family duties and relationships with spouses and other family members. Many teachers have to balance their work and their family responsibilities and childcare duties (Wan & Lam, 2010). If PD activities are held in a place that is far away from the family, family members need to be supportive to enable teachers to participate in those activities (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Wan & Lam, 2010). Lacking family support, teacher participation in PD activities would be considerably challenged. Family support has been demonstrated as a significant motivator for teacher engagement in PD (Harvey, 2005).

### *Structural factors*

An individual's PD process depends on the interaction among individuals, the organizations they work for, and relevant contextual factors (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009). Teachers work in a system that is governed by a particular leadership style and its set of rules and regulations. Accordingly, teachers are required to fit into their working environment and practice the rules and regulations in real contexts. Leadership practices and organizational conditions affect the professional learning environment and PD activities (Geijsel et al., 2009). Therefore, teachers' decision to participate in PD activities is affected by a number of structural factors including workload, rules, and regulations such as professional requirements, criteria for teacher evaluation and assessment, educational reforms, and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the institution.

Educational reform can have a positive impact on teacher participation in PD. Working in an educational system, teachers are interested in discovering more about the educational philosophy underlying the new requirements, challenges, beliefs, and values inherent in educational innovations and trends (Harvey, 2005; Justins, 2004). At the same time, teacher participation in PD will enable them to satisfy institutional requirements, such as requirements for licenses or certificates (Guskey, 2002b; Scribner, 1999). Educational reforms or innovation also need PD to be implemented in actual contexts, and PD can be seen as a critical determinant of success (Bolam & McMahon, 2004). Where heavy workload or work pressure exist, this is not necessarily negative for professional learning, as they can still encourage teachers to join in collaborative or instructional activities (Kwakman, 2003). Finally, evaluation and assessment of their practice puts some pressure on teachers but simultaneously provides them with a good opportunity to find out about required skills, knowledge, and abilities (Liu et al., 2014; Rendos, 2005). Once teachers have a better sense of the requirements, they will be motivated to improve in order to satisfy those demands. Similarly, Duke and Stiggins (1990) emphasized that one reason to evaluate teachers is to enhance teachers' motivation and awareness of the requirements, as well as the policies and practices of schools. This in turn encourages teachers to participate in PD activities.

### *Cultures*

Many researchers have confirmed the direct influence of supportive school culture on encouraging teachers to participate in PD activities (Lee, 2013; Liu et al., 2014; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The supportive organizational culture can be collaborative, encouraging, or friendly, fostering a school atmosphere that

could create a good learning environment, in which teachers can receive immediate support or mentoring from their colleagues and administrators (Evers et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2014; Shadur, Kienzle, & Rodwell, 1999). Learning climate and team membership are two cultural factors which have a direct impact on PD (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006) and on teachers' willingness to take part in learning activities. (Lohman & Woolf, 2001). In short, a supportive organizational climate with a good learning culture and shared values amongst teachers together play an essential role in promoting teacher engagement in PD activities (Kwakman, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Song, 2008).

### 3.2.2. Barriers to teacher engagement in PD

Besides investigating factors that enhance teacher engagement in PD, it is important to examine inhibitors to teacher PD. Researchers have approached barriers to PD from various facets and angles of teachers' personal and working life, and a variety of terms are used in the literature to describe these barriers. External and internal barriers were discussed by Johnstone and Rivera (1965) when identifying barriers to engagement in adult education activities. External factors referred to structure, culture, time, money, family duties such as child care, and weather, while internal inhibitors included self-esteem and intrinsic motivation, personal characteristics and beliefs or attitudes. The impact of the external and internal barriers on participation in learning activities varies between individuals. Sometimes, factors such as self-efficacy, collegiality, and an institutional working culture that motivate some teachers to engage in PD, prove to be barriers to other teachers.

Internal (personal) factors

### *Teachers' motivation and self-efficacy*

Many researchers have shown the impact of intrinsic motivation on promoting teacher PD (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Lohman, 2006; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Meister, 2010; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Scribner, 1999). In other words, a lack of motivation or interest in professional learning can be an inhibitor to teacher participation in PD activities (Sinyangwe, Billingsley, & Dimitriadi, 2016). Teachers' lack of motivation and interest in engaging in PD can be caused by low personal priority when teachers have to balance their time spent on other duties apart from PD, such as family and leisure activities (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985).

### *Teachers' self-efficacy*

Teacher self-efficacy is also a significant factor affecting teachers' participation in PD activities (Lohman, 2006). A negative sense of self-efficacy greatly hinders teachers' engagement in PD activities (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2003, 2006; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004).

According to Darkenwald and Valentine (1985), feelings of self-doubt, difference, and low academic self-esteem can negatively influence teachers' engagement in PD activities because they are not confident that they are capable enough to improve themselves and support students to achieve better learning outcomes. Lack of confidence can be the result of a lack of encouragement from friends and family, especially when teachers face personal problems such as situational difficulties related to child care, family problems, personal health problems or handicaps (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985).

### *Teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward PD activities*

Teachers' own opinions and feelings toward PD activities can considerably influence their participation in PD (Bayar, 2013). While positive attitudes could motivate teachers to engage in further PD activities (Silane Ruberto, 2003), negative attitudes severely deter their participation (Amos & Benton, 1988). If teachers do not find the PD activities practical and beneficial to their knowledge and skill improvement, they tend to regard them negatively which then limits their desire to attend again (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009).

Many studies have shown that teachers' beliefs about impractical and irrelevant PD activities considerably decreased their participation in those activities (Drage, 2010; Kwakman, 2003; Scribner, 1999; Wan & Lam, 2010). Some teachers doubt the relevance to teachers' own teaching purposes of mandated PD programs (Garet et al., 2001; Musanti & Pence, 2010). As a result, a number of teachers become frustrated, worried, and unwilling to participate in mandated PD activities (Hargreaves, 2004; Lohman, 2003; Scribner, 1999). As illustrated in the studies by Hargreaves (2004) and Lohman (2003), teachers were frustrated when they had to follow mandated PD programs and activities because they were not spending time on their own PD goals, but on administrators' or other community members' goals. Similarly, some teachers in Knight's (2000) study expressed their unwillingness to participate in a one-off training session, which they did not find helpful. Teachers even gave a further explanation that that time could be spent much better on preparing their classroom tasks.

Teachers' perceptions of PD can also limit the type of PD activities they would participate in (Sinyangwe et al., 2016). In Sinyangwe et al.'s (2016) study, for example, teachers only

engaged in PD activities which were formal, planned and structured by the government because they perceived PD as a directive from the government. In short, the lack of awareness of PD opportunities and limited access to PD information hinders teachers from participating.

External (environmental) factors

#### *Mediating factors*

One of the most influential factors on teacher PD participation is funding or monetary support. Many studies have shown that lack of funding or money considerably hinders teachers from participating in PD activities (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Kosgei, 2015; Lohman, 2000, 2005; Lohman & Woolf, 2001; Nabhani, Nicolas, & Bahous, 2014; Sinyangwe et al., 2016). Teachers may be required to take responsibility for several financial costs such as fees, transportation and accommodation and other daily expenses when attending PD activities such as conferences, workshops, or training courses (Schibeci & Hickey, 2004). However, many teachers do not earn high salaries. In Vietnam, teachers' salaries are quite low (Pham, 2001; Thu Huong, 2018), so many teachers in Vietnam, especially young teachers, cannot afford all the costs for PD activities and it is difficult for them to engage in PD activities without financial support.

A lack of incentive or meaningful rewards for professional learning can be regarded as another barrier to teacher participation in PD. In the study by Lohman (2000), teachers felt discouraged from engaging in PD when they received no or few rewards for doing non-teaching duties such as reviewing curriculum, mentoring teachers, leading teams and departments, and supervising student teachers. Lack of rewards for teacher learning, both monetary and non-monetary, is regarded as an inhibitor to teacher participation in PD

(Lohman, 2000, 2005; Lohman & Woolf, 2001). In other words, teachers' decisions to take part in PD or make learning efforts are negatively impacted by little or no financial incentive (Schleicher, 2011; Sinyangwe et al., 2016).

Last but not least, lack of learning material and courses also hinders teacher participation. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985, p. 178) indicated that lack of appropriate and relevant courses which fit respondents' perceived needs and interests is one of six inhibiting factors to participation in organized adult education, defined as "any organized learning activity for adults, including courses, workshops, seminars, and training programs offered by schools, colleges, and other organizations or community groups". More recently, Drage (2010) and Sinyangwe et al. (2016) support the same argument, confirming that irrelevant or poor-quality PD activities which could not meet the participants' need were a hindrance to teacher engagement in PD. Furthermore, poorly qualified trainers or facilitators are other factors that can also inhibit teacher participation in PD and training program (Kosgei, 2015). It is argued that outside presenters or experts have little or no idea of the contexts of their participants and their specific concerns, so they can upset participants by ignoring their expertise and expectations (Knight, 2000)

### *Community factors*

The community factor that was most frequently reviewed as a barrier to teacher PD in the literature is a poor relationship with colleagues. Many researchers agree on the impact of collegiality on teacher participation in PD activities (Hargreaves, 2004; Knight, 2000; Kosgei, 2015; Kwakman, 2003; Lee, 2013; Lohman, 2006). Collegiality can promote teachers' learning when they collaborate well with each other, but there exists a historical belief that lack of collaboration or conflicts with colleagues can adversely hinder teachers

from taking part in PD activities (Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000, 2006; Scribner, 1999). Due to a poor relationship with other colleagues, teachers become hesitant to join in study groups or shared tasks and gradually become accustomed to working alone. Keeping away from other colleagues will then limit teachers' learning of knowledge, experience, and best practices from each other (Guskey, 2009).

In addition to a poor collegial relationship, a poor relationship with administrators also hinders teacher participation in PD programs and activities (Kosgei, 2015). In a study by Maranga (1977, as cited in Kosgei, 2015), teachers would be resistant to any suggestions for learning and improvement when they perceive their supervisors as mistake finders. Furthermore, the PD participation of teachers with families can be prevented due to family responsibilities (Biggsby & Firestone, 2016; Scribner, 1999). Without family support, teacher participation in PD activities is considerably challenged.

### *Structural factors*

From the literature, it can be seen that there are two main structural hindering factors to teacher participation in PD activities: (1) uneven distribution of labour which results in teachers' excessive workload, and (2) a leadership style represented by top-down decision making and lack of recognition (Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Le, 2002; Lohman, 2000; Pham, 2001; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Sinyangwe et al., 2016). Sinyangwe et al. (2016) conclude that heavy workload significantly hinders teachers from engaging in PD activities. Kwakman (2003) and Knight (2000) similarly argue that work pressure and job variety negatively influence teacher participation in PD. Teachers in the study by Knight (2000) experienced feelings of being overwhelmed by tasks assigned to them and gradually became stressed and fatigued because of the excessive workload that they were required to

complete. Similarly, Pham (2001, p. 3) describes the teachers in his study as “teaching machines” as they teach “five hours in the morning, five hours in the afternoon, and two more in the evening”.

Leadership style also influences teachers’ PD efforts considerably. For example, designing policy for teachers with good achievement from PD participation can promote teacher participation in further PD activities (Hargreaves, 2004; Kwakman, 2003), even when the incentives or rewards are quite simple, such as the opportunity to travel. A reward represents administrators’ recognition for teachers’ PD efforts, so the lack of such recognition tends to decrease teacher participation in non-teaching activities like PD activities (Lohman, 2000). In addition to a lack of encouraging strategies, top-down decision making can also be a deterrent to teacher PD. As presented in the study by Knight (2000), teachers were uncomfortable with top-down decision making on their PD in the district, and they did not find the PD activities that they were required to attend practical or useful for their professional improvement. Similarly, Lohman (2000) indicated that teachers’ limited decision making in school management hinders teachers from informal learning. The study illustrated that, because teachers’ interim findings and ideas were rejected, they were not motivated to pursue any other work in their group for the rest of the year.

### *Time*

Many studies in the literature have revealed the significant influence of time availability on teacher participation in PD activities (Guskey, 1999, 2003b; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2003, 2006; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009).

Time conflict and time constraints are highlighted as one of the most significant deterrents

to teacher participation in PD and learning activities (Badri et al., 2016; Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000, 2006; Nabhani et al., 2014).

In order to participate in PD, teachers have to balance their time spent in many other activities including time for teaching, lesson preparation, traveling if the venue for PD is far from their home, family commitments, and leisure activities (Bayar, 2013; Lohman, 2000; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Roux, 2013; Scribner, 1999). As a result, teachers have to consider what activities to spend their time on. If they decide to participate in PD activities, they have less time to spend on leisure activities, or they may not complete home duties and childcare satisfactorily (Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Wan & Lam, 2010). Similarly, teachers' excessive workload such as face-to-face teaching, marking, and other teaching-related tasks can limit the time that teachers use for other activities such as sharing experience and materials with their colleagues and conducting classroom inquiry or practicing new teaching techniques (Lohman, 2000, 2003, 2006). As concluded in the study by Lohman (2000), lack of time is very challenging for teacher learning. Teachers explicitly indicated that they experienced a lack of time for learning because they had to spend most of their time dealing with teaching bigger classes with students with special needs, and other non-teaching responsibilities, including managerial and operational tasks (Lohman, 2000). In short, a lack of time constrains teachers' participation in both individual and organizational learning (Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2000), and is identified as a significant barrier to teacher PD (Drage, 2010).

### 3.3. PD for language teachers in Vietnam

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, PD for language teachers has recently been taken into special consideration in Vietnam, and many PD initiatives have been taken through Project 2020 in order to improve teachers' language proficiency, instructional competence and capability of doing research (V. C. Le, 2011; Nguyen, 2018; Tran, 2017). A search of the literature in PD activities and PD models for language teachers in Vietnam reveals that the prominent PD activities are top-down activities or programs with structured contents, developed and run by educational authorities, notably MOET (Ho et al., 2014; Le, 2018; Nguyen & Mai, 2018; Pham, 2001). This is in contrast to international definitions of PD for language teachers as a range of activities that enable teachers to enhance their language knowledge and proficiency, improve their pedagogical skills, and explore new theories and trends in language teaching especially within the current education reform (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In accordance with this understanding of PD, Richards and Farrell (2005) illustrate current approaches to PD for language teachers, which include both individual or group self-learning activities such as self-observation, keeping a teaching journal or teaching portfolios, and collaborative activities or other training activities such as teacher study groups, workshops, peer observation or action research.

The result of the top-down PD initiatives in Vietnam is limited because most PD programs adopt a cascade approach: a few key teachers attend PD programs to be “trained in a particular content, and them, in turn, go ahead and train their colleagues on the same” at their institutions (Bett, 2016, p. 3). PD programs adopting the cascade approach are conducted face-to-face in major cities and participating teachers from outside those cities are required to travel in order to attend (Ho, 2015; V. C. Le, 2011; Nguyen & Mai, 2018).

This leads to barriers related to time, funding and human resources which can hinder the effectiveness of this form of PD (Nguyen & Mai, 2018). Furthermore, PD programs using the cascade model are periodic and simply transmit knowledge without considering the local context such as individual identity or school working cultures and environments, so that they fail to help teachers to solve their day-to-day teaching and learning problems (Nguyen & Mai, 2018).

Arguably, teacher participation in PD is influenced by a multitude of factors, including social factors, structural factors, and cultural factors, as discussed in section 3.2 in this chapter. Thus, the limited outcomes of PD initiatives in Project 2020 may be attributed to factors not yet adequately identified. It is crucial, therefore, to investigate factors impacting teacher participation in PD at Vietnamese universities in order to maximise teachers' engagement. It is also significant to study the factors impacting teacher PD from the perspectives of both EFL teachers and managers because when both teachers and policy makers understand enablers and barriers for teacher PD, practical solutions to improve the quality of teacher PD can be discussed. However, there has been no study focusing on this problem from the perspectives of both EFL teachers and managers in the Vietnamese context of foreign language educational reform, so the findings of this study can help to fill this gap in the literature.

## Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented definitions of PD from a narrow view which mainly refers to the traditional forms of PD (e.g., one-off workshops or conferences, short courses or training, lectures by guest speakers, and staff meetings) and a broader view relating to various PD activities which help to enhance teachers' professional knowledge and skills and their

growth as a teacher. PD activities from this broader perspective comprise both traditional forms of PD and the reform PD activities such as study groups, teacher networks, mentoring, individual learning, individual research projects or teacher learning communities. By reviewing the literature on the understandings of teacher PD in general, as well as in the Vietnamese educational context, it can be concluded that teacher PD in Vietnam can best be defined as any formal or informal learning activities that enable teachers to improve their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, enhancing students' learning outcomes and supporting institutional development.

This chapter has also presented a review of previous studies and literature on factors motivating and hindering teachers' participation in PD activities. These factors are related on the one hand to individuals' motivation, beliefs and attitudes toward PD and on the other hand to environmental or contextual factors. However, although I searched for some understanding of the dynamic interaction of those factors, I could find no literature. The insights generated from the literature review also emphasize a need to investigate factors enabling or inhibiting teachers' engagement in PD activities in a particular social context in which teachers' professional lives are influenced by particular sociocultural, historical and contextual factors. A lack of empirical studies in this research field in Vietnam supports the primary objective of the present study: exploring the enablers and barriers to EFL teachers' PD engagement in the Vietnamese HE context. In addition, it is necessary for the theoretical framework in this study to consider sociocultural and contextual factors, so a cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) originating from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is used. The use of CHAT in this study is detailed in Chapter 4: Theoretical frameworks and methodology.

## CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

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### Chapter overview

This chapter highlights how the present research is designed in order to explore the current situation of EFL teacher PD and factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities in

the context of Vietnamese HE. The chapter begins with a discussion of key issues in the research paradigms, the ontology, and the epistemology, and the paradigm underpinning the present research before discussing the theoretical framework employed in this study. The case and research site are then explored, followed by details of data sources, data collection, the data analysis approach and the process of analysing the data. The last section is about ethical considerations in the present research.

#### 4.1. Research paradigm

A paradigm is defined as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p.17). A research paradigm provides the researcher with a philosophical, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological basis to conduct research and to interpret the world (Morgan, 1983). A paradigm comprises four main components: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Scotland, 2012). These components can help to distinguish one research paradigm from another (Guba, 1990).

Ontology is “the study of being,” and “the nature of existence” (Crotty, 1998, p.10).

Epistemology refers to “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). In other words, epistemology deals with how we understand and help to explain the theory of knowledge. Ontological issues and epistemological issues are closely related and emerge together. Inquirers from different paradigm perspectives hold differing ontological and epistemological assumptions of reality and knowledge underpinning their specific research approach (Scotland, 2012).

Methodology is defined as the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods, and links the choice and use of methods to the expected

outcomes (Crotty, 1998, p.3). Methods are related to “the techniques and procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108), methodology deals with the question of how the inquirer can go about finding out whatever they believe can be known. Methods are viewed as the particular techniques and procedures that researchers use to collect and analyse data in their studies (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

### Research paradigm for this study

The phenomenon of teachers’ learning and teachers’ engagement in professional learning does not naturally exist, but occurs due to the interaction between humans or between humans and other factors in the surrounding environment. In the present study, teachers’ attitudes and behaviours toward PD are expected to be shaped by the interaction between teachers and various factors related to their work in their working contexts. Therefore, the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm is adopted in this study.

Constructivism assumes a relativist ontology, meaning that there exist multiple versions of constructed realities rather than a single true one (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, the ontology of constructivist research is relativist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012). The key principle of the constructivist paradigm is that realities are socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Those realities can be explored and determined by “the individual’s experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interactions between the individual and the researcher” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130) and the interactions between the researcher and the subjects of the research, and among the research participants (Chalmers, Manley, & Wasserman, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005). Realities

are not judged in terms of their truthfulness, but their sophistication (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Within the constructivist paradigm, also known as the interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Scotland, 2012), knowledge is relatively constructed and dependent on how individuals construct their “personal meaning system on the same objective reality” (Benson, 1997, p. 21). According to Crotty (1998) and Scotland (2012), knowledge is socially constructed based on cultural derivation and historical situation. Knowledge is not the duplication or the reflection of reality, but the understanding of numerous people about a specific subject of the research (Candy, 1991; Petty et al., 2012). For interpretivists, knowledge or meanings are constructed by human beings as they interact with the world they are interpreting. Knowledge should also be understood and interpreted based on time, values and social contexts. Therefore, there are various realities that are individually and socially constructed through “the interaction between language and aspects of an independent world” (Scotland, 2012, p. 11). A social constructivist approach originated by Lev Vygotsky is adopted by some interpretivist researchers who focus on the impact of social collaboration on building meaning and knowledge (Kell, 2004).

Cousins (2009, p. 9) states that:

Cultures of inquiry associated with positivism could be said to pursue *explanations* of and *predictions* about human behaviour, while those associated with interpretivism aspire to generate *understandings* and *insights* in contexts that are held to be inherently too unstable for reliable predictions to be made.

The methodology of the present study was devised in order to attain its principal objective: to investigate the factors impacting EFL teachers’ engagement in PD activities in the

Vietnamese HE context. This study required an in-depth investigation of EFL teachers' and educational managers' perspectives on the significance of PD for EFL teachers' development and the factors enabling and hindering teachers from participating in PD activities. In addition, it was essential to analyse the structure and working culture of the researched institution and the context of Vietnamese HE regarding EFL teacher PD in order to understand deeply the contextual and structural inhibitors and motivators influencing teacher PD participation within the particular context of the Vietnamese university. Taking all these together, a qualitative case study was adopted as the research methodology for this study to gain insight into EFL teacher PD from the multiple perspectives of different stakeholders (EFL teachers, faculty managers, and institutional managers) by utilising a number of methods: questionnaires, documents, focus groups, and interviews. Further justifications for this choice are presented in section 4.3.

## 4.2. Theoretical framework

In the first section, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is presented and justified as the core analytical and theoretical framework for the study. It is used first to identify factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities according to different activity system components. CHAT is also used to address tensions between managers' and teacher's objectives in undertaking PD. In the subsequent section, self-determination theory (SDT) is introduced as a tool to assist in the analysis of one particular component in the CHAT activity system: the *Subject*. SDT enables the researcher to understand better the reasons why various factors can motivate teachers' engagement in PD activities.

#### 4.2.1. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT)

##### Overview of CHAT

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) was elaborated in the 1980s and 1990s when researchers felt a need for greater understanding of material and cultural reality, but found that the behavioural and social sciences did not support them to do so (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999; Plakitsi, 2013b). As stated in Engeström et al. (1999), the behavioural and social sciences traditionally separated the study of socioeconomic structures from the study of individual behaviour. As a result, CHAT was originally developed to meet the need for an approach that could link the individual and their surrounding social structure into a self-contained activity (Engeström et al., 1999; Plakitsi, 2013a).

CHAT was initiated and developed based on Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective and referred to the relationships between the perceptions of humans and their activities. From Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, all cognitive developmental processes start on the social level, and knowledge is constructed in social interaction, or co-constructed, with a more or a less knowledgeable person (Lantolf, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a). Social interaction, which is framed within an activity and based on the context in which social practices and activities occur, is the basis of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). From a CHAT perspective, human cognition and behaviour are studied within a collectively organized, artifact-mediated activity system (Engeström, 1987; Leontiev, 1978), and the activity system is the fundamental unit of analysis (Roth & Lee, 2007). Roth, Radford, and LaCroix (2012) defined CHAT as "a cross-disciplinary framework for studying how humans purposefully transform natural and social reality, including

themselves, as an ongoing culturally and historically situated, materially and socially mediated process” (p. 1).

Contrary to other theories, which affirm that learning is a precursor to activity, CHAT assumes that human activity precedes and triggers conscious learning. In other words, human consciousness could be considered a part of human interaction with the environment. In general, CHAT highlights the interaction of the human mind and human activity within their surrounding environment and conceptualises individuals and their environments as a holistic unit of analysis (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). In particular, CHAT focuses on several factors, notably the activities which people engage in, the tools used in the activities, the relationships among various components in the activities, and the objects or outcomes of the activities (Engeström, 1994).

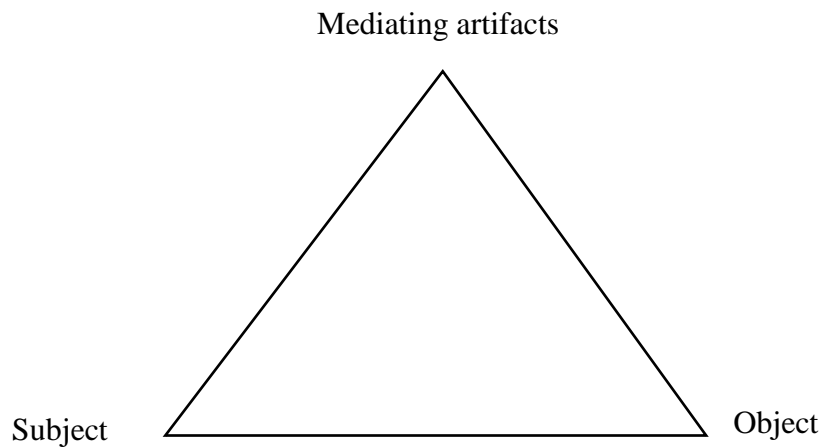
#### Development of CHAT

CHAT has evolved through three generations of development, with focuses and principles varying from generation to generation (Engeström, 1987).

#### *First generation*

Vygotsky’s identification of a mediated action triangle (Figure 4.1) is referred to as the first generation of CHAT (Engeström, 1996, 2001), which was developed on the basis of his conception of mediation. As presented in the triangle, the human subject’s actions are put in a relationship with artifacts that mediate the subject in their actions to achieve their set object (goal). According to Vygotsky, “the self [can] no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and . . . society [can] no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts” (Engeström, 2001, p.134). The relationship

between a subject and an object cannot be identified in the human brain, but it can be identified by historically studying society and culture, or studying society and culture in the process of change (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981b).



*Figure 4.1: The basic triangular representation of mediation (adapted from Cole & Engeström, 1993)*

In this triangular representation, the individual is the unit of analysis. First generation activity theory shows the relationships among *Subject*, *Mediating artifacts* and *Object*, or in other words, it depicts how a person makes use of socially constructed artifacts to mediate actions in order to achieve her/his object. The limitation of first generation theory is that it merely focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, while the other agents of mediation, like human activity and social relations, are left untouched (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999).

#### *Second generation*

Leontiev further developed Vygotsky's basic triangle to build the second generation of CHAT. While Vygotsky was particularly interested in the individual nature of human activity with social others, Leontiev highlighted collective activity itself as the unit of

analysis (Engeström, 2001; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Leontiev (1978) affirmed that thought and cognition were part of social life, and could be understood as a part of systems of social relations, on the one hand, and individuals' intentions in certain social conditions on the other.

Leontiev (1981a) defined activity as

the nonadditive, molar unit of life for the material, corporeal subject. In a narrower sense (i.e., on the psychological level), it is the unit of life that is mediated by mental reflection. The real function of this unit is to orient the subject in the world of objects. In other words, activity is not a reaction or aggregate of reactions, but a system with its own structure, its own internal transformations, and its own development. (p. 46)

Activity mediates a person's actions and has an impact on the way they achieve their objectives while being itself mediated by artifacts that have been shaped by human agents in certain cultural and historical contexts (Leontiev, 1981b). According to Leontiev (2009), "the main thing that distinguishes one activity from another lies in the difference between their objects, it is the object of activity that endows it with a certain orientation" (p. 400). Although Leontiev expanded Vygotsky's theory from an individual focus to a collective activity system, he never graphically developed a model of a collective activity system. This was later done by Engeström (1987, p. 78) (Figure 4.2). By adding the elements of community, rules, and divisions of labour, and highlighting their interactions with each other, Leontiev signaled the pivotal role of social/collective elements in an activity system which Engeström represented as a series of connections across an expanded mediated action triangle (see Figure 4.2).

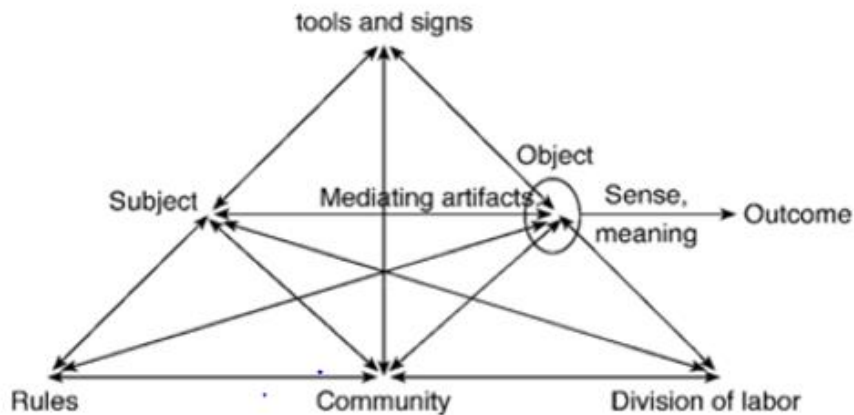


Figure 4.2: The structure of a human activity system (Engeström, 1987, p. 78)

As presented in Figure 4.2, the elements of CHAT include subject, object, outcome, mediating artifacts, rules, community, and division of labour. All these elements are not isolated but interact with one another.

### Subject

The ‘subject’ refers to the individual or group of individuals who engage in the activity system for the same object or purpose, and their actions are the focus of analysis (Daniels, 2004; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999; Trust, 2017). In addition, Plakitsi (2013a) described the subjects of an activity system as those “whose viewpoint is adopted” (p. 2).

### Object and outcome

The ‘object’ is the motive, direction of the activity, or the focus of the activity which the subject acts on to achieve the outcome or final goal (J. H. Cho, 2014; Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 2000; Leontiev, 1981b). Leontiev (1978, p. 62) clarified that “the object of the activity is its true motive”. The formation of an outcome occurs when the object goes through multiple transformations until it finally stabilizes (Bravo Olavarria, 2013;

Engeström, 2006). The subject interacts with the object through the mediation of external and internal artifacts (Plakitsi, 2013a).

#### Mediating artifacts

‘Artifacts’ include signs and tools which possess a mediation function (Bedny, Seglin, & Meister, 2000). Tools can be material, like the physical items in the external world, or psychological, like the cognitive tactics used in higher mental functions (Trust, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Engeström (1990) classified artifacts into four types: *What* artifacts, *How* artifacts, *Why* artifacts and *Where to* artifacts. Those four types of artifacts are respectively used to classify objects; propose processes and procedures on, within, or between objects; explain the behaviour of objects and predict the potential future of objects. The primary function of artifacts is to mediate between subject and object to lead to outcomes that can change society, the environment, and individuals (Plakitsi, 2013b). This interaction is influenced by rules, community, and division of labour.

#### Rules

*Rules* refer to explicit and implicit norms, disciplines, and regulations that regulate actions and interactions within the system and direct individuals to effectively participate as a member in a community (Bravo Olavarria, 2013; Engeström, 1993; Plakitsi, 2013a). Daniels (2004) defines the rules as “the principles of regulation of action and interaction” (p. 123). *Rules* represent the expectations of the administration toward participants and can indicate power and constraint (Bravo Olavarria, 2013; Stryker, 1994). *Rules* can also be understood as the agreements relating to the assigning of tasks among different members of the community, such as in a task completion procedure, and timelines for task completion (Bravo Olavarria, 2013).

## Community

*Community* can be understood as a physical environment or place in which activity occurs (Cho, 2014; Mwanza-Simwami, Engeström, & Amon, 2009). *Community* can refer to groups of individuals who share common interests or the same objectives (Bravo Olavarria, 2013; Daniels, 2004; Osuna, 2003; Plakitsi, 2013a). *Community* can also be a “system of multiple points of view, traditions, and interests” (Bravo Olavarria, 2013, p. 51).

## Division of labour

*Division of labour* refers to the division of tasks, roles, power, and status amongst members of a community (Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 1987, 2001; Plakitsi, 2013a). Distribution of labour can be horizontal or vertical. Specifically, tasks are distributed horizontally when they are allotted across members of a community who have equal status, and vertically when they are distributed to members based on their positions or power (Barab, Barnett, Yamagata-Lynch, Squire, & Keating, 2002; Bravo Olavarria, 2013).

## *Third generation of CHAT*

The third generation of CHAT further expands the second model to include at least two interacting activity systems, so that the unit of analysis is not individual activity, but joint activity (Engeström, 1987, 1999). The third generation, expanded by Engeström, aims to develop conceptual tools to understand relations between multiple interacting activity systems which share potential objects (Bravo Olavarria, 2013; Dang, 2017) (see Figure 4.3). The emphasis on dialogicality and multi-voicedness distinguishes the third generation from the second generation.

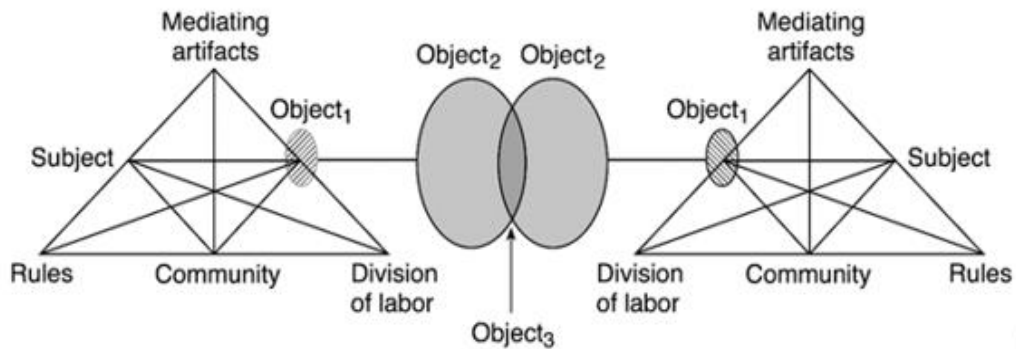


Figure 4.3: Two interacting activity systems as minimal model for third generation of activity theory (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

Engeström (2000, 2001) highlighted the importance of identifying the contradictions between two or more components within an activity system or between activity systems in the development of activity systems. If contradictions which impose tensions on participants are identified, solutions to overcome those tensions can be worked out to improve the activity system. Engeström (2000, p. 996) states that

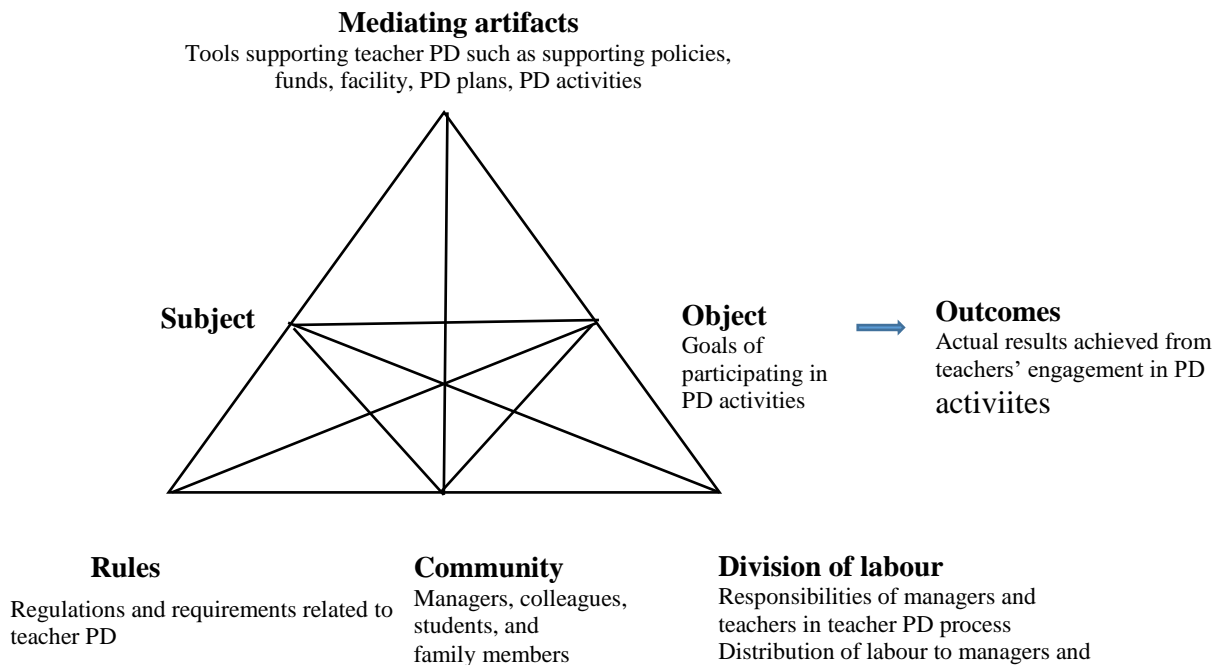
The identification of contradictions in an activity system helps practitioners and administrators to focus their efforts on the root causes of problems. Such collaborative analysis and modeling is a crucial precondition for the creation of a shared vision for the expansive solution of the contradictions.

In CHAT, contradictions and tensions are not embedded in individuals' personalities, but "rooted in the system in which the individuals are a part" (Peruski, 2003, p. 158).

Contradictions play a significant role not only in understanding problems and conflicts highlighted by the theory, but also by indicating signals for potential improvements and development (Barab, Evans, & Baek, 2004, as cited in Dang, 2014).

*Application of CHAT in this study*

The second generation of CHAT is used as the core analytical framework for this study, as it facilitates the identification of features of individual human activity and practices. In an attempt to analyse teachers' engagement in PD, it is necessary to consider it in relation to different components of activity, namely the rules they have to follow, the community in which they live and work, the division of labour, the tools or instruments that support them to complete their work, and the new object for their teaching and professional improvement (see Figure 4.4). The relationship between EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities and all those social, cultural, and historical factors involved in that activity will be explored and categorised in Chapters 7 and 8.



*Figure 4.4: Activity system of 'Teachers' engagement in PD's (adapted from Engeström, 1987)*

The field of teacher PD can be seen as generating at least two activity systems: that of teachers' engagement in PD, and that of their managers' planning for teacher PD. While this study focuses on the former, the *Object* component in the activity system of managers' planning for teacher PD is also considered in order to compare the *Objects* of the two activity systems. The other components of the activity system of managers' planning for teacher PD are beyond the scope of this study.

The third generation of CHAT is employed in Chapter 8 to identify the similarities and differences between the goals of teacher engagement in PD activities and those of managers' PD planning. As a result, differences regarding managers' and teachers' perspectives on the impact of other activity system components on teachers' engagement in PD can also be explored.

#### 4.2.2. Self-determination theory

CHAT is useful as a framework of analysis for factors impacting teachers' participation in PD activities because it enables the investigation of the factors from various angles, which include but are not limited to the social, cultural, structural, and individual elements of an activity system relating to teachers' engagement in PD. However, an additional theory is needed in order to deeply explain why those factors particularly impact teachers' professional learning, in other words, why they impact teachers as the *Subject* of the activity system and how they relate to teacher motivation. Self-determination theory, one of the most comprehensive theories of human motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008), will be used to explain why certain factors worked positively or negatively upon teachers' engagement in PD activities and to understand teacher agency in relation to factors impacting their engagement in PD activities.

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan, classifies motivation into two broad types—*intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation—based on different goals that give rise to an individual’s action and an individual’s levels of self-determination demonstrated when engaging in a task (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2002, 2012; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Deci and Ryan (1985b, p. 38) define self-determination as “a quality of human functioning that involves the experience of choice; in other words, the experience of an internal locus of control”. *Intrinsic* motivation is a self-determined activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, individuals also exercise some level of self-determination when they engage in a task certain types of *extrinsic* motivation, known as *identified* and *integrated* regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

#### *Intrinsic motivation*

*Intrinsic* motivation is the motivation to engage in a task for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from its performance (Deci et al., 1991). When *intrinsically* motivated, individuals do not engage in an activity because of “a reward contingency or control” (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, p. 38), but for their interest in the activity or its own rewards. When *intrinsically* motivated, individuals exercise the highest level of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2012), and tend to devote considerable effort to the task and persist in the task for a long time (Ngo, 2015). Consequently, *intrinsic* motivation tends to lead to high-quality learning and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Within SDT, basic psychological needs can be viewed as determinants of *intrinsic* motivation. According to STD, basic psychological needs comprise a need for *autonomy*, a need for *competence*, and a need for *relatedness*. First, the need for *autonomy* refers to an individual’s need to have the freedom to act and experience their behaviour without any

control or pressure from external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ngo, 2015). In other words, autonomy involves a “high degree of experienced choice with respect to the initiation and regulation of one’s own behaviour” (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, p. 111). Second, the need for competence is the need to be competent and effective in interactions with other people and the social environment. Competence is not a skill; rather, it is an individual’s feeling of being confident and effective in performing a task (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The need for competence motivates individuals to seek and conquer challenges that are optimal for their capacities (Deci, 1975). In this way, individuals have opportunities to exercise, maintain, and enhance their capacities, which play a critical role in their growth and development process (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Third, the need for relatedness is the need to create emotional bonds and secure attachments with other people. It illustrates an individual’s need for being emotionally connected to caring and responsive relationships (Deci et al., 1991). The need for relatedness refers to the inherent desire to be cared for, respected, and valued by significant people such as family members, managers, colleagues, and students (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Among those three basic needs, Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that the innate psychological needs for autonomy and competence are satisfied by intrinsically motivated behaviours. Individuals become interested in a task and/or find the task significant to their growth and development only when their engagement in an activity is perceived as voluntary, they feel competent and the task is optimally challenging. In contrast, if these needs are not satisfied, people may find engaging in a compulsory task dull, unbeneficial to their growth and development, and even a waste of time (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2012; Deci et al., 1991).

## Extrinsic motivation

Although intrinsic motivation is obviously important, people are not intrinsically motivated to undertake most activities but are required to carry out many tasks that are controlled by others (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). In order to perform the required tasks, individuals need to exercise extrinsic motivation, which refers to motivation to engage in an activity not out of interest but as a means to an end (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2002). When extrinsically motivated, an individual is controlled by external forces such as monetary rewards, praise, and sanctions (Deci & Ryan, 1985b).

Extrinsic motivation is classified into four subtypes: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2000). External regulation refers to people's engagement in an activity because of the offer of a reward or the threat of punishment. External regulation is the least autonomous type of extrinsic motivation and is typically contrasted with intrinsic motivation.

The second type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation, which refers to a controlled motivation and external forces such as internalized rules or demands, which cause a sense of pressure and obligation (Deci et al., 1991). On the one hand, introjected regulation is still quite controlling because people engage in some activities to avoid anxiety or out of pride (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, it can be seen as a form of slightly autonomous extrinsic motivation, since individuals strive to engage in an activity to confirm their value in other people's eyes or in order to avoid a threat to their self-esteem (i.e., feelings of guilt or shame) (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

The third type is identified regulation, which is more autonomous or self-determined. With identification, individuals acknowledge the significance of task accomplishment and accept the regulatory process, and they will have a sense of choice and desire to complete a task (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Put differently, if performing a task because of identified regulation, individuals exercise a certain level of self-determination.

The fourth type is integrated regulation, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, integrating the regulatory process and the individual's coherent sense of self (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Integrated regulation occurs when an individual has drawn on a range of values and needs for their choice of action. With integrated regulation, individual engagement in a task is fully self-determined or, to some extent, related to intrinsic motivation. However, intrinsic motivation is different from integrated regulation. While intrinsic motivation is related to interest in the activity itself, integrated regulation refers to an individual's conscious acknowledgment of the significance of an activity for a valued outcome.

#### Types of motivation and development of self-determination

As mentioned above, SDT distinguishes different types of motivation based on reasons why individuals carry out an activity and how self-determined they are when engaging in an activity. A continuum from amotivation to extrinsic motivation and then intrinsic motivation conceptualises types of motivation in connection with the development of self-determination level (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2000) (see Figure 4.5).

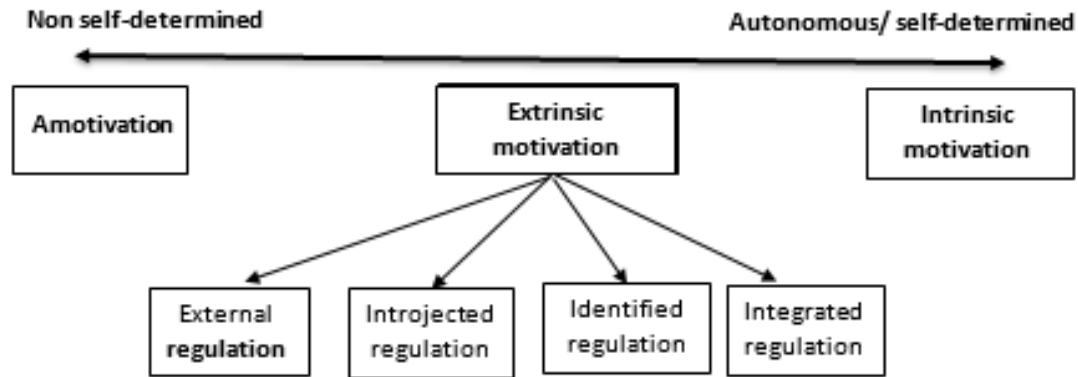


Figure 4.5: Types of motivation and self-determination (adapted from Ngo, 2015, p. 59)

At the far left of Figure 4.5 is amotivation, which is illustrated with no self-determination and no motivation. Amotivation occurs when people do not value an activity or are not able to see the relationship between their participation in an activity and the outcomes of their engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). Amotivation can refer to a situation when people do not feel they are competent to carry out a task successfully (Deci, 1975; Ryan & Deci, 2002). When people are amotivated, they become indifferent to activities and have no intention to engage in those activities; as a result, they may react negatively when they are required to participate in those ongoing activities.

In the middle of the continuum, extrinsic motivation is divided into the four substyles described above because people experience different levels of self-determination in each one.

#### Application of SDT in this study

SDT is employed in Chapter 8 of this study to shed light on the factors motivating teachers' engagement in PD activities. In particular, discussion on the motivating factors can be generated more deeply based on types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. We can

understand the reasons why teachers engage in activities in which they are less interested, based on the nature of external regulation (i.e., reward, a punishment, and important people's compliments), introjected regulation (their value in other people's eyes or self-esteem), identified regulation (the significance of task accomplishment), and integrated regulation (acknowledgment of an activity's significance). In addition, SDT also enables us to discuss the level of self-determination that teachers have exercised when participating in a range of PD activities in the Vietnamese HE context. In other words, SDT is used to understand agency in relation to the factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities.

### 4.3. Case study research

#### 4.3.1. Case study

A case study approach is utilized in the present study in order to address the research questions. Case study is defined as an “in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 436). The phenomenon and context can refer to more tangible subjects such as individuals and organizations, and less tangible ones such as relationships and processes (Yin, 2014). The conceptualisations mentioned above fit the nature of the present research that explores both more tangible aspects of teacher PD in the form of EFL teachers and their institutions, and less tangible aspects of relationships between teacher PD and sociocultural factors. Additionally, case study is “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real life’ context” (Simons, 2009, p. 21). Therefore, “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life

events” (Yin, 2009, p. 4), and it can enable us to discover things related to small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, school performance, and changes in individuals.

In this case study, I deeply investigate the phenomenon of in-service EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context, particularly exploring how and why university English teachers in the context of Vietnamese HE engage in PD, how sociocultural and contextual factors influence English teacher PD, and how to enhance teacher PD. Multiple sources of data—national and institutional documents, questionnaires for EFL teachers, focus groups with EFL teachers and individual interviews with faculty and institutional managers (see section 4.4)—were included in order to capture the complexity of people’s views and PD activities in a certain context. The theoretical frameworks described in section 4.2 of this chapter facilitate the investigation and help to explain the relationship between specific factors more appropriately. Furthermore, an insight into the real status of teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context was discovered, and this is the strength of case studies (Breg & Lune, 2012). By revealing how different sociocultural and structural components influence teacher PD rather than merely identifying the PD activities that teachers have engaged in, potential ways to improve teacher PD will be recommended.

#### 4.3.2. Research site selection

In this research, a multi-disciplinary institution that offers a variety of training levels, including vocational diploma, diploma, bachelor degree, Masters degree, and doctoral degree, was selected as the research site. This is one of the biggest universities in the North of Vietnam in terms of student numbers (around 40,000). English is a compulsory subject at all training levels in the institution, and this could explain why the faculty of foreign

languages has the biggest number of teachers—about 170 teachers in 2016 and more than 200 teachers in 2017.

The organizational structure of the participating institution in Vietnam (see Figure 4.5) shows that faculties are at the same level as departments, centres and institutes and the deans of faculties directly report to the Rector and Vice rectors. Faculties in the participating institution primarily focus on training and academic issues. Like the deans of the other faculties, the dean of the faculty of foreign languages takes the main responsibility for managing the faculty academically and administratively, and the associate deans assist the dean based on specific working duties assigned by the dean. Therefore, it is the dean and associate deans who are in charge of developing PD plans for the teachers, supervising teachers' engagement in PD, evaluating teachers' performance and making plans for the faculty development as a whole. In addition to the managerial job, both deans and associate deans are required to do classroom teaching. Specifically, deans and associate deans are required to carry out 50% and 75% of a teacher's teaching workload respectively. This means that the dean and associate deans perform the roles of a teacher and dean or associate dean at the same time.

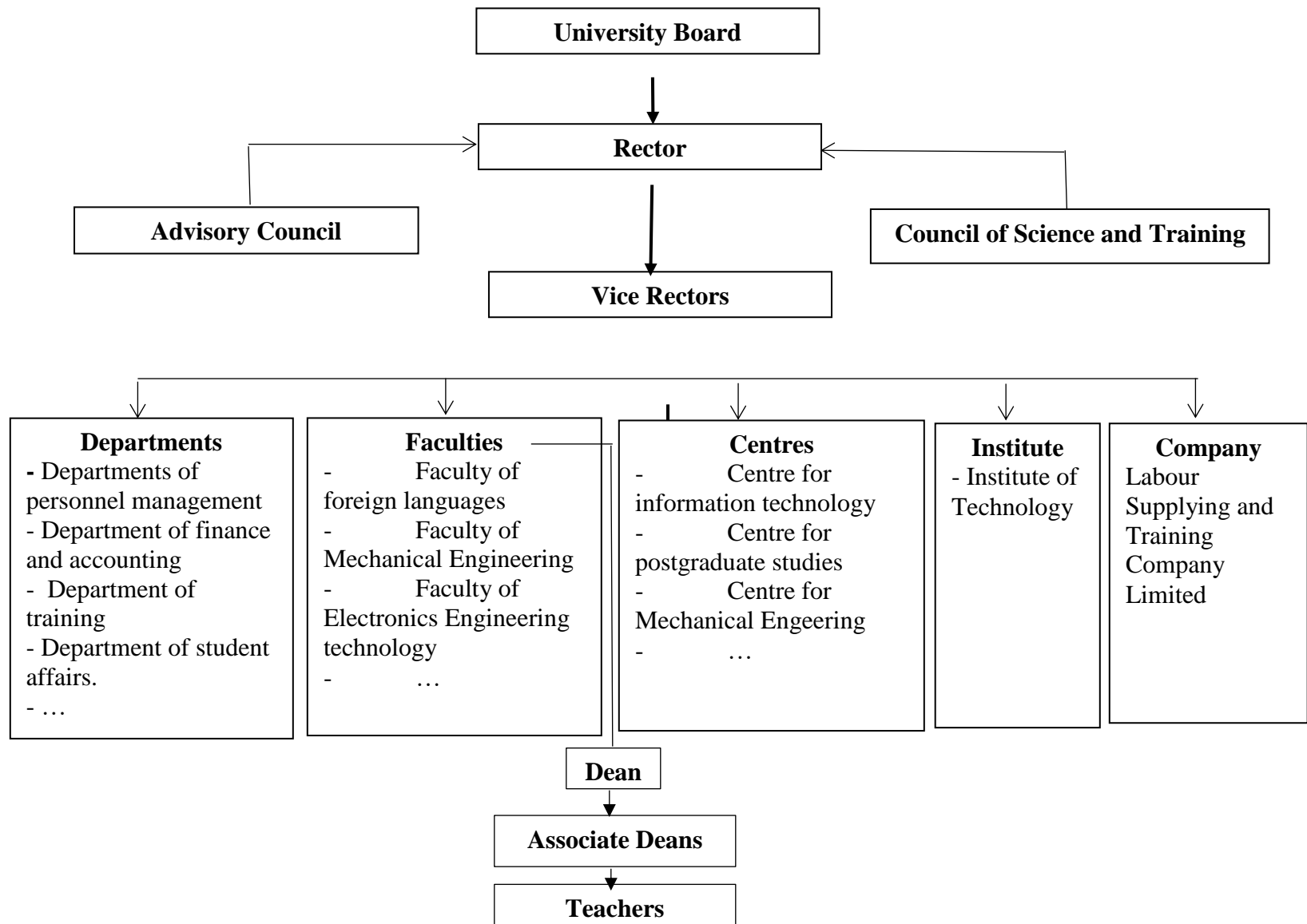


Figure 4.6: Organisational structure of the participating institution in Vietnam

There are several reasons why this multidisciplinary institution was chosen as the research site for this project. First, I have been working in this institution for nearly 15 years, and know it well in terms of both structure and administrative issues. This made it easier to gain access to the research site (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Secondly, PD for EFL teachers in this institution has been seriously considered due to the constant development and reforms of the English curriculum since 2006. This university was one of the early pioneers in developing the project on improving the quality of English teaching and learning for non-English major students in 2006. The English hours increased significantly from 120 to 360 allocated equally in the first 4 semesters of a bachelor degree course. The English requirement for undergraduates was also set in the project and introduced to students. Since 2009, information and communication technologies (ICT) have been applied in English teaching and learning for non-English major students, and blended learning has been designed and added to the English curriculum. Since 2015, based on the main suggestions and recommendations mentioned in Project 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008), the faculty of foreign languages has carried out a new version of the English language project, in which different English curricula have been applied for different groups of majors, including Business English; English for electrical and electronics engineering; English for garment technology and fashion design; English for hospitality; English for tourism; and English for the automobile industry. English learning activities for students have been modified and diversified. Students can participate in various learning activities both in the regular classroom and beyond, including participating in an English Learning Community, mentoring groups, or extra evening classes.

Accordingly, it is crucial for EFL teachers to improve constantly to follow the new

curriculum and the implementation of different versions of English language projects. EFL teachers have had opportunities to engage in PD and had a variety of PD experiences. Teachers were required to improve their English proficiency and professional knowledge and skills, such as English teaching approaches, employing information technology in English language teaching, and to study by themselves and participate in various PD activities. They were invited to attend several workshops on testing and assessment which were organized by Project 2020 to improve their knowledge in that field and to gain some experience from the discussions in the workshops. For all these reasons, EFL teachers in this institution were invited to share their rich experience and opinions on PD that this research project sought to investigate.

Prior to conducting this study, I was granted approvals from The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and the President of the institution where this study was conducted.

#### 4.4. Data sources

Data sources for this research are both primary and secondary. The primary data was collected from a questionnaire for EFL teachers on teachers' perspectives on the importance of PD and factors influencing teacher PD and teachers' PD experiences; from interviews with managers; and from focus groups with EFL teachers. The secondary data was gathered from different national and institutional documents related to teacher PD in Vietnam. The variety of data sources not only allowed me to capture an in-depth picture but also enabled me to triangulate different sources of data and better assure the reliability and validity of the study (Stjelja, 2013; Tellis, 1997). In addition, the questionnaire data also

helped me to prepare ideas for the interview and focus group discussion and to make the data as comprehensive as possible.

#### 4.4.1. Documents

Yin (2003) ascertains that document analysis is especially relevant to case study topics. This method is not only stable, unobtrusive, and exact but also provides broad coverage (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, this method is highly recommended for backing up and supplementing evidence from other sources, such as interviews or focus groups (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003, 2014). However, it is important to be critical of documents and compare documents with each other in order to seek for the most reliable information, as documents are not always accurate or free from bias (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011; Prior, 2011; Yin, 2014).

A variety of relevant documents were analysed, including information about teacher PD issued by the government and the participating institution. The national documents issued by Vietnamese government, Vietnamese Prime Minister, or by Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) were in the form of reports, decisions, circulars, directives, and legal documents. The institutional documents included institutional regulations, reports, notice, or instructions, and emails on PD regulations, PD requirements, supportive PD policies, or PD activities from the Dean to teachers. The institutional documents were issued by the participating institution (referred to as University A) and the faculty of foreign languages (referred to as Faculty B).

#### 4.4.2. Questionnaires

Using questionnaires is a beneficial way to gather data. Firstly, questionnaires can supply a large amount of data at a relatively low cost (Dörnyei, 2003; Neumen, 1994). Secondly, completing questionnaires does not take respondents much time if they are simple and straightforward (McClelland, 1994). As a result of survey simplicity, overall respondent accuracy may be increased (Long, 1986). Thirdly, the participants were familiar with questionnaires. However, it is difficult to check the appropriateness or explain information further in a question because “on-the-spot clarification is not possible” (Brown, 2001, p.6). In order to minimize this weakness, I carried out a pilot questionnaire to modify any items necessary, based on the comments and feedback from pilot participants. The pilot questionnaire was administered to five English teachers doing their Ph.D. at the University of Adelaide, and five colleagues working as English teachers at a university in Vietnam. All pilot participants were required to answer the questionnaire and give their feedback and comments on the questionnaire as the whole, and on any items that they found ambiguous or confusing in content, structure, or format. Thanks to participants’ comments, I restructured, reworded, and refined the instructions and the questions prior to producing the final version of the questionnaire.

To fit the requirements of the research, the questionnaire used to collect data was adapted from two questionnaires, which were developed by Karaaslan (2003) and by Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni, and İlyas (2013). The questionnaire developed by Karaaslan (2003) was used to investigate English teachers’ perspectives on self-initiated PD. It was divided into four sections to study four different areas. In the first section, participants were required to answer six closed questions and four open-ended questions about their demographic

information, namely age, gender, working time and workload, academic background, and qualification. The other three sections consisted of 36 Likert-type questions that asked teachers to rank their responses based on a scale using the categories of “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Uncertain,” “Agree,” and “Strongly agree.” The attitude of Turkish university English teachers toward their own PD was identified in section 2 of the questionnaire. Section 3 was designed to find out PD activities which were perceived as significant to teachers’ development and teachers’ engagement level in those activities. In the final section, nine factors hindering teacher PD were listed for participants to rank in terms of influence level. The questionnaire developed by Çelik et al. (2013) is a 9-section questionnaire that was adapted from Karaaslan (2003). It was used to collect data for the study on perspectives of Turkish university-level EFL teachers regarding on-going PD. In addition to section A concerning participants’ working duration and field of expertise, there were 71 Likert-type questions in another eight sections addressing eight issues of PD—EFL teachers’ attitude towards their own PD; teacher development activities; factors that hinder EFL teachers’ PD; applicability of PD activities; potential incentives for PD; impact of PD activities in the last 12 months; and perceived need for PD.

In order to collect the initial data for the present study, the two questionnaires mentioned above were adapted to develop a 2-section questionnaire. The questionnaire mainly focused on participants’ attitudes toward various PD activities, their PD experience, and their viewpoint on factors influencing teacher PD. Section 1 focused on participants’ demographic information concerning their age, gender, expertise, workload, job status and years of teaching experience. Section 2 consisted of four questions about EFL teachers’ perceptions of the importance of PD, factors motivating and hindering teacher PD, PD

activities that teachers had engaged in, and their impact on teachers' teaching practice. For each question, participants were required to rank their responses according to a four-scale measurement— “Not important at all,” “Relatively unimportant,” “Relatively important,” and “Very important”. Likert-type scales are considered a proper measurement of attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, as “Likert-type scales are assumed to have equal units as the categories move from most negative to most positive” (Simon & Goes, 2011, p.188).

Although the participants were all EFL teachers, the questionnaire was provided both in English and in Vietnamese, so participants could adequately understand the questionnaire and feel more confident to complete it. Translation of instruments is a complicated and time-consuming process, as the translator is required to show evidence that the meaning of items in the translated version is equivalent to the items in the original one (Duffy, 2006). In order to ensure the equivalence between the translated items and the original ones, the steps of translating instruments suggested by Weeks, Swerissen, and Belfrage (2007, p.163) were strictly followed:

- Translation from the source (English) to the target language (Vietnamese)
- Back translation of study instruments (target language to source)
- Pretest procedures/field testing (piloting the instrument)
- Committee approach for final fine-tuning of instruments

In the first step, I translated the questionnaire myself. I have been working as an EFL teacher for 15 years, and have nearly eight years of experience teaching English to English-major students and doing translation jobs from English to Vietnamese and vice versa for the institution. In 2011, I had great experience of translating from English to Vietnamese when

working as a translator and interpreter for a group of Vietnamese Rectors and Vice Rectors in a 2-week course in Korea. Furthermore, it is of significance for translators to be familiar with the target language, culture, and subject matter (Chang, 1994; Hambleton & Kanjee, 1993; Hofstede, 2001). In addition, I had lived in an English-speaking country for sufficiently long to acknowledge the cultural differences between the usage of English and Vietnamese. My translation and cross-cultural experience ensured the equivalence of the content and construct of the translated version.

In the second step, back translation from the Vietnamese version of the instrument into the English version was done by another Vietnamese-English bilingual person who has taught translation for English major students for eight years at a Vietnamese university. The back translation is identified as “blind translation” (Weeks et al., 2007, p.158); the translator was asked to translate the translated version of the instrument to the source language without being exposed to the original one (Brislin, 1970; Werner & Campbell, 1970). The two versions of the instrument, were then compared with each other by a native English-speaking Australian lecturer. There existed some minor differences identified by the native English speaker in terms of wording and paraphrasing between the two versions. I discussed these with the back translator and then agreed that there were no discrepancies in the meanings of the items in the two versions.

After completing the online version of the questionnaire in both English and Vietnamese using the Survey Monkey website, the link for the online questionnaire was sent for piloting by six EFL teachers who were teaching translation at a Vietnamese university. Pilot participants were requested to complete all the questions and give comments and feedback on the whole questionnaire and any items they found awkward or ambiguous. All

participants reported that the questionnaire was clearly and logically structured, and they found it easy to follow. Furthermore, all the items were understandable and made sense to them. The participants also provided valuable comments and feedback that helped to finalise the questionnaire. Some participants shared that they found it more natural in written Vietnamese to use *Không ảnh hưởng*, *Không thúc đẩy* and *Không cản trở* instead of *Không ảnh hưởng chút nào*, *Không thúc đẩy chút nào*, and *Không cản trở chút nào* in the answering options. Additionally, they thought it more systematic to use a parallel structure for answering options for different questions in the translated version. This valuable feedback helped me to form the final version of the questionnaire.

In the final step, three Vietnamese-English bilingual experts formed a committee to finalise the translated version of the questionnaire. The committee worked together and discussed the translated questionnaire and made any necessary changes to formulate the final translated version which could be then administered to the large group of participants to collect data for the research.

The results from the questionnaire make a significant contribution to the final discussion of the findings of this study in three ways. Firstly, this source of data can triangulate with the main qualitative data collected from the interviews and focus groups. This triangulation helps to enhance the reliability of the final findings. Secondly, the questionnaire results worked as a guideline to prepare a good interview protocol with focused questions or follow-up questions. The initial ideas on some issues related to EFL teacher PD enabled me to have a preliminary look at the current situation of PD for EFL teachers in a Vietnamese university. Additionally, preliminary results on motivating and hindering factors to teacher PD revealed by the questionnaire provided me with areas to explore the

most necessary data in greater detail and depth during focus group discussions and individual interviews. Finally, from the research viewpoint, by completing the questionnaire, teachers' knowledge and experience of teacher PD were consolidated and refreshed. Completing the questionnaire prepared the potential interview participants for a good discussion on their PD experience. In other words, the questionnaire contributed to the success of the interviews conducted after the questionnaire.

#### 4.4.3. Interviews and focus groups

Interview and focus group transcripts can be considered the primary data sources in this research. Interviews allow researchers to have access to the other person's perspective (Patton, 2002). They are an excellent way to explore the hearts and minds of concerned parties (Rossett, 1987). Interviews are also considered one of the most significant sources of case study information (Yin, 2003). In this study, perceptions of both EFL teachers and managers on different PD issues were conveyed through interviews and focus groups. The research investigated the current situation of EFL teachers' PD at the university level, factors influencing EFL teachers' PD, and ways to improve the effectiveness of their PD. Therefore, the most important participants were EFL tertiary teachers. In addition, managers play a significant role in creating and maintaining a good learning environment, and supporting PD activities for all educators in the institution. So, it is vital to gain the perspectives of the university and faculty managers on how well they think their teachers are engaging in PD activities, and what policies should be developed to promote and support teachers' PD.

Focus groups were the primary means of gathering data from EFL teachers. According to Powell and Single (1996), a focus group "is a group of individuals selected and assembled

by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (p. 499) and “is composed of individuals with shared key characteristics pertinent to the study” (p. 500). The focus group was utilized to deeply explore teachers’ PD experiences and their opinions on factors influencing teachers’ PD because of two main reasons. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, collectivism is one cultural character of Vietnamese people, so teachers are likely to be interested in working in groups. Peters (1993) and Goldman (1962) emphasized that when participants work in groups, they may feel supported and empowered by the sense of group membership. As a result, teachers become more confident when supported by other members in their groups, and are able to cooperate. Moreover, focus groups provide participants with a comfortable forum to share their opinions, as they are not required to answer all the questions (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Focus groups provided teachers with a good environment to discuss and share their own PD experience and their beliefs about factors motivating and hindering teacher PD. Secondly, focus groups are a quick and economical way to investigate information from different angles at the same time, as participants will be addressed in a group rather than one by one (Kreuger, 1994; Silverman, 2004). Focus groups are believed to be a good tool to collect participants’ attitudes, beliefs and experiences of social issues (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Therefore, focus groups were an ideal way to generate the Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers’ diverse ideas of factors influencing teacher PD. During focus group discussions, the participants gave their appraisal of the PD activities they had attended, discussed the factors influencing the quality of teacher PD, and motivators or barriers to teachers’ engagement in PD, and expressed their opinion on how to improve the situation of EFL teacher PD.

To collect data from university and faculty managers, individual interviews were conducted to investigate organizational policies, procedures, and processes (Yin, 2014). Four different managers who play different roles in teacher PD in the institution provided a wide range of information on different aspects of teacher PD. These various and rich sources of data helped to build up an overarching picture of EFL teacher PD in the context of Vietnamese HE.

#### 4.4.4. Questioning strategies

##### Focus group

Two questioning strategies that are popularly used by moderators in focus groups include topic guides and questioning routes (Krueger & Casey, 2009). By using a topic guide, moderators/ researchers employ a list of topics or issues to remember what needs to be asked during focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In a different way, in the questioning route approach, a list of questions which have been developed by moderators or experts are asked in the focus group. In this study, a questioning route consisting of 13 main open-ended questions was used. These questions were developed based on the theoretical framework (CHAT) and literature on teacher PD, notably PD activities, characteristics of effective PD and factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities. As a result, these questions mainly emphasized the participants' current PD experience, their appraisal of and recommendations for improvement for the PD they had engaged in, and factors impacting their engagement in PD activities or how cultural, structural, and social factors might influence teachers' PD.

A list of the same major questions was used for each group, facilitating a comparison of the data from different groups. When conducting focus groups, follow-up questions were sometimes asked for further clarification or further details.

In order to help the participants to understand the questions thoroughly, and easily share their experience and opinions, the focus groups were conducted in Vietnamese. In addition, I tried to maintain a supportive and respectful manner and good relationship with participants to ensure the success of each focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Sim, 1998). This warm working environment made participants comfortable to discuss their experience and arguments. It was also clearly explained that participants' personal information shared in focus groups would not be mentioned in any reports or discussed with others outside the group, and participants were not obliged to share any information that they felt uncomfortable for other people to hear. As a result, the participants were willing to join and share in the discussion from the beginning to the end of the focus groups.

### Interviews

A semi-structured interview was carried out with four managers who were playing different roles in teacher PD at different administrative levels. In comparison with an unstructured interview, which provides participants with opportunities to share their understandings and perspectives on the case freely, the formalised questions in a semi-structured interview can help to align the interviews with the research objectives (Fontana & Frey, 2000). While structured interviews are restricted to a list of pre-determined questions and limited sets of possible answers, semi-structured interviews are not so rigid. Semi-structured interviews could begin with a pre-determined set of questions, but could then make some changes to ensure the relevance of contexts, and they do not use identical questions for different

participants (Freebody, 2003; Gillham, 2005; Lichtman, 2010). In this study, formalized questions were adjusted in accordance with different managers with different positions and roles at different administrative levels. In other words, semi-structured interviews not only provided the flexibility to explore participants' understandings and opinions of the case, but also helped to cover the core issues of the research (Freebody, 2003; Gillham, 2005).

Ten open-ended and two yes/no questions, which were then followed by open-ended questions for further detail, were used as a guide in the interview. The list of questions was formulated based on the four main topics which were the central point of the research. Notably, the participants were asked to share their understandings of the current status of EFL teacher PD (e.g., roles of teacher PD in teachers' improvement, present popular PD activities), current policies related to teacher PD (institutional supports for teacher PD, focus of PD policies), viewpoints on factors influencing teacher PD (barriers and motivators), and potential ways to improve teacher PD and encourage teachers to apply knowledge gained from PD in real contexts.

#### 4.4.5. Sampling

##### Participants

In order to collect the expected data, purposeful sampling was used to intentionally select individuals with a better understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012).

Besides the EFL teachers who could share their PD experience and their opinions on issues related to PD for EFL tertiary teachers, only four managers directly responsible for teacher PD in the institution and faculty were selected. Interviews with these four managers revealed PD strategies and policies which the institution and faculty had developed and utilised and the impacts of these policies on teacher PD and teachers' jobs. Additionally,

barriers and motivators to EFL teacher PD were discussed in the interviews with the managers.

EFL teachers and managers were emailed an invitation letter and the participation information sheet by administrative staff in the faculty, inviting them to participate in the project. EFL teachers, including both full-time and part-time, novice, and experienced teachers, were sent an invitation letter and a link to an online questionnaire to complete. This variety of teachers provided information about different levels of PD engagement and a variety of opinions on PD issues based on their different PD experience. By completing the online survey, EFL teachers showed their agreement to participate in the project. Those interested in attending a focus group for further sharing and discussion on EFL teacher PD registered in the last section of the questionnaire. A total of 170 EFL teachers were sent an invitation, and 133 teachers completed and submitted the online survey, which represents a 78% return rate. Fifty-one teachers registered for further discussion and sharing in the focus group. Similarly, two university and two faculty managers were sent an invitation to participate in the interview, and all of them agreed to attend. The numbers of participants invited and agreeing to participate in the research can be seen in Table 4.1.

*Table 4.1: Number of participants invited to participate in the project on Vietnamese university EFL teachers' PD*

Stakeholders	Positions of participants	Total		
		Invited	Questionnaire	Participated Focus groups Interviews
Teachers	EFL teachers	170	133	35
University managers	Vice Rector	1		1

Stakeholders	Positions of participants	Total		
		Invited	Questionnaire	Participated
			Focus groups	Interviews
	Head of the Department of Human Resource Management	1		1
Faculty managers	Dean and Associate Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages	2		2
<b>Total participants</b>		<b>174</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>35</b>
			<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

There were 133 respondents to the online questionnaire including nearly all of the 15 male teachers in the faculty (n=13, 9.8 %); 74 full-time teachers accounting for 55%; 27 novice teachers who had been working as English teachers for less than 3 years, 24 teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience and 82 experienced teachers who had been working as English teachers for more than 5 years, which account for 20%, 18%, and 62% respectively (see Table 4.2).

*Table 4.2: Demographic information of EFL teachers responding to the questionnaire (n=133)*

	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Female teachers	120	91.2
Male teachers	13	9.8
Full-time teachers	74	55.0
Sessional teachers	56	45.0
Teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience	27	20.0
Teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience	24	18.0

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	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Experienced teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience	82	62.0

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The focus group participants were selected from 51 EFL teachers who had completed the online survey and volunteered to attend interviews. In order to obtain rich data, I selected 35 focus group participants to achieve a balance in gender, age groups, academic division, working status (fulltime or sessional teachers), working campus (in Hanoi and in another province) and years of experience as a teacher. In order to balance gender as far as possible, the researcher decided to select all five male teachers (two at a campus in another province and three in Hanoi) as the male teachers accounted for merely 9.8%. Additionally, all three teachers at the campus in another province and 27 teachers in Hanoi were chosen based on their age group (ranging from 23 to 47); their academic division (11 teachers in the Division of English major and 16 in the Division of non-English majors); and their teaching experience (4 working as a teacher for less than three years, 7 working as teachers for 3-5 years, and the rest working as teachers for more than five years). This means that among all those who volunteered for interviews, 35 EFL teachers were selected, representing 20% of total EFL teachers in the institution. These 35 teachers include males (n=5) and females (n=30), novice teachers (n=11) and experienced teachers (n=24), part-time teachers (n=4) and full-time teachers (n=31); and those working in Hanoi campuses (n=30) and the campus in another province (n=5).

The 35 EFL teachers were allocated into seven focus groups (from four to six teachers in each focus group) based on their age group, academic position, working campus, and,

where possible, gender balance. These seven focus groups included a group of novice teachers and part-time teachers; a group of senior teachers who also take the position of division head or group leader; four groups of experienced teachers who had been working as EFL teachers for more than five years; and a group of teachers from a campus in another province. The male teachers were allocated to different groups. This kind of grouping enabled the researcher to gather more extensive and reliable data. Generally, novice and part-time teachers do not like to share their thoughts in front of full-time and experienced colleagues, as they tend to think that these colleagues are superior and they find it more comfortable not to be supervised by their division heads or group leaders when attending interviews. Additionally, the teachers working in another province did not have to travel to Hanoi for the interview, as I went to their campus to conduct the focus group.

#### Anonymity of participants

To guarantee the anonymity of the research participants, I labeled the 35 teachers in 7 focus groups with a code from Teacher 1 to Teacher 35, and managers from Manager 1 to Manager 4. By labeling the participants, I did not know exactly who is under each pseudonym and was not influenced by participants' names and their personalities, so I became more objective when analysing the interview data (Gibbs, 2007).

#### 4.5. Data collection

According to some CHAT researchers, it is advisable to collect multiple types of qualitative data to capture the complexity of an activity system and ensure the subjects' views are included in the study (DeVane & Squire, 2012; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999; Nardi, 1996). In this study, three sets of data (online questionnaires, interviews and focus groups,

and national and institutional PD documents) were collected in order to study the activity system of EFL teachers' engagement in PD from multiple perspectives.

Documents could be collected from the website of the Ministry of Justice, where almost all legal normative documents are available, and from the participating institution. The necessary institutional documents and some national documents by the Department of Human Resource Management and the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the research site were accessed with the approval of the Rector. The Dean also agreed to share his emails related to EFL teacher PD issues as document sources for analysis. The document collection was straightforward, but the questionnaires and interviews required more preparation.

#### 4.5.1. Questionnaires

In an attempt to mitigate the problem of geographic distance and make it convenient for participants to complete the survey, the survey was posted online on the Survey Monkey website. The administrative staff at the participating university were sent the participant information sheets and invitation letter, which had been approved by The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, and the link to the questionnaire for teachers to complete online. Then, the administrative staff sent an email to 170 EFL teachers with an invitation letter and the participant information sheet, to invite them to complete the online surveys. It was also mentioned in the email that some hard copies of questionnaires were available in the main office of the faculty for those who could not access the online version or just found it more convenient to complete the hard copy version. There was a box available in the main office for hard copy returns.

After 20 days of delivering the online survey to participants, 133 responses were received, which accounted for 78.2%, and no one was interested in completing the hard copy questionnaires.

#### 4.5.2. Focus groups and interviews

Both focus groups and interviews were carried out in Vietnamese to make it easier for participants to share their experience and give their opinions on different angles of various PD issues without any language barrier. Furthermore, the lists of questions were emailed to participants before the actual focus groups and interviews, so all participants could read the questions and ask for any explanation via email, as well as prepare notes for their sharing and discussion. This preparation made participants more confident to actively join in the discussion. During the interviews and focus groups, it was apparent that all participants were extremely comfortable when they had something to share and actively engaged in any discussions, resulting in the collection of rich information.

#### 4.5.3. Conducting focus groups and interviews

##### Focus groups

As previously mentioned in section 4.4.3, I managed to develop a warm, friendly and respectful environment when conducting the focus groups in order to encourage the participants to share their experience and opinions (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Sim, 1998). During the focus groups, I played the role of a moderator to ask questions, stimulate participants' engagement and take notes (Krueger & Casey, 2001). Based on those criteria, the focus groups were conducted with the following steps.

The focus groups were conducted in a separate room within the research site. In an attempt to make all participants comfortable, I encouraged them to join a warm-up conversation together first. As all the participants knew each other well prior to the interview, they joined in the conversation happily. After some minutes talking and when all participants had arrived, I started the focus group by briefly introducing the objectives, voluntary nature and confidentiality of the study, and giving an explanation about some terms used in the focus group such as PD and PD activities. I strongly emphasized that participants' information, such as their name and their institution, would be kept confidential, and they would not be identified in any publications arising from the research. Furthermore, the participants were advised that they could leave the focus group at any time, and in that case, all the information they had provided would not be used for further analyses. The participants were also informed that they could choose not to answer particular questions.

Each participant was given a copy of the participant information sheet and encouraged to read it carefully and asked if they had any questions for clarification before completing and signing the consent form. As all participants were EFL in-service teachers, I had prepared the participant information sheets and the consent forms in both English and Vietnamese versions. Before starting the focus group discussions, the participants were provided with the proposed list of core questions to read, make notes for the discussion, and ask for explanations on any questions that they were not clear about. Once given time for preparation, the participants could make a better contribution to the focus group discussion. The length of the focus groups varied from 70 to 95 minutes. This variation occurred due to the differences among the focus groups, including different teaching experiences, different positions, and different PD experiences. The senior teacher and the leader focus group

discussions tended to be longer as participants had more experience and opinions to share; by contrast, the novice teacher group discussion was shorter as they had had less chance to access PD activities due to their limited teaching careers.

### Interview

All interview participants had a private office at their institution, and it was much more convenient not to move to another place for interviews. Furthermore, their own working space could inspire them to share their real experiences and opinions about PD in that working context. According to Simons (2009), the real-life experience of participants can be considered as the main focus of a case study, so it was ideal for the interviews to be conducted in a natural, familiar, and convenient place for participants (Breg & Lune, 2012).

The interview questions were sent to participants prior to the interview, so they could prepare relevant information and be ready to share their understandings and viewpoints on the research issues. In addition to the pre-determined questions, follow-up questions were expanded and added based on the actual answers of participants during the interviews. The length of interviews was from 30 to 56 minutes, depending on participants' experience and responsibility for teacher PD. The more directly they were involved in teacher PD, especially PD for EFL teachers, the more they shared their experience and opinions.

## 4.6. Data analysis

There are four sources of data in this study: questionnaires, documents, interviews, and focus groups. All these sources of data help to answer the two main research questions: what is the current situation of PD for EFL teachers in the Vietnamese HE context? And what are the enablers and barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities from EFL

teachers' and managers' perspectives? The present study used descriptive analysis to analyse the questionnaire data and qualitative content analysis to analyse text data including interviews, focus groups, and document data.

#### 4.6.1. Interviews and focus groups

Interview and focus group transcripts are the two primary sources of data in the present research. A qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyse these data.

Qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The distinct feature of content analysis is to “systematically transform a large amount of text into a highly organized and concise summary of key results” (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, p. 94). This data analysis approach enables the researcher to compress a large volume of text data, understand the data, and identify and generate categories and themes (Bengtsson, 2016; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Krippendorff, 1989; Mayring, June 2000; Schreier, 2013; Weber, 1990). Additionally, qualitative content analysis is useful to analyse text data which comprises verbal discourse, written documents, and visual representations to make “replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 1989, p.403). In other words, the content analysis must ensure replicability, which is closely related to the essence of reliability. Replicability means that different researchers may use the same technique to study the same phenomenon at different times, but they obtain the same results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative content analysis is “extremely well-suited for analysing the multifaceted sensitive phenomenon” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 114) and

suitable for studies focusing on description rather than developing a theory (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

Qualitative content analysis is considered a flexible analytic approach because it supports the researcher to use different approaches in data analysis with either qualitative or quantitative data (J. Y. Cho & Lee, 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Researchers can employ an inductive or deductive approach or combine these two approaches to analyse the data, depending on the purpose of the study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, June 2000). Inductive content analysis is used when there is no or not enough existing knowledge about the phenomenon under study, or the knowledge of the phenomenon is fragmented (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). A deductive approach to content analysis is viewed as a data-driven approach, and the researcher forms codes, categories, and themes from the data. A deductive content analysis approach is recommended when data analysis is carried out using previous knowledge or literature, or when testing existing theories under new research conditions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). When deductively analysing text content, predefined codes and categories grounded in previous literature and existing theories are used as a guide (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, June 2000; Schreier, 2013). However, even when researchers adopt an inductive analytic approach, they are still likely to use theoretical frameworks to infer the meaning of the data, identify codes, and generate categories and themes (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).

It is noteworthy that there are actually multiple ways, but no systematic guidelines and rules available for researchers to use to analyse the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), so researchers will develop their own ways of analysing the data based on the key features and principles of content analysis, their experiences, their study data, and their interpretive

skills (Bengtsson, 2016; Schreier, 2013; Simons, 2009). In the present study, three main phases of content analysis process were followed: preparing, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), as well as the core principles and guidelines proposed by previous researchers (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Krippendorf, 1989; Mayring, June 2000). In addition, I analysed data using the CHAT framework and paid attention to the cultural, historical background of Vietnamese teachers and teachers' motivation as well. In order to make the results valid, I not only carefully devised and revised each category but also presented sufficient evidence from the data to support each category (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The chosen quotes were translated into English to illustrate the findings.

#### Preparation phase

After collecting and organizing interview and focus group data from managers and EFL teachers, I selected units of analysis, a significant task in the preparation phase. Units of analysis in the transcription are viewed as words, phrases, and sentences with meaningful information (Feeley & Gottlieb, 1998); or other objects of study such as a program or an organization (Mertens, 1998). However, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) recommended whole interviews or other textual documents as the most suitable units of analysis because they are large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to be kept in mind as a context during the process of analysis. In the present research, a whole interview or focus group was selected as the unit of analysis. I acknowledged that all questions raised for discussion in semi-structured interviews or focus groups referred to teacher PD and could be inter-related to one another, so the whole interview or focus group transcription supported me to identify codes and create categories. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese using Microsoft Word. This process assisted me to become initially

familiar with the data (Krueger, 2006). I then coded the names of both teachers and managers in order to guarantee the anonymity of the participants and to avoid any bias when analysing the data (Gibbs, 2007) (see section 4.4).

I immersed myself in the data by reading the data transcripts repeatedly to have a sense of the data as a whole and to gain insights into meanings in the data. The intensive reading enabled me to become utterly familiar with the data, which significantly helped me to form codes, categories, and themes in the next phase, and to make valid interpretations from the data.

There are two main levels of analysis: (1) the analysis of words, phrases, or sentences with important information to investigate various issues related to teacher PD, such as PD activities recently taken, the significance of teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context, or factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities; and (2) the analysis of teachers' participation in PD activities as a whole which draws on the results of the first level of analysis.

### Organizing phase

The organizing phase refers to coding and creating categories. I decided to code in Vietnamese to avoid misinterpretation because of any possible mistranslation (H. J. Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008; Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010).

### *Level 1 of analysis*

At this level, an inductive qualitative content analysis approach was employed for the data reported in Chapter 5. I started the coding process with three main pre-determined categories derived from the first research question and its sub-questions: (1) PD activities

recently taken by EFL teachers; (2) the significance of PD to quality teaching; (3) the goals of teacher PD, including teachers' goals for participating in PD activities and managers' goals for planning teacher PD. The primary objective of these questions was to understand the current situation of EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context.

In the coding process, I made notes and headings as initial codes while reading the printed transcripts. All notes and headings were written down in the margins, to illustrate all aspects of the study objectives, and typed on a coding sheet using Microsoft Excel (Burnard, 1991; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The codes were then developed and revised carefully before being classified into sub-categories which were formed after the coding process under these three main pre-determined categories. The following are some examples of the sub-categories under these three categories:

- Improve teachers' English proficiency level and teaching methods
- Update teachers on IT skills and IT application
- Update teachers on English language educational reforms
- Update teachers on the needs of the current labour market and society
- Enable teachers to satisfy learners' expectations
- Increase teachers' motivation and love for their teaching career

Examples of developing codes and creating sub-categories under the three main categories in the interview and focus group data are illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Examples of coding and generating sub-categories in interview and focus group data

Raw data	Coding	Sub-categories	Category
<i>Teachers are required to improve both their professional and instructional knowledge to satisfy the new requirements of the national language project</i>	New requirements	Update teachers on English language educational reforms	Significance of PD to quality teaching
<i>PD is extremely critical to enable English teachers to follow the new institutional development trends</i>	New development trend		
<i>PD helps teachers to update new policies in English teaching and learning and curricula</i>	New language policies and new curricula		

Based on the second research question and its sub-questions, two more pre-determined categories were formed: (4) enablers and (5) barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities. When analysing data related to the second research question, I employed the CHAT framework to classify the factors, as reported in chapters 6 and 7. Therefore, one more level of pre-set categories was generated under categories 4 and 5 based on five components of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), namely: *Subject, Mediating artifacts, Rules, Community, and Division of labour*. All the codes were devised and revised before being grouped into sub-categories which were developed after coding under these five CHAT-based pre-set categories.

Examples of developing codes and sub-categories using the CHAT framework in interview and focus group data are given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Examples of developing codes and sub-categories based on the CHAT framework

<i>Raw data</i>	<i>Coding</i>	<i>Sub-categories formed after coding</i>	<i>Pre-set categories based on CHAT framework</i>	<i>Category</i>
<i>If teachers did not participate in PD activities and were assessed as underperformers for two consecutive years, their contract would also be terminated.</i>	PD participation Teacher evaluation	Regulations for job security	Rules	Enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities
<i>To secure their job, teachers have to learn and improve their English proficiency to meet the standard requirement. Otherwise, they cannot keep their teaching job, or their contracts will not be renewed.</i>	English proficiency level			
<i>Applying the condition of the English proficiency standard (at least 6.5 IELTS band score) to renew contracts enhanced teachers' learning</i>	English proficiency level			

### Level 2 of analysis

At the first level of analysis, I investigated a number of teacher PD topics to understand the current situation of EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context (Chapter 5), and I grouped motivating and hindering factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities into categories and sub-categories using the CHAT framework (Chapters 6 and 7). At this next level 2 of analysis, I employed SDT to focus on the *Subject* component of the activity system of teachers' engagement in PD, and to shed light on how categories of factors impacted teachers' engagement, as well as what type of motivation the teachers experienced when participating in PD activities and what level of self-determination they exercised in their PD participation (Chapter 8, section 8.3.2).

Based on SDT, sub-categories of motivating factors were classified based on types of motivation and the relevant level of self-determination.

#### *Reporting phase*

The last step of analysis is preparation for the reporting of results. After thoroughly examining all categories and sub-categories, I selected the most convincing evidence to support these categories and sub-categories, using quotes from the interviews and focus groups. All the quotes were translated into English and labeled according to the speaker.

#### 4.6.2. Document analysis

As previously mentioned in section 4.5, documents in the present study are considered the secondary source of data to triangulate the results of the interview and focus group data analysis. I investigated both national and institutional selected documents, which are related to PD for EFL teachers such as National Language Project 2020, regulations on PD for tertiary teachers, PD strategies for EFL teachers in colleges and universities in Vietnam, and regulations for PD at the faculty level. The main objective of document analysis was to explore how the importance of PD for EFL teachers is viewed. Therefore, I studied the rationale, objectives and implications of the documents and sought relevant content which illustrated the significance of PD to quality teaching. The categories generated from document analysis also matched the categories devised from the interview and focus group data analysis regarding the importance of PD to EFL teachers.

#### 4.6.3. Questionnaires

The teacher questionnaire had been administered to EFL teachers before I conducted any interviews or focus groups. The questionnaire data was not the primary source of data, but

was used to prepare the interview and focus group protocols and triangulate the data from interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire results provided initial hints of what should be explored in more detail when conducting the interviews and focus groups. Due to this objective of the questionnaire, I used descriptive analysis on the data, identifying and describing patterns based on the percentage of participants opting for each item.

#### 4.7. Ethical considerations

A number of ethical issues were considered before collecting data on the research site, as recommended by Creswell (2012) and Merriam (1998). First of all, I requested and obtained a written letter from the University Rector in March 2016, which granted me permission to conduct the project in the institution and collect the necessary institutional documents. I also applied for ethics approval from The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, as this study involved human subjects, and the ethics approval (approval number H-2016-114) was granted in June 2016.

Secondly, when being invited to join the research, all participants were provided with a participant information sheet which included information about the researcher, the project focus, the methods of the study, the time and location of the study in which they were invited to participate, what participants were expected to do when participating in the project, how participants' information would be processed, and what participants could do if they wanted to ask any questions or make a complaint. Once participants fully understood the project, they made their own decision to participate or not. Participation consent was also collected from every participant, so all participants acknowledged the value and consequences of their participation in the present research. The participants were

advised that their participation was entirely voluntary, their identities would be kept confidential and anonymous, and all data would be made nonidentifiable before being reported. As mentioned in section 4.4, pseudonyms were used to guarantee the anonymity of the research participants. They were assured that no individual or identifiable data would be reported in publications or reported to the participating institution, which is also not identified in any research thesis or paper. Furthermore, participants could withdraw from the project at any stage and were not required to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable.

Finally, participants were informed that the questionnaire was anonymous, and no identifying information was required. In addition, all interviewees were advised that their names and identifying information would be separated from their interview data. I de-identified the data by removing names and aggregating survey results. Furthermore, electronic data including the online questionnaires and the recordings of interviews and focus group discussions were stored securely in a password protected PC. Consent forms and other hard-copy materials such as the transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

## Chapter conclusion

In summary, constructivism is the paradigm underpinning the present research, and a qualitative case study approach was used to explore the current situation of EFL teacher PD and factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities in the Vietnamese HE context.

Multiple data sources, namely national and institutional documents, teacher questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus groups, were collected. A teacher questionnaire was sent to 170 EFL teachers, and 133 teachers responded (79.7%). The results of the questionnaire

helped in devising and revising the questions for individual interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews with four managers (two faculty managers, and two institutional managers) and seven focus groups with 35 EFL teachers were conducted. Those 35 teachers were selected from the list of the teachers who showed their willingness to participate in further discussion. Both interview and focus group data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach. The results of the document analysis and the teacher survey data helped to triangulate the findings from interview and focus group data analysis.

A number of ethical issues were considered carefully to minimise the potential risks and ensure the confidentiality of participants. Ethical issues were cleared with ethics approval from the University of Adelaide Ethics Committee.

## CHAPTER 5: EFL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM: CURRENT SITUATION

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## Chapter overview

This chapter will present an overarching picture of what is happening about EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context, based primarily on data from teachers themselves. It will reveal different facets, which include, but are not limited to, how important PD is to teacher development, PD activities EFL teachers have recently taken part in, teachers' goals for engaging in PD activities, and how teachers' engagement in PD influences teacher change and also student change. In addition, there is a section on managers' goals for planning teacher PD, which provides a different perspective to some degree from that of the teachers. Findings from all four sources of data (national and institutional documents; questionnaires for EFL teachers; teacher focus groups; and interviews with managers) will be employed to illustrate the situation. Findings in each section are summed up and discussed in comparison with the findings of previous studies and taking account of Vietnamese sociocultural contexts, as described in Chapter 2.

### 5.1. Professional development and quality teaching

#### 5.1.1 Findings from documents

The importance of PD to EFL teachers is investigated here through the different national and institutional documents addressing foreign language innovations, through regulations and strategies for teacher PD, through a selected PD program, and through some official faculty notices related to teacher PD (see Table 5.1). The implementation of PD policies mentioned in those documents and the effectiveness of the implementation are not the focus of this study. Therefore, a descriptive analysis approach was used to analyse the documents related to teacher PD to present an overview of the contextual background to EFL teacher PD in Vietnam.

Table 5.1: Policy documents at national and institutional levels

Year	Policy document	Level
2008	<i>Decision on the approval of the Project entitled "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020" (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b)</i>	National
2013	<i>Regulations on professional development for tertiary teachers (MOET, 2013)</i>	National
2013	<i>Participating in the professional development program for tertiary EFL teacher in IT application in English teaching and learning (National Language Project 2020, 2013b)</i>	National
2013	<i>A professional development program for EFL teachers in colleges and universities in Vietnam (National Language Project 2020, 2013a)</i>	National
2014	<i>Professional development strategies for EFL teachers and managers of the institutions in 2014 (MOET, 2014)</i>	National
2014	<i>Main strategies of National Language Project 2020 in 2014 (National Language Project, 2014b)</i>	National
2016	<i>Main strategies of National Language Project 2020 in 2016 (National Language Project, 2016)</i>	National
2016	<i>Criteria for annually evaluating EFL teachers in faculty level, academic year 2016-2017 (Faculty B, 2016)</i>	Institutional
2017	<i>Plans for teaching festival, year 2016-2017 (University A, 2017b)</i>	Institutional
2017	<i>Assigning teachers to attend a workshop of assessment and testing (University A, 2017a)</i>	Institutional
2017	<i>Regulations on professional development (Faculty B, 2017a)</i>	Institutional

These national and institutional documents indicate that PD is believed to play a significant role in improving the quality of English teaching and learning by enhancing teachers' knowledge and ability, as detailed in Table 5.2.

*Table 5.2: Objectives of teacher PD strategies and processes*

<b>Focuses of PD</b>	<b>Data sources</b>
Improving teachers' English proficiency level	(Faculty B, 2015b; MOET, 2013, 2014; National Language Project 2020, 2013a, 2013b)
Improving teachers' professional skills such as teaching competencies	(Faculty B, 2015a, 2015b; National Language Project 2020, 2013a)
Updating teachers on the new and efficient teaching methods current worldwide and in the Asia area	(Faculty B, 2015b; National Language Project, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b)
Improving teachers' IT skills and IT application in real teaching contexts	(National Language Project 2020, 2013b)
Improving teachers' skill in developing teaching materials	(MOET, 2014)
Improving teachers' skill in designing blended-learning programs	(MOET, 2014)
Enabling teachers to become up-to-date with the new trends and innovations in education in Vietnam	(MOET, 2013; National Language Project, 2014b, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b).

#### Improving teachers' English proficiency

Professional development is regarded as a good way to improve teachers' English proficiency level, which explains why a number of national and institutional plans or projects have involved improving EFL teachers' English proficiency as the main goal. As mentioned in documents from Language Project 2020 (National Language Project, 2014b, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b), after EFL teachers were assessed to identify their current English proficiency, plans to retrain and improve EFL teachers' competence were developed, focusing primarily on improving teachers' English proficiency (MOET, 2014; National Language Project 2020, 2013a, 2013b). A report on

EFL teacher PD (National Language Project, 2014a) reveals that improving teachers' English proficiency is one of the essential aims of a comprehensive curriculum for teacher PD. Additionally, at the institutional level, PD activities also aim at improving the English competency of English teachers (Faculty B, 2015b).

#### Improving teachers' professional skills

The focus of EFL teacher PD strategies is not limited to improving teachers' English proficiency but also attends to improving teachers' teaching competencies (Faculty B, 2015a, 2015b; National Language Project 2020, 2013a); improving teachers' IT skills in real teaching contexts (National Language Project 2020, 2013b); updating teachers on the new and efficient teaching methods currently used worldwide and in the Asian areas (Faculty B, 2015b; National Language Project, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b); developing teaching materials (MOET, 2014); and designing blended-learning programs (MOET, 2014).

As a result of this acknowledgment of the importance of PD, Project 2020 has mainly focused on developing different professional skills for EFL teachers. As mentioned in the report on PD curriculum and PD programs for EFL teachers (National Language Project, 2014a), improving teachers' pedagogical skills, IT application skills, and action research skills has been one of the main objectives in the teacher PD strategies. As stated in the report, PD programs focusing on teachers' pedagogical skills and IT skills for EFL college and university teachers were completed in 2013 and used to train teachers of different institutions in Vietnam. Additionally, hundreds of EFL teachers from different colleges and universities in Vietnam participated in short courses at the University of New South Wales and the University of Queensland in Australia, the University of Victoria in New Zealand, and Indiana University in the United States in

order to improve their assessment skills, pedagogical skills, or IT skills for English teaching. However, although this sounds impressive, there is no data indicating whether their skills were actually improved.

#### Update teachers on changes in education

PD is understood to be indispensable to help teachers to improve their knowledge in the field and increase their teaching competencies to realize the recent educational innovations (Vietnamese Government, 2013)

The phrase *tiếp tục bồi dưỡng chuẩn hóa đội ngũ giảng viên ngoại ngữ* (constantly fostering PD to standardise FL teachers) was emphasized in many documents of the project, in an attempt to help Project teachers meet the requirements of comprehensive reforms in foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system (National Language Project, 2014b, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b). MOET (2013) indicated that by participating in PD, teachers would not only improve their pedagogical skills and be able to implement the new teaching approaches in their field but also implement the new trends in education in Vietnam. Additionally, PD supports teachers to fulfill their responsibilities of lifelong learning to meet the requirements, which are renewed each year.

#### 5.1.2. Findings from teachers' questionnaires

When completing the questionnaire, the participants—Vietnamese EFL tertiary teachers (n=133) — were asked to rank the importance of common PD activities on a scale from 1 (Not at all important) to 4 (Very important). The results of the participants' responses are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Importance of common PD activities to teachers' development (ranked in order of importance according to total of levels 3 and 4)

Importance level	Activity no.	Professional development activities	Level of importance (%)				Total of levels 3 & 4
			1	2	3	4	
			Not at all important	Relatively unimportant	Relatively important	Very important	
1	3	Following research literature in the field	0	0.76	28.79	70.45	99.24
2	4	Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues	0	1.52	28.79	69.7	98.49
3	15	Attending professional development programs	0	2.27	25.76	71.97	97.73
4	12	Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice	0	2.27	57.58	40.15	97.73
5	8	Developing techniques and activities with colleagues	0	2.29	38.93	58.78	97.71
6	13	Attending in-service training courses (workshops, seminars, etc.)	0.76	2.27	37.12	59.85	96.97
7	2	Keeping a teaching journal to reflect on own teaching	0	3.79	50	46.21	96.21
8	5	Asking for help from colleagues	0	3.79	50	46.21	96.21
9	7	Developing new materials with colleagues	0	3.85	40	56.15	96.15
10	1	Gathering information about one's own teaching performance (through surveys, interviews, etc.)	0	4.55	56.06	39.39	95.45
11	14	Attending conferences and symposia in the field	0.76	8.33	48.48	42.42	90.9
12	9	Taking part in peer observation (mutual observation and feedback)	0.76	9.85	64.39	25	89.39
13	6	Training other teachers	1.53	11.45	64.12	22.9	87.02

Importance level	Activity no.	Professional development activities	Level of importance (%)				Total of levels 3 & 4
			1	2	3	4	
			Not at all important	Relatively unimportant	Relatively important	Very important	
14	10	Participating in lessons observed by the academic head and Faculty and University managers	0.76	15.91	59.09	24.24	83.33
15	11	Conducting teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems	1.54	15.38	55.38	27.69	83.07
16	16	Writing articles for teaching journals or other publications	3.79	37.12	56.06	3.03	59.09

As can be seen from Table 5.3, most English teachers appreciated the importance of the listed PD activities. In particular, 15 out of the 16 activities mentioned in the survey were assessed to be relatively important or very important by the majority of participants (from 83.07% to 99.24%).

The number of teachers who posited that following research literature in the field was relatively important and very important was almost 100%. The activities of attending training courses (activity 13), conferences (activity 14), and PD programs (activity 15) were also highly valued for teachers' professional improvement with 96.97%, 90.90%, and 97.73% of teachers opting for these respectively. Furthermore, the number of participants choosing the "Very important" option was higher than the number of participants opting for "Relatively important". In short, PD activities that provide teachers with chances of updating new knowledge in their field and getting the input of new professional knowledge or experience were the most highly appreciated by the teachers.

In addition, EFL teachers were likely to recognize the importance of activities they could do in groups with their colleagues. A high percentage of teachers selected the

options of “Relatively important” and “Very important” when ranking the importance of sharing experiences and problems with colleagues (activity 4 — 98.49%), asking for help from colleagues (activity 5 — 96.21%), developing new materials with colleagues (activity 7 — 96.15%), and developing techniques and activities with colleagues (activity 8 — 97.71 %).

For the activities which teachers do in order to consolidate their teaching, solve classroom problems, and improve their teaching practice, 97.73% believed that trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice (activity 12) can help teachers to develop themselves, and 96.21% of participants considered that keeping a teaching journal (activity 2) was relatively important (50%) or very important (46.21%). Although fewer teachers considered lesson observations (activity 9, 10) and conducting a teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems (activity 11) as important activities in their development, the percentage of teachers still accounted for more than 83%. However, 15.38% and 15.91% of participants respectively said that conducting inquiry and lesson observations were relatively unimportant to teachers’ development.

By contrast, writing articles for teaching journals or other publications (activity 16) was thought to be relatively important by 56.06% of participants and very important by only 3.03%. This means that 59.09% of participants agreed that this activity was important to their development. However, 37.12% of teachers indicated that this activity was relatively unimportant to teachers’ development. This item had the lowest importance ranking in the survey.

To sum up, although participants’ attitudes towards the importance of various PD activities to teachers’ development were slightly different, they positively valued the roles of all but one of the PD activities. Although the questionnaire data shows that

teachers seemed to be aware of the importance of PD to them, the internal validity of teachers' responses and the question as to whether external or internal factors account for this awareness could not be confirmed by the questionnaire. Therefore, the focus group discussions with teachers were conducted to explore the matter further.

### 5.1.3 Findings from focus groups with teachers

The data from focus group discussions with EFL teachers (n=35) showed that all of the EFL teachers acknowledged PD as one of the most important issues that can benefit not only teachers themselves, but also students. From these EFL teachers' point of view, PD was vital for tertiary teachers, as it provided them with better job satisfaction and opportunities to comprehensively improve their knowledge and skills; resulting in better teaching performance and positive changes in students' learning and learning outcomes.

#### Improving teachers' English proficiency level and teaching methods

Almost all the participants (82.86%, n=29) indicated that they engaged in PD to improve their language knowledge and learn new instructional methods from their colleagues, experts, and the literature in their field. The teachers explained that teaching methods should be various in order to motivate different types of students. Because they believed two heads were always better than one, they engaged in PD to discuss their teaching problems, share their own teaching experience with their colleagues, and learn new teaching techniques from others. Teacher 7 shared that she gained valuable experience in *approaching new ways of problem solving by learning from teachers and colleagues*. The new teaching skills they learned from other teachers could enable them to avoid giving boring lessons:

Teachers are required to update a number of new instructional methods to maintain good teaching quality. (Teacher 23)

Engaging in teacher study group activity, I can ask my colleagues for help to solve my teaching problems, and learn much from their suggestions. (Teacher 8)

Regarding language knowledge, the teachers strongly argued that it was crucial for EFL teachers to improve their language proficiency and continuously update language knowledge, as the English language changes constantly. Language was socially constructed and kept *changing along with the development and changes of society* (Teacher 25), so teachers *needed to update on the English language which changes over time* (Teacher 30). Additionally, teachers' level of English proficiency would not improve or might decrease gradually after graduating from the university if they had few chances to practice it.

PD helps teachers to improve their language proficiency to meet the language requirement set in the national language project 2020. (Teacher 35)

#### Updating teachers on IT skills and IT application

One quarter of participants acknowledged the significant influence of information technology on English teaching and learning today. As such, it was important for English teachers to make use of the new technologies applied in English teaching and learning. The teachers stated that they would go off track and be unable to follow the current trends in English teaching if they did not update their knowledge of new technologies.

If English teachers are well-equipped with information technology knowledge and know how to apply information technology in teaching English, they can make use of information technology to provide better lessons and motivate students. (Teacher 10).

There is a growing tendency for the application of new technologies in English teaching and learning, such as using projectors to perform lessons, online learning, blended learning, and distance teaching and

learning. It will be a must for English teachers to learn about those technologies to perform their teaching tasks efficiently. (Teacher 18)

#### Updating teachers on English language educational reform

Many teachers (n=23) agreed on the fact that the new language policies, new relevant curricula, and the institution's new development strategy had created a particular need for English teachers to improve themselves to meet the English language requirement and new approaches to English teaching and learning in Vietnam. According to Project 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008), English teachers in schools are expected to score B2 (upper-intermediate) on the CEFR Band Scale, and university English lecturers are required to score C1 (advanced). In addition, this language project put into practice a number of reforms in language curricula at all education levels from primary school to tertiary level. As a result, English teachers found it crucial to participate in PD to bring themselves up to date with the new policies and curricula and improve their professional and instructional knowledge to keep themselves on track.

Tertiary English teachers are required to improve both their professional and instructional knowledge to satisfy the new requirements of the new foreign language policies and curricula. (Teacher 3)

Professional development is extremely critical to enable English teachers to follow new strategies for the institution's development. (Teacher 32)

#### Updating teachers on the need for current labour market and society

One-third of teachers stated that engaging in PD offered them good opportunities to recognize the changes in the demands of the current labour market and society toward education in general and English teaching and learning in particular. In their opinion, by participating in PD, teachers would not only learn about the requirements of employers and society, but also acquire new knowledge, experience, and skills to prepare their

students for those requirements. The teachers indicated that society developed constantly, and triggered new expectations for the English proficiency of the workforce in a period of globalization and integration. This means that teaching is considered a lifelong learning career to meet different social requirements at different times. One teacher's comment expresses this well:

Professional development supports teachers to improve their ability to meet the need of the new labour market, and new social conditions.  
(Teacher 3)

#### Enabling teachers to satisfy learners' expectations

Students' expectations were the concern of a number of participants (22.85%, n=8) as part of deciding to participate in PD activities. Most of the participants asserted that students' knowledge and English skills were quite good when they were in high school, so students' demand for English teaching at the tertiary level was accordingly increasing. Additionally, students tended to *learn English for practical purposes*, and they expected to improve *the kind of English that is related to their major, and they can use it in their future job context* (Teacher 33). Consequently, students would require more from tertiary English teachers to help them to improve the level of English proficiency for their future jobs.

Students now have high motivation to study English and expect more from English teachers [...] Students tend to raise a number of questions during the lesson. If teachers have no sense of continuously improving, they may not be able to answer students' questions.  
(Teacher 13)

#### Increasing teachers' motivation and love for their teaching career

A small number of teachers (11.42%, n=4) considered PD as a practical way to re-instill the love of teaching into themselves. They shared their experience of getting bored with teaching after some years in the job and then being motivated again when they

participated in workshops and joined discussions with their colleagues in teacher study group activities. Different PD activities provided teachers with different experiences and knowledge that they could gain from each other. The participants indicated that engaging in PD activities rekindled their enthusiasm for teaching as they realized that teaching was not dull, but demanding, challenging and exciting.

Engaging in PD, teachers will love their teaching job more. [...] Professional development offers teachers the chance to learn new knowledge and new instructional methods. Teachers are refreshed and love their job more. (Teacher 27)

#### Improving the reputation of the institution

All four managers and some teachers (17.14%, n=6) argued that teacher PD not only benefitted the teachers themselves but also brought the institution a number of advantages. Once an institution had well-qualified staff, it would increasingly develop. It was explained that teacher PD enabled the institution to maintain and guaranteed good training quality for students' potential employers and society.

Professional development helps to improve the teaching quality, which then builds up a good reputation for the institution. (Teacher 28)

An increase in reputation would lead to more students deciding to study at the institution.

#### 5.1.4. Discussion

The findings from EFL teachers indicate that the implementation of Project 2020 has strongly influenced teachers' recognition of the importance of PD. The majority of teachers (n=29) agreed that PD could support them to improve their English language proficiency level to meet the language requirement and build other English language knowledge. Also, the teachers could learn new teaching methods from their colleagues,

experts, and literature when participating in various PD activities. Additionally, 29 out of 35 participants presented the benefit of PD in updating teachers on the new language policies and curricula developed by the Ministry of Education and Training and the institution. Participants argued that knowing about the new policies and curricula was vital for teachers' plans to improve themselves and properly implement the new curricula in real contexts. Furthermore, by participating in PD activities, some teachers (25.71%, n=9) would learn about the new technologies that could be effectively employed in teaching practices. After the PD process, teachers felt more confident to satisfy the students' heightened expectations due to the language requirements for students established in Project 2020.

Before Project 2020, tertiary teachers in Vietnam were largely not familiar with PD and PD activities (V. C. Le, 2011; Pham, 2001), despite the fact that PD for teachers plays a vital role in improving education quality and helps teachers to update their knowledge and become familiar with the most recent teaching standards (Guskey, 2000; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Richards & Farrell, 2005). During nearly 15 years of teaching at the institution, especially before Project 2020, I rarely heard any conversations amongst my colleagues or my friends teaching English at other institutions about attending workshops, conferences or other PD activities. Teachers knew little about those events and had no idea that they should have participated; otherwise, they would have managed their time to attend. They only knew about the teaching festival and teacher study group because they were required to attend. In addition, they sometimes did some sharing of teaching experience with their colleagues during between-class breaks.

The implementation of Project 2020, however, has considerably changed teachers' awareness of PD. Teachers engage in PD to learn their new roles and duties, which have been changed by the education reforms. Many documents related to Project 2020 repeatedly mentioned PD plans and PD significance to the improvement of language teachers (Faculty B, 2015b; MOET, 2013, 2014; National Language Project 2020, 2013a, 2013b; National Language Project, 2014b, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008b). The standards for teachers and students mentioned in Project 2020 pushed teachers to improve and become more aware of the role of PD. The first activity of testing the English proficiency of EFL teachers conducted by Project 2020 exerted much pressure on EFL teachers when the majority failed to meet the standard requirement (Nguyen, 2015; Saigoneer, 2018; Viet Nam News, 2018). As a result, those teachers who could not satisfy the requirements started to find ways to learn and improve their English proficiency level.

After the interviews for this study had been conducted in 2016, teachers continued to notify me of PD activities. Anecdotally, PD strategies developed by Project 2020 have been offering teachers several opportunities which have contributed significantly to the increase in their awareness of PD. This is the first time most language teachers have heard about different PD activities and sought to attend events such as conferences, workshops, and training courses which were provided by Project 2020. Teachers have become increasingly familiar with PD activities and the ideas of engaging in PD as a significant task apart from the usual teaching tasks. Many training courses were conducted by Project 2020 to improve English teachers' professional competency at all training levels throughout the country (Dang, 2018). In addition, the emergence of the VietTESOL International Convention organized by the VietTESOL Association, an annual international TESOL conference which was first jointly organized by Project

2020 and Hanoi National University of Education in 2014, has provided EFL teachers with an excellent chance to share their research and learn from other presenters. This annual VietTESOL International Convention is one of many initiatives within the strategic scheme developed by Project 2020 to build up the PD environment for EFL teachers in Vietnam.

In conclusion, Project 2020 has made a significant contribution to the change of teachers' attitudes to, and teachers' engagement in, PD activities, although the Minister of MOET, Phung Xuan Nha, indicated in 2016 that "the government had failed to meet the goals of the NFL scheme for the 2008-2020 Project" (as cited in Duy Thái, 2016; Luong, 2016). Regarding on-going PD for EFL teachers, there might still be a lack of regular and follow-up workshops for EFL teachers to upgrade their skills or put their knowledge and skills into practice as stated by Mr. Do Tuan Minh, Rector of University of Languages and International Studies, VNU, Hanoi (Saigoneer, 2018), but teachers' awareness of PD and continuous professional learning has been considerably improved.

## 5.2. Current PD activities

At the time of the study, teachers had recently engaged in a variety of PD activities. Some, both formally structured and informal, were compulsory (Faculty B, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; University A, 2015, 2017a, 2017b); others were teachers' personal choices matching their interests or their personal goals such as fulfilling scholarship requirements. In particular, teachers were required to regularly engage in teacher study groups, teaching festivals, and lesson observations. They were also selected to attend workshops or PD training courses, or advised of and encouraged to attend workshops for their own PD.

The common PD activities for EFL teachers can be clearly identified in participants' responses to both the questionnaires and focus group discussions.

#### 5.2.1. Findings from teachers' questionnaires

The survey data revealed the common PD activities amongst the participating EFL tertiary teachers. By answering question 4 in the questionnaire, participants (n=133) indicated the activities they had recently engaged in. Table 5.4 ranks the activities by the level of participation rate, with each activity retaining the question number it originally had in the survey.

Table 5.4: Professional development activities in which EFL tertiary teachers had recently participated

Number in order of participation rate	Activity No	Professional development activities	Undertaken?	
			Yes (%)	No (%)
1	4	Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues	98.5	1.5
2	5	Asking for help from colleagues	93.98	6.02
3	10	Participating in lessons observed by the academic head and faculty and university managers	90.98	9.02
4	3	Following research literature in the field	89.47	10.53
5	7	Developing new materials with colleagues	89.47	10.53
6	13	Attending in-service training (workshops, seminars, etc.)	87.97	12.03
7	15	Following professional development programs	84.21	15.79
8	8	Developing techniques and activities with colleagues	81.95	18.05
9	9	Taking part in peer observation (mutual observation and feedback)	81.95	18.05
10	2	Keeping a teaching journal to reflect on my own teaching	72.93	27.07
11	12	Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice	72.93	27.07
12	1	Gathering information about my own teaching performance (through surveys, interviews, etc.)	72.18	27.82
13	14	Attending conferences and symposia in the field	69.92	30.08
14	6	Training other teachers	59.4	40.6
15	11	Conducting teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems	57.14	42.86
16	16	Writing articles for teaching journals or other publications	49.62	50.38

As can be seen from Table 5.4, the PD activities that EFL teachers had recently engaged in were various, and the number of teachers engaging in PD differed from activity to activity.

Overall, the activities that more teachers participated in were those they could do in groups with their colleagues or those that were formally structured. The activities of sharing experiences and problems with colleagues (activity 4), asking for help from colleagues (activity 5) or participating in lessons observed by the academic head and Faculty and University managers (activity 10) were the most common PD activities with 98.5%, 94%, and 91% of teachers participating respectively. Working with colleagues to develop materials or teaching techniques and attending workshops or PD programs were also common, with more than 81% of teachers recently engaging in them.

Individual activities were less common among EFL teachers. About 72% of participants indicated that they had recently engaged in the activities of gathering information about their teaching performance (activity 1), keeping a teaching journal (activity 2) and trying new ideas in practice (activity 12). Conducting an inquiry for solving classroom problems (activity 11) and writing articles (activity 16) were less common with only 57.14% and 49.62% of teachers participating in these activities.

To sum up, although EFL tertiary teachers participated in a number of PD activities, they were more interested in group or organized activities rather than individual ones.

### 5.2.2. Findings from focus groups with teachers

Participants in focus group discussions shared their experience in a variety of PD activities, both ‘formally structured’ and ‘informal’. Teachers also made some comments on the activities they had engaged in. In this study, the participants regarded ‘formally structured activities’ as those activities which were formally organized by the faculty or institution or other organizations, and the teachers were required or offered to participate at a given time. ‘Informal PD activities’ were the ones that the teachers could

do individually or in pairs or groups at flexible times, and at venues decided by the teachers. Informal PD activities were either teachers' personally chosen activities or ones they were required to engage in.

Formally structured activities

### *Teaching festival*

All participants shared that they annually joined in the institution's teaching festival, which provided them with a myriad of opportunities to improve their professional knowledge and teaching skills. They engaged in the teaching festival to directly teach a lesson for evaluation or just to observe other teachers' lessons to gain experience from their lessons or from the appraisals of the panelists.

### Teaching a lesson for evaluation

Nearly all the teachers (n=31) indicated that they had taught a lesson in the annual teaching festival, and they recognized the feedback as beneficial to their development. Teachers explained that by presenting their lessons in the teaching festival, they had to work under pressure and to think intensively about designing good lessons, teaching methods, teaching techniques, and skills of classroom management. Therefore, they had a chance to revise both the theory and experience of teaching methodology and put them into practice. Additionally, teachers were content with presenting their lesson as they could *learn from the feedback and comments of the panelists and other colleagues about both good and inappropriate points which they could not realise by themselves* (Teacher 28).

To me, the most beneficial PD activity is presenting a lesson in the teaching festival for evaluation. I have prepared the best lesson I could, but there were still some drawbacks revealed by the panelists that I couldn't be aware of in advance. Panelists' feedback actually makes me who I am now. (Teacher 6)

### Observing other teachers' lessons

All the teachers stated that they had observed other teachers' lessons at the annual teaching festival both at a faculty and an institutional level, and they were all interested in this activity. Teachers were relaxed when observing other teachers' lessons for learning and sharing their opinions. By observing other teachers' lessons, teachers could improve their own teaching performance.

I have observed other teachers' lessons at the teaching festival. It is incredibly beneficial as we can learn from our colleagues' strengths and weaknesses in designing lessons, teaching techniques, and classroom management. (Teacher 25)

### *Workshops and conferences*

Attending workshops and conferences was another common PD activity that nearly all participants (97.1%, n=34) took part in. Teachers were selected to attend PD workshops organized within the institution, such as workshops in assessment and testing, TESOL, and introduction to research methods. Once teachers were selected, they were required to fully participate but paid no fees. Most teachers highly valued these opportunities, as workshops and conferences could provide them with new knowledge or help them to refresh and further discuss their prior knowledge. Some teachers were happy to attend workshops or conferences, but their expectations were not fully satisfied as the workshop duration was too short. Teacher 21 shared in a comical way that a workshop on assessment and testing was like *cưỡi ngựa xem hoa* (seeing flowers while riding a horse – a Vietnamese saying meaning 'not going into detail'), or even like *đi trực thăng xem hoa* (seeing flowers while flying an aeroplane). She explained that the lecturer introduced content in a single day which generally took two weeks to deliver.

The workshop on assessment and testing that I have attended was highly beneficial. However, it was short, and it needs to be longer, so

the participants could have chances to practice designing tests and get feedback. (Teacher 8)

In addition, nearly half the teachers (42.86%, n=15) actively looked for workshops and conferences held in other institutions or by publishers, although these workshops were not always as good as they expected.

### *Training courses*

Some teachers (17.14%, n=6) took part in training courses to improve their English proficiency or tertiary teaching methods. The teachers explained that this was because their English proficiency was of a low standard or they did not have the Tertiary Teaching Certificate, so they were required to learn and obtain the required English proficiency level and the appropriate certification. The teachers registered and paid for courses such as IELTS and tertiary teaching methodology inside or outside the institution.

I was required to hand in the Tertiary Teaching Certificate to the institution. So, I had to manage my time to study and paid for the tertiary teaching course at the National University of Education.  
(Teacher 1)

### *Informal activities*

In addition to formally structured PD activities, the teachers indicated that they frequently participated in other activities with their colleagues or on their own. They defined these as informal activities (see Table 5.5).

*Table 5.5: Informal PD activities that tertiary EFL teachers had recently engaged in*

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Details</b>
Teacher study groups	Developing techniques and activities with colleagues Discussing lesson plans Reviewing the teaching techniques Developing supplementary teaching materials Developing tests and question banks
Collaborating and sharing with colleagues	Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues Asking for help from colleagues Discussing difficult situations in teaching with other colleagues at break time
Mentoring	Training other teachers (senior teachers were assigned to train novice teachers) Working as mentors for the English club for students
Doing research	Following research literature in the field Supervising students to do research Conducting teacher-initiated inquiries to solve classroom problems
Writing articles	Following research literature in the field and writing articles for journals
Self-initiated learning	Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice Preparing for IELTS test Learning from different English teaching websites such as the British Council website

### *Teacher study group*

Teacher study groups were the most common PD activity among the participating EFL teachers. The groups were formed from teachers who taught the same subject in a semester. Teachers were required to join their groups weekly to work on various issues related to the subject they taught. One teacher might join more than one group, depending on the number of subjects taught. All teachers' meeting hours would be recorded and counted for their monthly and yearly PD hours.

The teachers explained that they participated in this activity the most because they were required to join in more than one group depending on the number of English levels they

taught in a semester. One teacher normally taught from two to four different levels of English for different kinds of students.

In the weekly meetings, teachers worked on all stages of teaching preparation (e.g. developing curriculum and syllabus, developing teaching materials, and lesson plans); teaching performance (e.g. teaching techniques and activities); teaching consolidation (e.g. reviewing the teaching techniques, teaching materials and supplementary activities); and assessment and testing (e.g. designing tests and developing question banks).

The teachers showed an interest in group work, as they could support one another to complete their tasks. Furthermore, teachers could share and learn with each other when they worked with other colleagues who taught the same subject. Some teachers emphasized that in their group meeting, they could ask for help from their colleagues and be supported simultaneously, and this saved them much time compared to learning in other ways.

Working with colleagues in a teacher study group is really useful, as I can learn different teaching techniques and activities for one lesson from different teachers. (Teacher 29)

Joining the teacher study group meeting, my colleagues could directly show me some tips to deal with question bank software when I was in trouble with it. It saved me a lot of time. (Teacher 23)

On the other hand, about half the participants mentioned drawbacks to the teacher study group, chiefly related to time constraints and time inflexibility. Teachers complained about the conflict between their teaching timetable and group meetings, and even the conflict between the times of different group meetings. Consequently, some teachers had to attend another teacher study group's meeting that matched their timetable but did

not match the subjects they taught, and they found it a waste of time when they had no ideas for discussion. In addition, female teachers stated that they sometimes failed to manage their time to fulfill multiple tasks including caring for their family, teaching, and teacher study group meetings for PD.

I have to balance my teaching and other personal issues related to my family to attend the meetings. Sometimes, I missed some important meetings, as I failed to manage my time. (Teacher 8)

The teacher study group is sometimes time-consuming. Many teachers in one group follow different teaching timetables, so it is difficult to get all members to attend every group meeting. The teachers who missed their group meeting would join the other group meeting to satisfy the meeting hours required by the faculty, but they contributed nothing to that group discussion. (Teacher 5)

#### *Collaborating and sharing with colleagues*

Some teachers (n=7) stressed that they regularly communicated and collaborated with their colleagues at work, and they found this a useful activity for their PD. The teachers could communicate with one another informally in short conversations during the break time, and they shared their teaching experience, or difficult situations in their teaching or at work, and asked for their colleagues' help. Some teachers indicated that those short conversations were very practical and provided teachers with a friendly atmosphere to share and incidentally learn from each other. Moreover, they were extremely convenient, as they could take part in such conversations without making plans in advance. Additionally, collaboration with colleagues at work enabled teachers to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Some teachers explained that they could learn from colleagues' contributions to their discussions, and the more they worked with different colleagues, the more they developed professionally.

Working with colleagues, I could learn a lot of things which are not only teaching experience, their teaching techniques, and other professional skills but also their ways of thinking and appraising. (Teacher 9)

I feel comfortable discussing with my close colleagues to ask for their suggestions to deal with some difficulties in my teaching. I also found Ms. Hoa's informal sharing of IELTS preparation beneficial for me and I could remember quickly. [Hoa is a pseudonym] (Teacher 23)

### *Mentoring*

Only seven participants acted as mentors and were assigned to instruct the other teachers in the faculty or support the newly recruited teachers. These participants explained that it was necessary for them to learn to master the areas they were going to share and tutor, and they prepared carefully for their mentoring. Moreover, they would repeatedly revise their knowledge and skills by instructing and sharing with other teachers. As a result, their teaching improved considerably.

I did mentor other teachers in the faculty. Before mentoring, I tried to study and understand deeply the issues I was going to instruct my colleagues. Training other people means training ourselves at the same time. (Teacher 31)

### *Self-initiated learning*

Many teachers kept learning by undertaking a number of activities during their teaching practice. Some teachers (14.29%, n=5) self-evaluated their teaching and kept a teaching diary. More teachers (45.71%, n=16) regularly tried out new ideas or suggestions to improve their lessons, and they continuously changed and adapted for the next lessons in other classes. By doing this, the teachers agreed that they could explore various interesting techniques and classroom activities which really worked for the students. In addition, some teachers (11.43%, n=4) asked other people, including their students, for feedback on their teaching. They employed both formal methods, such as conducting

surveys, and informal ones such as directly getting feedback from students after the lessons.

I taught the same subject in some classes, so I often took notes on the advantages and disadvantages of my lessons in previous classes, and adopted other approaches to improve the lessons in later classes. (Teacher 22)

I keep self-evaluating my lessons and try to improve them when teaching in other classes. (Teacher 34)

I asked my students for their feedback on my lessons on both advantages such as exciting and motivating points and disadvantages such as the ambiguous matters. I then made some positive changes in the next lessons. (Teacher 32)

In addition, some teachers (17.14%, n=6) were interested in learning from the internet which they could access and use to learn at a time convenient to them. According to these teachers, flexible time was particularly significant, as they were always under time constraints, and needed to manage their time to complete their tasks at work and with their families. Moreover, they were more likely to seek free-of-charge websites which offered sample lessons, and tips for teaching English as a foreign language. In these teachers' view, this PD activity enriched their teaching methods and teaching approaches, as they could observe a number of lessons delivered by various teachers from many places in the world. However, the teachers could not apply all the knowledge and skills they learned; they merely used those appropriate to their contexts.

I learn teaching approaches and teaching skills from the British Council website, such as how to teach reading and listening skills effectively, and how to manage the class well, especially large-size classes. (Teacher 2)

Learning from some teaching websites is very beneficial as it is free of charge. I try to practice in my real teaching contexts and build up

my own teaching techniques that work the best in my real situations.  
(Teacher 3)

### *Doing research*

One-third of the participants (34.29%, n=12) shared their experience of doing research to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Doing research varied from teacher to teacher. Some teachers (28.57%, n=10) had conducted an inquiry individually or in a group to solve problems emerging in their teaching. During the process of doing their research project, they were required to review the literature and update their knowledge from the literature on current issues related to their research topic, and even learn solutions to their teaching problems. Three teachers benefited from mentoring and supervising students to carry out their research. These teachers explained that in order to mentor their students, they themselves had to review literature, theory, and research methods.

Conducting inquiry and supervising my students to do research have changed my belief in teaching translation and interpretation. When I read and studied from the literature, I could update approaches in teaching translation and interpretation. By applying these approaches, I could motivate students to actively engage in my lessons. (Teacher 18)

### *Writing articles (including following research literature in the field)*

About a quarter of the teachers (n=8) had written articles for journals or other publications. This was not directly for their PD, but for scholarship applications to study abroad. Having a publication is one condition for candidates for some scholarships, or an advantage for other scholarships. Amongst the focus group participants, no one had written an article for other purposes.

### 5.2.3. Discussion

The findings highlighted that EFL teachers were interested in group activities in which they can share experiences and problems with colleagues, ask for help from colleagues, and do other tasks collaboratively with colleagues. Additionally, more teachers participated in formally organized activities which they were required to attend, such as the annual teaching festival, workshops or conferences organized within the institution. Teachers explained that they could be seen as underperforming at the end of each month or academic year if they did not participate in the required PD activities. The common PD activities amongst EFL teachers indicate the significant influence of Vietnamese collectivist culture and top-down leadership culture on teachers' engagement in PD activities.

#### The connection of collectivism with PD activities for EFL teachers

It can be summarized from the findings that the most common PD activities were the ones in which teachers had a chance to work in groups with other educators such as teacher study groups, workshops, training programs, or activities of sharing and collaborating with their colleagues. The teachers found group activities useful and beneficial as they could share their experience, get feedback from colleagues, learn and ask for help from their colleagues. Because a teacher study group is not a formal staff meeting (Richards & Farrell, 2005), it becomes a safe place for teachers to cooperate with their colleagues to work on teaching-related activities such as developing curriculum and teaching materials, reviewing lesson plans, or engaging in peer coaching or classroom observation. Additionally, the desire to participate in group activities is understandable because collectivism is an important cultural dimension in Vietnam (Borton, 2000; Ellis, 1995; Pham, 1999), and the typical feature of collectivistic cultures is group orientation (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 93). Furthermore, when working in a group,

teachers will have a sense of functional harmony, cooperation, and unity which are regarded as the principal values of collectivism (Hofstede, 1991; Park et al., 2005; Truong, 2013).

Additionally, these EFL teachers feel more comfortable and safer working in groups or teams. The teachers get involved in group discussions as a group member, but not as an independent individual. Teachers then contribute to the common tasks and agreements of the group, and they are not individually responsible for any results, but only shoulder responsibility as a group member (Phan, 2017). This may be because Vietnamese people, like those in other collectivist societies, feel more comfortable working as a team member, and they often use ‘we’ as a personal pronoun when stating a personal idea (Burns, 1998; Gudykunst, 2004; Phan, 2017).

In summary, the importance of PD perceived by policy makers, teachers and managers indicates that EFL teachers not only realise the benefits of PD but also attempt to fit in with the system. EFL teachers’ thinking and action are considerably influenced by educational reforms and top-down leadership style. However, responding to the new requirements of education reforms and the request of their managers is not the only reason for EFL teachers’ engagement in PD activities. The other goals will be analysed in section 5.3.

#### [Influence of leadership cultures on common PD activities amongst EFL teachers](#)

A prominent finding is that EFL teachers consistently took part in the PD activities which had been officially organized, such as the teaching festival, workshops or training programs organized within or outside the institution or teacher study groups. The teachers explained that they were selected and required to participate in some workshops held at the institution to develop their professional skills such as in

assessment and testing, or English teaching techniques, or research methods.

Additionally, it was compulsory for teachers to participate in teacher study group meetings, perform a model lesson at the annual teaching festival and observe other teachers' lessons as well. The teachers initially engaged in some PD activities because they were required to do so by the top-down regulations and policies, although they desperately struggled with their tight schedule of teaching and attending workshops at the same time. This finding supports a previous study by Tran (2016), which concluded the dominant role of MOET and the universities in deciding types of PD activities for lecturers. Tran found that teachers were more likely to attend formal PD activities such as one-off training courses, workshops, and conferences, which were provided or organized both within and outside their institution by MOET or their institution.

Teachers can benefit from attending activities such as teacher study groups and teaching festivals because by observing other lessons, teachers can learn effective teaching strategies that they have never tried, and they can reflect on their own teaching as well (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Also, teaching for other people to observe is an effective way to gather information about their teaching and classroom management, and build up an awareness of their teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Despite the benefits to the teachers of the activities mentioned above, it is nevertheless clear that the teachers initially participated in those PD activities to accomplish the tasks assigned to them by their Dean based on the institutional rules. Their PD engagement could not always be based on whether they found activities interesting or useful.

The habit of engaging in some PD activities as a must-do task aligns with the top-down school leadership and high power distance in Vietnam, which is strongly influenced by Confucian values. Confucian principles enforce absolute respect and obedience of

subordinate to superior and subject to master. The teachers' habit of obedience is consistent with the findings in two previous studies (Tran, 2015; Truong et al., 2017) that teachers are reluctant to raise their voices against administrative and managerial decisions as that could be seen as impolite or disrespectful by their leaders. The top-down leadership culture makes teachers more reliant on what the higher authority tells them to do. Teachers might lose the habit of deciding for themselves what they should do, as their initiatives and ideas may not be approved, or they are not supported to realise their initiatives. Furthermore, by agreeing and complying with the leaders' decision, the teachers are giving their leaders face which is very important in collectivist cultures, especially to high-status people (Gudykunst, 2004).

### 5.3. Teachers' goals for participating in PD

#### 5.3.1. Goals for engaging in PD

The focus group data (n=35) indicated that teachers had a variety of goals for their engagement in PD. Those goals can be categorized into eight themes, as shown in Table 5.6

*Table 5.6: Summary of EFL teachers' stated goals for engaging in PD activities (all participants identified multiple goals)*

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>No of participants (n=35)</b>
Enhancing personal self-esteem	100%	35
Gaining appreciation and financial benefits	82.8%	29
Complying with obligatory regulations	68.2%	24
Enhancing professionalism	57.1%	20
Satisfying students' needs	34.3%	12
Job security	34.3%	12
Satisfying teachers' intrinsic goals	28.6%	10
Avoiding embarrassment	14.3%	5

### Enhancing personal self-esteem

All participants agreed that they participated in PD activities to pursue personal development and growth. From their perspective, personal development meant more self-confidence; better expertise in professional content knowledge, teaching skills and theoretical knowledge of their field; more knowledge about the surrounding world; and ultimately becoming a better person. The teachers explained that participating in different PD activities improved their knowledge and skills, and updated them on the current literature in the field. As a result, they *became more self-confident in front of their managers or colleagues* (Teacher 4) when undertaking any academic tasks assigned, and in front of their students in the classroom as well. Some teachers shared that after engaging in some PD activities they could *raise their voice to share their knowledge and points of view in faculty seminars or workshops* (Teacher 4), and *their colleagues highly valued their ideas* (Teacher 3). The teachers could *discuss the problems related to their field with EFL teachers in other institutions* when they attended some workshops (Teacher 4). Additionally, the teachers were well aware that, as students' English levels and expectations are higher now than in the past, PD is considered a good way for teachers to prepare well to confidently teach in classrooms.

### Gaining appreciation and financial benefits

Almost all the teachers (82.8%, n=29) stated that they were engaging in PD to seek acknowledgment from external sources such as managers and students. These teachers found it worth spending time and effort to improve themselves, and then they felt loved and highly appreciated by their students or fully acknowledged by their managers. Good feedback from students could provide the teachers with a good reputation. As a result, many students would want to study under them, and they would be assigned to teach good classes or extra classes to get an ever-better payment rate.

Students' compliments greatly encouraged me to engage in PD to improve myself. If my teaching is not good, I will not be confident in front of my students and be gradually pushed aside. (Teacher 5)

Moreover, some teachers (22.9%, n=8) engaged in PD to be awarded a teaching prize and to receive a merit award at a higher level. These teachers reasoned that based on institutional regulations, if they were awarded the title of excellent teacher for two consecutive years or received a Merit at a higher level, including Ministry and National levels, they would be offered the opportunity to travel abroad without paying any money or get an early wage increase. For these reasons, they attempted to undertake certain PD activities to meet the requirements of being an excellent teacher for a few years, and then spend time on their other plans in the following years.

I participated in PD to respond to a good policy of the institution in which excellent teachers will be granted an opportunity to travel abroad or have their wages increased earlier. (Teacher 11)

I made my own plan for PD partly based on the criteria used to evaluate teachers at the end of each year. (Teacher 15)

#### Complying with obligatory regulations

Two-thirds of teachers (68.6%, n=24) admitted that their PD engagement was strongly influenced by institutional and faculty regulations. According to teacher 5, *obligatory regulations work well in motivating teachers to engage in PD*, and teachers could then discover the advantages of PD activities. The teachers indicated that there were a variety of regulations they needed to follow in terms of PD.

Firstly, the institution requires all English teachers to achieve at least a 6.0 IELTS band score. This forced the teachers to prepare for the IELTS test. Teacher 16 stated that *almost all teachers had a better sense of improving their English proficiency and prepared for IELTS since teachers were required to satisfy the standard of English*

*proficiency*. Some teachers (34.3%, n=12) chose to learn by themselves, and the others (25.7%, n=9) went to IELTS classes. Test preparation took a lot of time and effort, meaning that teachers had to reschedule their personal plans.

I prepared for the IELTS test myself to meet the requirement of the institution. I would like to have attended some IELTS preparation classes, but the timetable conflicted with my teaching schedules.  
(Teacher 22)

Secondly, some teachers (14.3%, n=5) added that they attended workshops or seminars as they were on the list of teachers who were required to go by their Dean. Among those teachers, some (11.4%, n=4) later found the workshops very hands-on and useful for the task they were currently working on, whereas one teacher found them interesting but had no opportunity to apply what he had learned as he was not carrying out any tasks related to the workshop topic.

The regulations to evaluate teachers monthly and annually put an additional burden on teachers' shoulders. Teachers were pushed to participate in PD to become a good teacher of the year, as they needed to satisfy the necessary institutional requirements, including joining the annual teaching festival, continuously learning to improve their expertise, conducting research, or writing a journal article.

If no personal benefit is attached to some PD activities such as conducting an inquiry or writing articles, teachers will not participate in those activities. [...]. Teachers will not successfully complete their task if they do not conduct any research. (Teacher 2)

### Enhancing professionalism

More than half the teachers (57.1%, n=20) stated that they participated in PD as they would like to improve their teaching practice or to become better staff. In their opinion, teaching well meant that a teacher could produce the best outcome product—their

students—for society. As such, teachers should not only have appropriate professional knowledge but social knowledge as well. The teachers explained that a high English proficiency level and good teaching methods are not enough for the teachers to prepare their students for future jobs. Teachers also need to have knowledge of other issues including social trends, employers' requirements for their students, and understanding of students and their expectations. These teachers were interested in PD activities for their professional knowledge and real-world knowledge.

I am well aware that teachers not only need to improve their English proficiency, and teaching skills, but also other skills including understanding students' needs, communication skills, teamwork skills, and being up to date with current social trends. (Teacher 31)

PD enriches my knowledge on the current requirements of the labour market for our students. (Teacher 3)

Almost half the teachers (48.6%, n=17) indicated that they would like to become staff who could accomplish well any academic tasks assigned over and above teaching tasks.

I had to develop the syllabus and teaching materials for one subject, but we were not trained to do it before and had no idea of how to develop it. We wished we could have been trained before taking on the tasks, so our work would be much better. (Teacher 14)

Because these teachers were not trained to do syllabus and materials development when they studied at university, they felt confused when assigned those tasks.

#### Satisfying students' needs

One-third of the teachers (34.3%, n=12) expressed their concern about their students' expectations when they took part in some learning activities. In these teachers' view, teaching is a kind of service job and their students are both their customers and the products of their teaching process.

Students' knowledge is much better now, as they can learn from different sources, and they keep asking teachers many questions. Teachers need to learn continuously to update their knowledge to support their students; otherwise they will fail to respond adequately to students' questions. (Teacher 13)

These teachers were well aware that students are now better at different things, including English and familiarity with IT products and software, as they can learn a variety of things on the internet. Consequently, the teachers studied to update themselves on new skills in order to support their students and not be backward in comparison with their students.

#### Job security

A quarter of the teachers (28.6%, n=10) revealed that they engaged in PD because of anxiety about job security. They explained that they would like to contribute to training quality improvement which could guarantee their students a good job after graduation, and then attract more students to their university, so they would have their jobs safeguarded.

PD enables teachers to improve the training quality which then enables students to utilise knowledge and skills gained at university in their real working conditions. More students will enroll in the institution, and this creates more jobs for teachers in turn. (Teacher 34)

Some other teachers (34.3%, n=12) linked their own preparation for the IELTS test to the conditions of renewing their contract. They took IELTS courses to obtain the required IELTS band score to keep their teaching job safe; otherwise they might not be qualified enough to be a teacher any longer and would be moved to other positions within the institution or have their contract terminated.

### Satisfying teachers' intrinsic goals

Teachers' intrinsic goals refer to their personal interest and their personal growth encapsulated in their desire to pursue a scholarship to study abroad.

Some teachers (25.7%, n=9) indicated that the motivation for their engagement in different PD activities was their personal interest, including meeting new people to build up their network, learning new things, and having new experiences. These teachers were eager to find PD activities like workshops, seminars, or cooperation with colleagues.

I consider myself a lifelong learner, and I like to engage in various PD activities. [...]. 80% of my engagement is self-initiated, and my personal interest. (Teacher 7)

I am interested in attending workshops and seminars to build networks, learn from others, and especially have fun socializing with other people. (Teacher 22)

Nearly one-third of the teachers (28.6%, n=10) stated that engaging in PD activities was a good way to support them to fulfill the requirements for their applications for scholarship awards to study abroad. These teachers felt happy and volunteered to study for IELTS tests, engage in workshops on research methods, conduct inquiries individually or in a group, and write journal articles. Teacher 18 indicated that *the teachers who were completing the application for the scholarship award studied for the IELTS test autonomously*. All these PD activities could help teachers meet the requirements or get bonus points for their scholarship applications.

Some of my colleagues and I have prepared for the IELTS test, done research, or written articles, as we wanted to pursue a scholarship to study abroad. (Teacher 3).

Teachers emphasized that although they found doing research, writing articles and preparing for IELTS tests challenging and tiring, they spent time on these activities because they thought it would serve their interests.

#### Avoiding embarrassment

A small number of teachers (14.3%, n=5) shared that they participated in PD activities to learn and improve their professional competence so as to avoid being ashamed.

Lots of students are very good at English now. I found it necessary for me to participate in PD to improve my knowledge and skill to perform well and save face in front of my students. (Teacher 15)

Novice teachers are better at English and employing information technology skills in teaching. So, I want to learn to keep up with those young teachers. (Teacher 6)

For these teachers, a feeling of being as good as their colleagues played a significant role in their PD engagement. They expressed their embarrassment about joining a discussion without contributing any ideas and felt ashamed of being worse than their colleagues or unable to answer students' questions.

#### 5.3.2. Discussion

As indicated in Table 5.6, the majority of teachers identified four main goals for their engagement in PD activities: enhancing personal self-esteem, gaining appreciation and financial benefits, complying with regulations, and enhancing professionalism.

All teachers aimed to enhance their self-esteem by improving their professional knowledge, skills, and sociocultural knowledge. Teachers' knowledge and skills become outdated after some time teaching due to changes in the field, and as a result, there may exist a mismatch between the knowledge and skills the teacher possesses and what the institution needs (Richards & Farrell, 2005). When being updated on

professional knowledge and skills, teachers would have a sense of high self-esteem when they could confidently raise their voice in discussions at faculty seminars, workshops or academic meetings, and their ideas were highly valued by other people. This finding is consistent with the literature that teachers participate in PD to improve their professional knowledge, update on both theory and practice in the field, and improve their teaching skills, so that they feel more confident (Guskey, 2000; Harnett, 2012; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Vo & Nguyen, 2009).

The majority of teachers found it worthwhile engaging in PD activities because this helps them to gain a high appreciation and acknowledgment of their students and managers, and they would consequently be offered excellent classes with a higher payment rate. In other words, teachers participate in PD activities because they anticipate financial benefits and feelings of self-worth. Specifically, the teacher-student relationship in Vietnam is significantly influenced by Confucian philosophy and students tend to expect their teachers to be knowledgeable people who can instruct them to gain all the knowledge they desire (Nguyen & Mcinnis, 2002). Teachers are always respected by students and expected to be good models for students to follow regarding intellectual and moral lives (Nguyen & Mcinnis, 2002). In addition, most teachers are inspired to improve their teaching practice to support their students to achieve their goals (Stiegelbauer, 1992). As a result, the teachers in the present study keep learning to update themselves on new professional and social knowledge to help their students and to maintain a good image in front of their students.

Many participants engaged in PD activities to comply with the regulations or meet the requirements of the institution. The teachers are required to engage in organized activities such as weekly teacher study groups or workshops. Following the regulations

of their organization is seen as a necessary condition for teachers to fit in their working environment (Geijsel et al., 2009; Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009). Especially under the top-down leadership style in Vietnam, teachers are required to respect and obey their superiors' decisions (Borton, 2000; Jamieson, 1993; Pham, 1999; Vietnamese Government, 1998; Truong et al., 2017). Teachers are required to comply with the directives of their leaders, though they can raise their voice and express different ideas later to higher authorities (Vietnamese Government, 1998). Arguably, the teachers in this study participated in the organized PD activities initially because it was compulsory for them and their engagement in obligatory activities was controlled and used as a criterion to evaluate their performance. Teachers' attendance in weekly teacher study groups is recorded and summed up at the end of each month to see whether they have collected the required hours. If not, they can be evaluated as underperformers, resulting in salary deduction in that month. In this case, training offered to EFL teachers could be considered not only as a PD opportunity but also as an obligation (Tran, 2016).

Finally, more than half of the teachers participated in PD activities to enhance their professionalism. Many preservice courses provide student teachers with fairly general theoretical knowledge which is not relevant to their teaching assignments (Richards & Farrell, 2005), so teachers have to learn much of what they need for their teaching assignments on the job. These EFL teachers wanted to learn about the knowledge and skills that were essential for them to successfully accomplish the tasks assigned. Teachers found it difficult to do tasks such as designing a curriculum or syllabus, and developing teaching materials, as they had not been trained in these skills at university. Teachers felt anxious when they were unsure if they were doing everything in the right way. Once teachers became confident in their knowledge and capable of developing

teaching materials or designing curriculum and syllabus, their anxiety could be put at rest.

The other goals for teachers' engagement in PD (satisfying their students, job security, personal goals, personal interest, and avoiding embarrassment) were selected by less than 40% of participants. Many previous studies have indicated that teachers' intrinsic motivation for lifelong learning, interest and hobbies, or curiosity for new things strongly encourages them to take part in learning (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Guglielmino, 2008; Meister, 2010; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004). However, less than half the teachers in this study engaged in PD activities because of intrinsic goals (e.g., their interests or personal goals or fulfilling scholarship requirements). This finding shows that it can be a higher priority for EFL teachers to enhance their professionalism, satisfy the regulations and requirements of the institution, and gain good appraisal from their managers or secure their job (especially for those whose English proficiency level is still lower than the standard requirement). In the recent Vietnamese HE context, EFL teachers have focused primarily on fulfilling new requirements such as meeting the English standard, updating new teaching approaches, learning how to apply IT in teaching and developing the new English curriculum, and completing their teaching tasks. Most PD activities, therefore, have become increasingly oriented to job requirements.

In summary, teachers' goals are evidently related to the enablers of PD activities such as institutional rules, teacher-related factors, and important people's impacts that are examined in Chapter 6 and to teachers' motivation to engage in PD activities that are more deeply discussed in Chapter 8 (section 8.3.2). Teachers' goals for engaging in PD

activities will also be further discussed in Chapter 8 (section 8.1.2) in comparison with managers' goals for planning teacher PD.

## 5.4. Managers' goals for planning teacher PD

When managers are planning teacher PD, they are the subject of an activity system that we can call 'planning teacher PD,' and their planning goals constitute the *Object* of that system. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, this activity has some relationship to the system of teachers' engagement 'in PD', but is independent of it. The identification of goals for planning teacher PD draws upon interviews with institutional and faculty managers (n=4).

### 5.4.1. Goals for planning teacher PD

The managers explicitly presented four main goals complying with high-level regulations or initiatives; preparing for and supporting institutional and faculty plans; enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills; and enhancing students' learning outcomes.

#### Complying with higher-level initiatives

All participants (n=4) mentioned that their strategies and plans for PD closely linked to the documents and initiatives of the government and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). The managers explained that the institution mainly developed the strategies and activities based on national laws and regulations such as the HE law or University Charter or Project 2020. The institution and faculty realized the higher-level initiatives in their real context. Specifically, PD for English teachers was developed based on the English standards for both English teachers and students as well as the PD strategies of Project 2020. Institutional manager 1 emphasized that *the institution was implementing Project 2020* by developing and implementing a new English curriculum,

developing teachers in terms of both English proficiency and teaching methods, and preparing students for meeting the new English standards for graduation. Both faculty managers indicated that the faculty's recent PD strategies aimed to fulfill the Project 2020 goal of teacher standardization. In particular, Manager 4 emphasized that *by 2018 all English teachers will achieve at least 6.0 IELTS which is just 0.5 IELTS score under the English standard of Project 2020* (Manager 4). The compliance with the higher-level initiatives is clearly illustrated in the following statements.

Professional development for English teachers in the faculty is to standardize English teachers based on the requirement of Project 2020. (Manager 3)

The institutional PD strategies for English teachers complied with the MOET's requirements for EFL teachers at different training levels. (Manager 2)

#### Support for institutional and faculty plans

Both institutional managers (n=2) and faculty managers (n=2) shared that they planned to develop their English teachers in order to support institutional and faculty plans. The managers indicated that good teachers could enhance the quality of English teaching and learning which would greatly contribute to increasing the institution's reputation and ranking. Manager 1 emphasized that the ranking and reputation of the institution mainly depend on the quality of its academic staff, so investing in PD was the right scheme to grow the ranking. In addition, the faculty managers explained that they intended to develop the faculty in the direction of *doing the internal institutional tasks and also doing some English Language Services outside the institution, with a ratio of 60% and 40% respectively* (Manager 4). Consequently, it was obligatory to have good English teachers to compete with outside foreign language centers.

The faculty enhanced teachers' professional development to prepare good human resources for the establishment of an independent English Assessment Centre incorporated with the British Council. (Manager 3)

#### Enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills

Three out of four managers (75%) stated that one of the objectives of PD strategic planning is improving teachers' expertise. The managers argued that teachers were required to have good professional knowledge and skills to meet the needs of new educational trends, and thereby enhance the institution's reputation. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to learn about new things related to their field and new teaching approaches, and apply them in their teaching practice. PD was essential to improve teachers' expertise and teaching skills, and PD enabled teachers to perform their teaching tasks better and get good feedback from students. More specifically, Manager 3 confirmed that teachers' English proficiency and their test design skills were significantly increased after they participated in some PD activities such as assessment and testing workshops, English classes with foreigners, or practicing English with colleagues or by themselves. The following statements illustrate these ideas.

The faculty PD scheme mainly aims at improving teachers' expertise. Accordingly, the areas of the training workshops which have recently been organized by the faculty are teaching methods, assessment and test design, or developing the curriculum. (Manager 4).

The essential objective of PD is enhancing teachers' content knowledge and their instructional skills, which could then make a significant contribution to the increase in students' English learning outcomes on graduation. (Manager 2)

#### Enhancing student learning outcomes

Three of the four managers confirmed the focus of institutional and faculty PD strategies on the improvement of student learning outcomes. Both institution and faculty

aimed to satisfy their students' needs and enhance students' English proficiency levels, which then help students to meet the English standard requirement and the real needs of their potential employers after graduation. Manager 1 emphasized the decisive role of student learning outcomes in the enhancement of the institution's reputation and ranking. As a result, the institution and faculty used students' feedback and comments to see how much they were satisfied with their teachers' teaching performance, and the results of student surveys would then guide the institution to develop appropriate PD plans for EFL teachers. Manager 2 further explained that with teachers' engagement in PD, students had recently been more satisfied with their English study, which was illustrated in their study results and their positive feedback and comments on their teachers' performance.

Institutional PD strategies have been developed with the objective that at the time of graduation, students' English proficiency would be good enough to meet the standard and their potential employers' needs.  
(Manager 2)

#### 5.4.2. Discussion

These four main goals of planning teacher PD are consistent with the importance of PD to positive change in teachers, students and institutions, especially in the current context of English teaching and learning in Vietnam. Teacher PD is viewed as a vital way to improve education quality (Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Mizell, 2010). Specifically, PD enables teachers to enhance their professionalism to satisfy their professional needs and their students' expectations and enhance students' learning outcomes (Lee, 2013).

Teacher PD also enables institutions to implement educational reforms (Borko et al., 2002; Crevola et al., 2006; Fullan, 2007a; Guskey, 2002b; Nguyen, 2018; Starkey et al., 2009) and to develop school capacity as a whole (Hargreaves, 2004; King & Newmann, 2001; Vescio et al., 2008; Wideen & Andrews, 1987). In the context of English teaching

and learning in Vietnam now, PD for EFL teachers plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of Project 2020 (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2012). Nguyen (2018) discussed how Project 2020 objectives would be achieved if teachers are willing for PD to improve their expertise and teaching practice. Arguably, while policymakers are those who develop plans and set the goals for any educational innovation or organizational development, it is teachers who are the principal agents and who make a vital contribution to achieving the goals (Fullan, 2007b; García & Menken, 2010).

It is understandable for managers in this study to consider the goal of complying with higher level initiatives when they plan teacher PD strategies. Given that the Vietnamese leadership style is top-down, it is compulsory for the lower-level staff or organization to comply with the directives or instructions of higher-level leaders or departments (Vietnamese Government, 1998; Truong, 2013; Truong et al., 2017). In this study, PD plans were developed based on the requirements of Project 2020, a significant educational reform in Vietnam which was considered as the first national comprehensive foreign language innovation. It is necessary for managers to develop PD strategies to realize the objectives of Project 2020 in the context of their institutions.

Teacher PD is considered a key to ensuring the success of educational innovations (Crevola et al., 2006; Fullan, 2007a; Guskey, 2002b; Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, the managers in this study viewed PD as an effective way to prepare good human resources who can support them to guarantee the success of institutional and faculty development plans. This finding lends support to Tran's (2009) study, which confirmed the significant role of teacher PD in promoting teachers' career growth, which vitally enhances their' institutions' teaching quality, diversity and reputation. Similarly, according to Newmann et al. (2000) and Little (1993), PD benefits both teachers and

institutions in terms of developing institutional capacity which is mainly decided by high-quality staff.

The goal of enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills is consistent with the features of PD mentioned in the literature and the main objective of Project 2020 in Vietnam. Many previous studies (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hassel, 1999; Hirsh, 2009; Mizell, 2010) concluded that the objectives of teacher PD are to enhance teachers' professional competencies and skills and change teachers' attitudes, so this improvement will support their students' learning and enhance their learning outcomes. In addition, as mentioned in Project 2020, teacher development was an essential need to address besides curriculum revision and textbook innovation, and about 85% of Project 2020 budget was used for PD (Nguyen, 2018; Parks, 2011). Standardizing teachers' language proficiency and updating teachers on effective English-teaching methods were considered as the major focuses of Project 2020 (Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen & Ngo, 2015). Thus, improving EFL teachers' professional knowledge and skills has recently become a significant goal for teacher PD planning nationwide in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2018).

The final goal of enhancing students' learning outcomes not only enables the institution to directly respond to the labour market requirement but also aligns with one of the primary purposes of Project 2020 that "by 2020, most Vietnamese youth graduating from vocational schools, colleges, universities will be able to use a foreign language independently and confidently to communicate, learn and work in an environment of integration, multilingualism, and multiculturalism" (Vietnamese Government, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, based on students' feedback and comments, the managers all plan to develop their teachers to meet students' expectations and foster students' learning

outcomes. This finding lends support to the argument of many researchers (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Hassel, 1999; Hirsh, 2009; Mizell, 2010) that teachers' improvement via their participation in PD activities ultimately results in enhancing students' learning outcomes. Moreover, Mizell (2010) and Sparks (2005) both highlighted a focus on achieving student-learning goals derived from students' needs as an obligation for effective PD.

It is noticeable that there are some similarities and differences between teachers' goals for engaging in PD and managers' goals for planning PD. These will be discussed in Chapter 8 using the third generation of CHAT.

## 5.5. Impact of professional development on teacher change

The impact of PD on teachers was shown in all three sources of data: the teacher questionnaire (n=133), EFL teacher focus groups (n=35), and individual interviews with managers (n=4).

### 5.5.1. Findings from teachers' questionnaires

In the survey, participants were asked to rank the level of influence of the PD activities they had participated in at work, using a scale from 1 (Not influential at all) to 4 (Very influential). Table 5.7 ranks the activities by level of influence, with each activity retaining the question number it originally had in the survey.

Table 5.7: Influence of PD activities on EFL teachers' teaching practice and non-teaching task accomplishment

Influence level	Activity No	Professional development activities	Participants (n=133)	Level of influence (%)				
				1 Not influential at all	2 Slightly influential	3 Influential	4 Very influential	Total of levels 3 & 4
1	15	Following professional development programs	112	2.68	3.57	56.25	37.50	93.75
2	3	Following research literature in the field	119	1.68	11.76	63.03	23.53	86.56
3	1	Gathering information about my own teaching performance (through surveys, interviews, etc.)	96	1.04	12.50	72.92	13.54	86.46
4	4	Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues	131	2.29	11.45	59.54	26.72	86.26
5	7	Developing new materials with colleagues	119	3.36	10.92	63.87	21.85	85.72
6	13	Attending in-service training (workshops, seminars, etc.)	117	3.42	11.11	61.54	23.93	85.47
7	8	Developing techniques and activities with colleagues	109	3.67	11.01	50.46	34.86	85.32
8	12	Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice	97	2.06	13.40	62.89	21.65	84.54
9	2	Keeping a teaching journal to reflect on my own teaching	97	3.09	16.49	68.04	12.37	80.41
10	5	Asking for help from colleagues	125	2.40	17.60	58.40	21.60	80.00
11	14	Attending conferences and symposia in the field	93	4.30	19.35	50.54	25.81	76.35

Influence level	Activity No	Professional development activities	Participants (n=133)	Level of influence (%)				
				1 Not influential at all	2 Slightly influential	3 Influential	4 Very influential	Total of levels 3 & 4
12	10	Participating in lessons observed by the academic head and Faculty and University administrators	121	2.46	21.13	61.48	13.93	75.41
13	9	Taking part in peer observation (mutual observation and feedback)	109	5.50	23.85	60.55	10.09	70.64
14	11	Conducting teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems	76	9.21	23.68	56.58	10.53	67.11
15	6	Training other teachers	79	6.33	26.58	58.23	8.86	67.09
16	16	Writing articles for teaching journals or other publications	66	12.12	42.42	40.91	4.55	45.46

As can be seen in Table 5.7, almost all PD activities were considered to influence teachers' teaching practices, although the impact varies from activity to activity.

The PD activity which most influenced teachers' teaching practice was following PD programs (activity 15). Nearly 94% of the participants in this activity selected the options of "Influential" and "Very influential", and only 2.68% thought that it did not influence their teaching practice at all. By contrast, writing articles for teaching journals or other publications (activity 16) was the PD activity that influenced teachers' teaching practices the least, with only 45.46% of participants considering it as influential or very influential. Forty-two percent of participants indicated that this activity had slightly influenced their work, and 12.12% thought that it did not have any impact on them at all.

Some of the PD activities which participants could do individually included gathering information about their teaching performance (activity 1), following research literature in the field (activity 2), or trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice (activity 12). Those were highly appreciated by participants in terms of their influence on their teaching practice (86.46%, 86.56%, and 84.54% respectively). However, the level of influence of Conducting an inquiry (activity 11) and Training other teachers (activity 6) was considerably lower, with only 67.11% and 67.09% of participants respectively considering those activities as being influential or very influential.

The group-work activities such as the activities that participants undertook with their colleagues had great impact on teachers' teaching practice as well. More than 85% of participants developing materials and activities with their colleagues (activities 7 and 8) felt these activities were influential and very influential. Moreover, 34.86% of participants in activity 8 stated that it very much influenced their teaching practice. Similarly, attending training courses (activity 13) had great influence on teachers' teaching and working, with 85.47% of participants selecting these as influential or very influential.

Lesson observation activities (activities 9, 10) were common amongst the EFL tertiary teachers, but their impacts on teachers were not as high as other group-work activities or some individual activities. However, there were still more than 70% of participants who considered these activities influential or very influential on their teaching practice. The level of influence of attending conferences and symposia in the field (activity 14) was similar to lesson observation activities, with 76.35% of participants opting for "influential" or "very influential".

In summary, most of the listed PD activities (15 out of 16 activities) had a great impact on teachers' teaching practice. Amongst those 15 activities, ten activities were ranked as "influential" and "very influential" by more than 80% of participants who had engaged in them. Only the activity of writing articles for a journal or other publications was considered slightly influential or not influential at all by the majority of participants.

#### 5.5.2. Findings from focus groups with teachers and interviews with managers

In the focus group discussions, EFL teachers were asked to share their opinions on the application of knowledge and skills gained from PD activities on their teaching practice and work completion, and give further explanations. Additionally, managers were asked to evaluate the teachers' application of knowledge and skills gained from PD activities in their real work, and their work efficiency. From the data of the focus groups and interviews, all participants emphasized that PD activities had a great influence on them, but in different ways.

##### Better work performance

Two-thirds of teachers (n=24) highlighted that certain PD activities they had attended—workshops on testing and assessment and TESOL—enabled them to perform much better at work. These teachers explained that before attending workshops, they undertook a variety of tasks, including designing tests and question banks, developing curriculum and materials based on their personal thinking and experience. After engaging in PD activities, they established and adopted more objective criteria when carrying out their assigned tasks. They felt more confident at work and found their work more reliable. Additionally, Manager 4 indicated that the teachers had a good awareness of various assessment practices, and groups of teachers could write proper Testspecs (Test Specification) for the subjects they taught.

After participating in the workshop on testing and assessment, my colleagues and I have redesigned tests and question banks based on more precise criteria. As a result, the format of tests was completely changed. (Teacher 21)

I used to do my tasks based on my thinking. But after attending some workshops, I knew the importance and principles of giving good instruction and designing functional tests and question banks. (Teachers 8, 25)

#### Better English proficiency and teaching performance

All teachers and managers agreed that PD activities had a considerable impact on their teaching practice and improved teachers' English proficiency as well. According to Manager 4, the teachers' English proficiency had apparently improved. This could be witnessed by the higher IELTS band score they gained. Manager 2 added that *only a small number of teachers (about 10 to 15%) had not satisfied the English standard requirement.*

In addition, the teachers stated that a number of PD activities, including working with their colleagues and attending workshops, or individual PD activities, enriched their knowledge and approaches to teaching. They could learn from their colleagues when observing their lessons and discussing lesson plans in teacher study group meetings, receive feedback from their students, and learn from discussions in TESOL workshops. They applied the skills they gained in their real classroom performance and noticed a significant change in students' learning. In addition, most teachers indicated that their application of new knowledge and skills gained from PD activities strongly motivated their students. Students became more excited and actively engaged in the lesson and enjoyed English more (Teacher 7).

Knowledge and teaching skills that I learned from different PD activities helped me to deliver more interesting lessons which

encouraged my students to actively engage. As a result, I got better feedback from students via Student surveys conducted by my institution. (Teacher 26)

When I utilised skills of giving instructions that I acquired from workshops, my students found it much easier to understand and could follow my instructions easily. (Teacher 33)

#### Better awareness of PD and a better attitude at work

Some teachers (14.29%, n=5) shared that PD activities positively changed their awareness of PD and attitude at work. Attitude at work includes the attitude of learning and sharing and attitude of working and cooperating with other teachers for a better working environment. The teachers explained that places in workshops were limited, so not many teachers were offered the chance to attend workshops. Consequently, these teachers wanted to share what they had gained from the workshops with their colleagues. The more they engaged in PD, the more they acknowledged the significance of PD and became interested in learning. In addition, Manager 4 commented that teachers' attitudes at work were much better. They actively participated in their teacher study group, enthusiastically contributing to discussions. Moreover, more teachers registered to attend the workshops when they received the call from the faculty.

I really want to share the new knowledge and skills I learned from the workshop on criteria for writing assessment with other teachers in the faculty, and then most of the teachers can assess students' writing properly. (Teacher 4)

The working attitude of teachers has improved positively. Many teachers used to surf the internet and Facebook with their mobile during the meetings, but they are now responsibly engaged in their group meeting discussion, and no one is using their mobile at work. (Manager 4)

In conclusion, teachers' positive change and students' improvement in learning can be regarded as the actual outcomes of teachers' engagement in PD activities. Although the

outcomes of engaging in PD activities are not the focus of this study, the description of teachers' outcomes is significant to further understand the current situation of EFL teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context.

## Chapter conclusion

The overarching picture of tertiary EFL teacher PD has been clearly displayed by the presentation of participants' views about PD significance, reports of PD activities that EFL teachers have recently undertaken, teachers' goals for participating in PD activities and managers' goals for planning teacher PD, as well as actual benefits that PD has brought to both teachers and students.

The findings demonstrate a relationship between contextual and structural factors and stakeholders' cognitive processes towards PD. Contextual factors considerably influence both people's cognition and their engagement in an activity (Lantolf, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a). Specifically, teachers' perceptions of the significance of PD and teachers' goals for participating in PD activities were both influenced by the context of educational reform in Vietnam, making teachers increasingly aware of the importance of PD in their teaching careers. Finally, although it is not clear whether teachers were actually engaged with PD activities, they did evidence outcomes related to positive change in their professional knowledge, skills, teaching performance and attitude at work, and students showed a positive change in learning English and in their attitude towards English.

Managers' goals for planning teacher PD are not only to improve teachers' knowledge and skills and students' learning achievement but also to benefit the faculty and institution as a whole. The relationship between the managers' planning activity system and the system of teachers' engagement in PD will be discussed in Chapter 8, which

also explores the differences and similarities between teachers' goals in engaging in PD and managers' goals in planning it.

Overall, this chapter allows an understanding of the current situation of EFL teacher engagement in PD. It thus lays the basis for the contextual sociocultural analysis of the data presented in the next two chapters, which report on and discuss the question of factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities, the main concern of this study.

## CHAPTER 6: ENABLERS FOR TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN PD ACTIVITIES

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### Chapter overview

Chapters 6 and 7 respond to the second research question regarding factors influencing Vietnamese university EFL teachers' engagement in PD, the main concern of this study. Chapter 6 focuses on enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities, and Chapter 7 will focus on barriers.

Section 6.1 reports the findings from all data sources: teacher questionnaires (n=133), focus groups with EFL teachers (n=35), and individual interviews with managers (n=4). Section 6.1.1 presents the tabulation of the closed questions in the questionnaire, while section 6.1.2 presents the findings from open comments from all sources, demonstrating both EFL teachers' and managers' perspectives. Throughout section 6.1.2 the CHAT framework is employed to analyse the data according to the following components within the 'teachers' engagement in PD' activity system: *Mediating artifacts*, *Community*, *Rules*, *Division of labour*, and *Subject* (the teachers themselves) (see Figure 6.1 repeated here from Chapter 4). These components highlight the possibility of both

barriers and enablers to PD. For example, supportive managers, colleagues or family members can considerably motivate teachers to participate in PD, but uncooperative collegiality can negatively influence teachers' engagement in PD. Similarly, appropriate distribution of labour for teachers can support teachers to manage their time for PD activities, but work overload can limit their engagement in PD due to a lack of time. This chapter will identify enabling factors only, whereas Chapter 7 will identify negative influences.

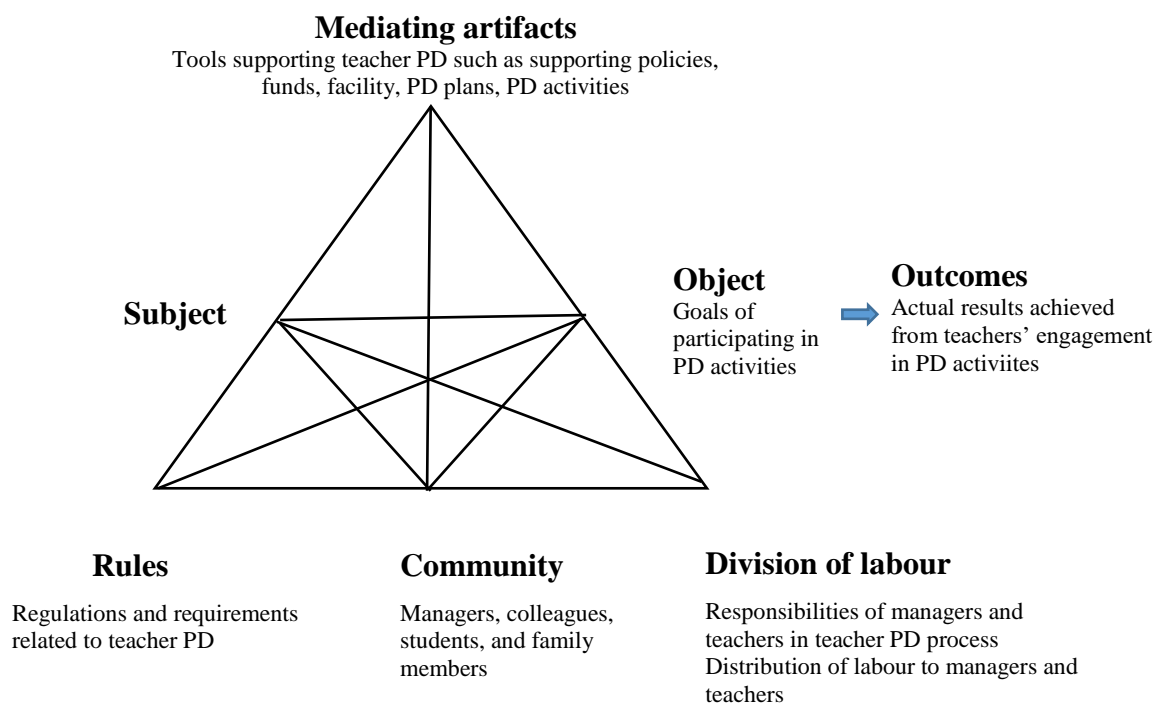


Figure 6.1: Activity system of teachers' engagement in PD (adapted from Engeström, 1987)

In section 6.2, further discussion is made through comparison with the existing literature and with features of Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese university context, again using the support of the CHAT framework. In the chapter conclusion, prominent findings will be summarised and further explained.

## 6.1. Enablers to teacher engagement in PD

In brief, the main enablers were financial support for teacher PD, the compulsory regulations teachers have to follow, the appreciation and encouragement from people with whom teachers work, and teachers' self-motivation. This summary is considerably elaborated, however, when looking more closely at the actual data.

### 6.1.1. Findings from teachers' questionnaire

To answer question 3 in the questionnaire, participants (n=133) evaluated the motivating level of 10 given factors influencing their engagement in PD on a scale from 1 (Not influential at all) to 4 (Very influential), and some provided additional comments or other factors that they thought also encouraged them to take part in PD. Participants' comments will be analysed in the next section since they were spontaneously generated.

Table 6.1 illustrates that factors that highly motivated teachers to engage in PD included some related to the subject of the activity system, such as teachers' motivation, some related to mediating artifacts such as financial policies, and some related to community. However, the level of influence of those factors varied. For ease of reporting, the third and fourth levels of influence (influential/very influential) are conflated in the findings and discussion below. For example, 'self-motivation' is described as 'influential' by 39.1% of participants and 'very influential' by 57.14%. This will be reported below as 'influential' (96.24%). The breakdown for each level appears in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Influence of the ten given factors on EFL teachers' engagement in PD

Influence level	Factor number in questionnaire	Enabling factors	Level of influence				Total of levels 3 & 4
			1 Not influential at all	2 Slightly influential	3 Influential	4 Very influential	
1	1	Self-motivation	0.75	3.01	39.1	57.14	96.24
2	5	Full or partial financial support for fees and expenses related to graduate studies	0	3.79	33.33	62.88	96.21
3	8	Increase in salary or other payment rate	0	4.55	26.52	68.94	95.46
4	10	Appreciation by colleagues, managers, and others in your workplace	0	5.26	39.85	54.89	94.74
5	4	Payment for PD activities that take place outside regular work hours	1.5	6.77	36.84	54.89	91.73
6	6	Funding for conference or workshop fees	1.52	8.33	40.15	50	90.15
7	9	Formal recognition or higher ratings on annual teacher evaluations	1.53	9.92	34.35	54.2	88.55
8	7	Funding for travel and/or daily expenses	2.27	9.58	38.64	49.24	87.88
9	3	Collaboration among colleagues	0	13.53	66.93	19.55	86.48
10	2	Communication among colleagues	0	24.43	64.89	10.69	75.58

### Subject

As can be seen from Table 6.1, *self-motivation* (factor 1) was the most acknowledged by participants as promoting teachers to engage in PD. 96.24% of teachers indicated that this factor was influential.

### Mediating artifacts

Financial factors (from factor 4 to factor 8) were also positively valued in terms of their influence on teachers' engagement in PD. Amongst these factors, *Increase in salary or other payment rate* (factor 8) and *Full or partial financial support for fees and expenses related to graduate studies* (factor 5) were most motivating with 95.46% and 96.21% of participants. There was no participant who identified these two factors as of no influence at all. The other financial factors also significantly impacted teachers' engagement in PD. In particular, 90.73% of teachers acknowledged that *Payment for PD activities that take place outside regular work hours* (factor 4) strongly influenced their PD engagement. *Funding for conference or workshop fees* (factor 6) and *Funding for travel and/or daily expenses* (factor 7) were identified as being influential by 90.15% and 88.64% respectively.

### Community

The influence of factors related to the working community—colleagues and managers — (factors 2, 3, 10) varied. Many teachers (89.23%) agreed that *appreciation by colleagues, managers, and others in their workplace* (factor 10) was influential in their decision to take part in PD. The other two community factors (factors 2 and 3) were ranked as influential by more than three quarters of participants (75.58% and 86.48% respectively). However, these two factors were also viewed as having little influence by a minority of teachers (24.43% and 13.53% respectively). In short, the three community factors played an important role in encouraging teachers to participate in PD, as none of the teachers opted for “not influential at all” in their survey responses.

Last, but still highly relevant, 88.55% of teachers acknowledged the importance of formal recognition or higher ratings on annual teacher evaluations (factor 9) in promoting their engagement in PD.

### Summary

In conclusion, all ten given factors were highly appreciated by teachers in motivating them to engage in PD. Amongst these ten factors, self-motivation (factor 1), financial support for graduate studies (factor 5), increase in salary or other payment (factor 8) and appreciation by colleagues, managers, and others in the workplace (factor 10) were those with the most influence. The factor of communication among colleagues was least valued in promoting teachers' PD engagement.

### 6.1.2. Findings from open comments

Open comments are drawn from three sources: the comments that EFL teachers added to their responses to the questionnaires (if any), sharing and discussion in focus groups with EFL teachers (n=35), and individual interviews with managers (n=4).

Using CHAT theory, this section identifies what factors EFL teachers and managers saw as motivating teachers to engage in PD. These factors can be associated with particular components of activity systems – mediating artifacts/ tools, community, rules, division of labour, and subject (the teachers themselves) – as shown in the following sub-section.

#### Mediating artifacts/ tools

Artifacts or tools can be understood as the available supports which facilitate teacher engagement in PD. Participants discussed financial support, facility support, strategies for teacher PD, and available PD activities, including organized PD programs or courses.

### *Financial support*

All teachers (n=35) viewed financial support from their institution or faculty as a motivating factor in their engagement in PD. Most teachers (71.4%, n=25) indicated that they became more motivated when they received funding for their PD. Some teachers (22.9%, n=8) argued that they would feel more confident in terms of financial issues if the institution spared a part of its budget for annual teacher PD. Accordingly, the teachers would become *much more willing and content to participate in PD* (Teacher 8) when they did not have to worry about the budget for their participation.

Once the institution establishes its fund to annually support teachers to engage in PD, the teachers will then be motivated. (Teacher 4)

All managers (n=4) believed in the positive impact of financial support on enabling EFL teachers to engage in various PD activities. *One of the most decisive factors which enhance teachers' engagement in PD activities is the support from the institution and the faculty* (Manager 1). They felt that EFL teachers became increasingly motivated to participate in PD activities when they were financially supported to undertake activities such as English learning, taking the IELTS test or attending international conferences and workshops. Managers explained that if teachers proposed their interest in 'relevant PD activities which would enhance their expertise and professional skills', the institution might *consider offering them a grant to register for participation* (Manager 1). However, it was not clear whether teachers actually realized this.

In addition, the institution funded the Faculty of Foreign Languages to organize conferences and workshops for teachers to attend (Manager 2). Similarly, two faculty managers agreed that the institutional monetary support for teachers to participate in teacher study group meetings or to attend workshops had a positive influence on

increasing the number of participants. PD also became better attended when the faculty used its budget to organize free workshops for teachers to improve professional knowledge and skills such as conducting inquiries, or research methodology. Belief in the effect of financial support on enabling teachers' engagement in PD is illustrated in the following statements.

It is a fact that more teachers participated in those PD activities in which teachers received some monetary support from the institution or the faculty. (Manager 4)

The institution could support teachers to realise their plan of attending international conferences, by providing them with air tickets or more. (Manager 2)

#### *Facility support*

A few teachers (34.3%, n=12) noted that the availability of working facilities, including meeting rooms and the internet, made it more convenient for them to organize teacher study group meetings. These teachers used to share a big room with other groups of teachers in their faculty, but it was inconvenient for them to work in their groups productively. They did not have a feeling of privacy and found it difficult to concentrate on the group discussion. At the time of the focus group, their faculty had recently been restructured and had a number of small rooms which were equipped with computers and printers for teacher study groups to use. They could then privately work together on issues including PD activities such as discussing the lesson plans, developing teaching materials, developing the syllabus and curriculum, and developing tests and question banks. As a result, teachers became more motivated to attend group meetings because they found their group discussion more effective (Teachers 5, 23).

### *Previous positive experience of PD activities*

Some teachers (17.1%, n=6) highly appreciated the organized teacher PD activities they had attended because their personal and job development was enhanced. As a result, they were interested in attending the next PD activities in the belief that they would improve their skills. One teacher stated that PD programs provided him with new ideas and more explicit ideas for his ongoing PD. This teacher subsequently found it easier and more motivating to engage in a variety of activities to achieve his PD goals.

The good quality of teacher PD programs or course and teacher study group meetings encouraged teachers to engage in the next PD programs and meetings. (Teacher 25)

In addition, two faculty managers emphasized the importance of easy access to PD activities. They explained that teachers became more interested and motivated to participate in the PD training workshops or courses held at the institution, as they faced no difficulty in finding the course nearby. Manager 4 noted that the faculty had invited foreign teachers to deliver English classes for teachers to improve their English proficiency, and also organized *'training workshops by both Vietnamese and foreign experts* for teachers to participate in (Manager 3). These courses and workshops attracted many teachers, even though they had to pay for them.

### *Managerial strategies for PD*

Nearly half the teachers (45.7%, n=16) claimed that institutional or faculty PD strategies could play a significant role in enabling 'their engagement in PD. According to Teacher 3, it was necessary to clarify what teachers were required to obtain to satisfy the managerial requirements, so that they would *have better motivation to improve themselves via PD to achieve their PD goals*. Managerial PD strategies delivered to teachers *long enough in advance* would enable teachers to *make the plan to engage in*

*suitable PD activities* to realise the objectives of those strategies in an appropriate period of time (Teacher 18). Furthermore, Teacher 15 acknowledged the importance of long-term PD strategies *in positively changing teachers' awareness and attitude toward PD*. Once teachers are aware of the significance of PD, they can become more interested in engaging in PD activities.

If the institution issues the annual plan or long-term strategy for teacher PD, we will have a realistic plan for our PD during a year, and try our best to achieve the goals set. (Teacher 1)

Three of the four managers also agreed on the influence of official PD strategies on teachers' motivation, so they have developed and implemented a number of PD action plans to enhance teacher PD. Manager 3 indicated that the faculty had drawn up a PD strategy to 2020 for teachers who did not meet the standard of English proficiency. This strategy was regarded as *an effective instruction for those teachers to identify when and how to do what*. This manager also added that if the institution enhances cooperation with other institutions in other countries, teachers will have ample opportunities to learn through exchange programs with teachers of those foreign institutions. Manager 4 presented some PD strategies that the faculty had developed to enable PD, such as *annual plans for PD at the end of the academic year* or using *senior teachers in the faculty to present at some workshops or faculty seminars* for the other teachers to learn based on the identified needs of faculty teachers. The faculty also *cooperated with other organizations including Language Project 2020 and the Ministry of Education and Training to host national and international workshops and conferences at the institution* (Manager 2). This cooperation was found to greatly facilitate teachers' engagement in those PD activities, and teachers could discuss, share and learn from experiences with experts and colleagues from many institutions.

Although teachers may be very busy doing other tasks apart from teaching during the summer break, in an attempt to enhance teacher PD, the faculty has planned to organize from three to four training workshops for teachers at that time, which can last for one intensive week at least. (Manager 4)

The institution has built up a plan to gradually boost teachers to do research. (Manager 2)

### *Time support*

Only one manager mentioned the significance of time support in enabling teacher PD. Manager 3 stated that the faculty encouraged teachers to spend time participating in PD to improve their English proficiency and expertise to meet the need of the institution. If teachers have not satisfied the requirement, faculty managers would consider *not assigning many classes for them*, so that these teachers would have more time for PD, even though it would also reduce their earnings. Teachers could also be *allowed to change their teaching schedule to attend workshops or training courses* if they desired to. This support from faculty could enable teachers to manage time to engage in PD to satisfy the required standards.

### *Community*

*Community* can be understood in several ways: as a physical environment or place in which activity occurs, as groups of individuals who share the same object, or as a system of traditions and interests (Bravo Olavarria, 2013). In this project, community refers to teachers' family members, managers, colleagues, and students who share the object at home, at work, and in the classroom. Different groups of individuals—managers, colleagues, students, and family—have motivated teachers to participate in PD in their own way.

## Managers

Some teachers (25.7%, n=9) highly valued the contribution of managers to their PD engagement. A few (n=4) also commented that managers could make a great contribution to building up a fair, supportive and serious working environment in which teachers would have a good attitude toward PD, especially when their learning efforts were fairly appraised. They thought that managers could inspire teachers to improve their expertise by sharing their own experiences and encouraging them to seek opportunities for PD. Managers could also help teachers develop a good attitude towards PD by recognizing their expertise and assigning them challenging and demanding tasks. In addition, managers could strongly enhance teachers' engagement in PD by their firm commitment to the implementation of PD policies.

It is not a bonus or promotion, but the managers' belief in my ability that motivates me to improve my expertise, as I feel satisfied when being assigned important tasks by my Dean. (Teacher 3)

The guideline from managers helps teachers to know what and how to improve their expertise. This will enable teachers to purposefully engage in various PD activities. (Teacher 14)

Two managers also highlighted the significance of managers' recognition of teachers' effort and their sharing of PD information in boosting teachers' engagement in PD activities to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Manager 4 indicated that in an attempt to promote teacher PD, he often informed teachers of information about workshops or conferences he knew about, and encouraged teachers to attend. By doing this, *teachers' awareness of PD importance was developed, and an increasing number of teachers participated in workshops and conferences (Manager 4).*

## Colleagues

Many teachers (68.6%, n=24) acknowledged that their engagement in PD was significantly influenced by their colleagues. Some teachers (22.9%, n=8) greatly valued their working environment when they had opportunities to work with many colleagues who had good expertise and a positive attitude to PD. As a result, the teachers thought that they all needed to continuously study and improve their expertise to raise their voice in discussions with supportive colleagues. The teachers further explained that if their ability and contribution were positively valued and acknowledged by their colleagues, they would feel self-confident and more eager to engage in various PD activities. A small number of teachers (11.4%, n=4) showed their interest in participating in PD to update their professional knowledge and skills to catch up with the younger teachers.

There are more and more young teachers who excel in language and IT application in teaching. I find it necessary to learn and update myself on new teaching approaches and IT skills to keep up with the young ones. (Teacher 6)

The need for discussing and sharing teaching experience with my colleagues encouraged me to engage in PD activities which provided me with opportunities to discuss my issues with them. (Teacher 14)

Some other teachers (11.4%, n=4) believed that their colleagues played a significant role in enhancing their PD. If their colleagues shared the knowledge and skills they gained from PD activities in meetings such as school seminars, they would become more motivated to engage in them when they had the opportunity. Moreover, Teacher 34 indicated that they were required to do mutual class observations, and in this case, *if her group members' attitude and responsibility toward the shared tasks were positive, her PD could be enabled more easily.*

Two managers also confirmed that collegial factors could be a motivator for teachers' engagement in PD because teachers had a good sense of learning from colleagues to improve themselves. The close relationship between teachers could influence teachers' readiness for PD, as they could share and support each other without feeling ashamed.

Teachers tend to compete with each other, so they try to participate in PD for improvement to be as good as their colleagues. [...]. Teachers can learn from their highly-appreciated colleagues at end-of-year teacher evaluation meetings and will have good motivation for their next-year personal PD strategy. (Manager 3)

Teachers who have competently performed both academically and in PD will sooner or later raise other teachers' learning spirit. (Manager 4)

### *Students*

More than half the teachers (54.3%, n=19) agreed that their students played a pivotal role in their engagement in PD. The teachers cared about their students' attitudes towards lessons and how students evaluated their teaching. Additionally, some teachers (28.6%, n=10) admitted that students' evaluation of teaching via an institutional survey was a good motivator for their PD. The teachers desired good evaluation results, so they participated in different PD activities to improve their teaching practice to make students more excited about learning. Accordingly, teachers were then highly appreciated and loved by their students.

I was motivated to constantly improve my teaching by the encouragement from my students who showed their interest in my lessons. I would like to deliver better lessons day by day. (Teacher 11)

Some questionnaire participants (6%, n=8) also gave a further explanation of their belief in students' positive influence on teachers' engagement in PD activities. Specifically, students' high level of English proficiency was viewed as a motivator to teachers'

professional learning to improve their teaching practice and support their students to achieve their desired learning outcome. When students were satisfied, they would highly appreciate them. Students' love and appreciation, in turn, made teachers more self-confident. The more interested their students were in their lessons, the more motivated the teachers became.

In addition, all four participants indicated that students' feedback and comments had a significant impact on intensifying teachers' effort to improve themselves by engaging in PD. According to Manager 4, whenever teachers had short talks during their break time, the issues that *they talked the most about were their students' attitude in learning and what their students said about teachers and their lessons*. Consequently, teachers kept learning and improving their expertise and teaching methods as students tended to make comparisons between teachers who had taught them. The desire to gain a better reputation and appreciation from students could motivate teachers to engage in PD activities to improve their teaching performance. A better reputation amongst their students could help teachers to have a feeling of pride and job satisfaction. As a result, teachers were *under pressure of satisfying students' expectations* (Manager 4). Both faculty and institution regularly collected students' feedback on teachers' teaching performance. Consequently, teachers would make desperate attempts to learn to improve their teaching through various PD activities such as teaching festivals, collaborating with colleagues, or learning from colleagues in teacher study groups. The following manager's statement strongly emphasizes the role of students' evaluations in enhancing PD.

Students' evaluation and feedback to teachers is an enabler to PD. Every semester, the Centre of Assessment and Quality Management will survey students on teachers' teaching performance. If teachers

were well evaluated and selected by students, their teaching job could be secured. (Manager 1)

### *Family*

Only the teachers emphasized the significance of family support in enabling them to engage in PD activities.

Some teachers in focus groups (14.3%, n=5) believed that their family members' encouragement and support helped them a lot to have time for PD and improving their expertise. In fact, female teachers (2.3%, n=3) commented in the questionnaire that family support and encouragement played a vital role in motivating teachers to engage in PD. It was explained that in Vietnamese culture, women are expected to do housework and take care of their children and family. It often took them long hours to do household chores. However, their family was not their problem when their husband and other family members supported them to do housework and encouraged them to spend more time learning and teaching. As a result, they could set their mind at rest and feel more comfortable to engage in PD activities.

I became more available to participate in PD to enhance my knowledge and skills when my family members helped me to do some housework and take care of my children. (Teacher 10)

### *Rules*

The most significant factor that motivated teachers to engage in PD is the institutional and faculty requirements and regulations (Manager 2). All teachers (n=35) who participated in focus groups argued that rules significantly encouraged them to take part in PD. All four management interview participants repeatedly indicated the significant roles of requirements in boosting teachers' engagement in PD. In this study, rules can be understood as principles and regulations that direct EFL teachers to effectively

participate in PD as a member of the faculty and institution. In particular, rules were classified into four main categories, which could enhance teachers' PD: Requirements for EFL teachers, Criteria for teacher evaluation, Regulations for working and contract renewal, and Payment policies.

#### *Requirements for EFL teachers*

All teachers (n=35) acknowledged that they were motivated to continuously engage in PD to meet the requirements of the faculty and institution. According to the teachers, the standard of English proficiency was the obvious recent requirement, which made them better aware of enhancing their English to achieve the desired IELTS band score. In addition, the teachers were required to update new knowledge and teaching approaches such as blended learning and IT skills to implement the new English curriculum. This was also said to be a big motivator for teachers' engagement in PD. In short, the requirements could *provide teachers with better suggestions for PD (Teacher 11)*. This means that teachers were orientated in their PD by the requirements for work.

One of the motivators for teacher PD was the pressure from the faculty and institution via the requirements for teachers, such as the English standard for EFL teachers. (Teacher 5)

All managers highlighted the great influence of the English standard requirement on teachers' change in perception of the necessity of PD engagement to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Manager 2, an institutional manager, revealed the positive results of implementing English standard requirements for EFL teachers by showing the increasing number of teachers who had tried to meet the requirements and the decreasing number of teachers who had not satisfied the standard.

### *Regulations for participating in PD activities*

Many teachers (37.1%, n=13) thought that the regulations for participating in PD activities strongly influenced their PD engagement. Some work regulations which were mentioned by the teachers included those relating to teacher study groups, and principles for assigning classes for teachers. Some teachers (11.4%, n=4) explained that they were required to attend teacher study group meetings for at least six hours a week, and their group leader needed to organize meetings almost every week. Consequently, the teachers were provided with regular opportunities to engage in this PD activity.

Due to the work policies for university lecturers, we were required to spend more hours doing research and other professional tasks. As a result, it is compulsory for us to attend teacher study group meetings every week. (Teacher 2)

All four managers repeatedly indicated the significant roles of requirements in boosting teachers' engagement in PD. Both institutional and faculty managers agreed that institutional requirements provided faculty managers with powerful tools to make teachers participate in PD to improve their expertise. Manager 4 asserted that it was tough for them to involve teachers in PD activities without institutional requirements. Managers 2, 3 and 4 indicated that teachers were required to attend their teacher study group meetings for at least three hours a week, and their meeting hours would be recorded, so 100% of teachers took part in this PD activity. Consequently, a new positive work habit was gradually established after being forced to meet and collaborate with other teachers several times. Teachers became increasingly involved in academic meetings, sharing and discussing rather than using a mobile phone or surfing the internet as they did originally at these meetings. In addition, teachers were required to do peer class observations to share teaching experience and learn from each other. In short, teachers' engagement in all the above-mentioned PD activities could explicitly be

motivated by the requirements and obligations of the institution and faculty. The following statement clearly presents that opinion:

Teachers' motivation to participate in PD was limited when there was no obligation from the institution. The requirements from the institution have made teachers manage to take part in different PD for their improvement. (Manager 2)

#### *Regulations for job security*

Some teachers (20%, n=7) agreed that when the requirements for renewing contracts were aligned with PD activities, teachers would be extremely motivated to engage in PD. The teachers were required to meet a standard of English proficiency equivalent to 6.5 IELTS if they did not want their contract to be terminated, or be moved to another position rather than being an EFL teacher. As a result, the teachers managed to attend some IELTS preparation classes or practiced by themselves to achieve the required IELTS band score. The teachers stated that they had to pay for IELTS preparation courses and manage their time to attend. This was not always seen as a negative, however. Teacher 8 maintained that *applying the condition of the English proficiency standard (at least 6.5 IELTS band score) to contract renewing enhanced teachers' learning.*

All four managers described the regulations relating to job security as the reasons why teachers were motivated to take part in PD to enhance their English proficiency level and professional skills. They mentioned the English standard as the requisite for contract renewal, and the great impact of this requirement on teachers' learning to satisfy that condition. Manager 3 added that *if teachers did not participate in PD activities and were assessed as underperformers for two consecutive years, their contract would also be terminated.* According to Manager 1, teachers found it vital to

improve their teaching practice to secure their jobs because when their teaching performance was highly appreciated by students, they would be selected by students and have classes to teach in the coming semester or coming year. The role of job security in enhancing PD can be vividly illustrated in the following statements.

To secure their job, teachers have to learn and improve their English proficiency to meet the standard requirement. Otherwise, they cannot keep their teaching job or their contract will not be renewed.

(Manager 2)

#### *Criteria for teacher evaluation*

More than half the teachers (57.1%, n=20) indicated that they were inspired to engage in PD by the criteria for teacher evaluation developed by the faculty and institution. The criteria for annual teacher evaluation included doing research, writing journal articles or other publications, or taking part in the teaching festival. By satisfying those criteria, teachers could gain enough points to be granted the title of an excellent teacher of the year. Teacher 11 gave a further explanation that teachers would be *provided with chances to travel abroad and have their salary increased earlier* if they achieved the title of an excellent teacher for two consecutive years. As a result, teachers were stimulated to participate in PD, and *they might then become increasingly interested in PD activities* (Teacher 16). In addition, if teachers did not undertake any PD activities mentioned in the criteria for teacher evaluation, they would be viewed as underperformers in that school year. The following statements clearly illustrate the importance of being awarded a positive title such as excellent teacher.

If teachers' doing research or writing articles was not a criterion to consider the title of teachers annually, teachers may not be interested in doing those PD activities. (Teacher 2)

The explicit criteria for teacher evaluation encouraged teachers to make their professional plan to improve their expertise and achieve the expected title. (Teacher 8)

All the managers also emphasized the enabling roles of teacher evaluation in regard to PD participation and shared several types of evaluation, including students' evaluation at the end of each semester, monthly evaluation of faculty managers, and annual teacher evaluation at the end of the school year. Manager 2 indicated that the institution and faculty used students' learning outcomes and students' evaluations and feedback as one way to assess teachers' teaching competence. As a result, *students' evaluations toward teachers' teaching performance was definitely a motivating factor for teachers' participation in PD* to improve their teaching practice (Manager 1). In addition, monthly evaluation of teachers stimulated them to commit to taking part in certain PD activities. Faculty managers did evaluate teachers monthly to identify what level of task completion they had done, including the required PD tasks such as teacher study group meetings, or developing teaching materials.

Similarly, Manager 2 regarded annual teacher evaluations as an enabler to PD from the beginning of each academic year. This manager explained that some teachers aimed to rank high in their career or merely to be good enough in comparison with their colleagues, so they managed to engage in PD activities to satisfy the teacher evaluation criteria. These criteria might include good feedback from students, high appreciation of teachers' contributions from the teacher study group leaders, and conducting inquiries or publishing journal articles or books.

### *Criteria for assigning teaching jobs*

Many teachers (31.4%, n=11) stated that they were encouraged to take part in PD to enhance their English proficiency and teaching capacity, which the faculty used as a basis for assigning classes to them.

The faculty utilised the student outcomes and the result of student surveys at the end of each semester to assign classes to teachers. This motivated teachers to continually engage in PD. (Teacher 16)

All the managers mentioned the significance of the criteria for teaching assignments to enhance teachers' engagement in PD. The faculty used teachers' English proficiency level and teachers' expertise and their contribution to the academic development of the faculty to assign teaching tasks for teachers at certain training levels (from vocational to doctorate level) and classes (non-English major students or English major student classes; or standard program vs high quality program classes) (Managers 3, 4). The better teachers were assigned to teach higher level classes with a higher payment rate. As a result, the criteria for teaching assignment could be *regarded as an indirect motivator for PD which supported them to achieve their job satisfaction and desired payment rate* (Manager 3). This manager even emphasized that in order to enhance PD, it was advisable to *link it to practical purposes such as monetary benefits or other benefits at work*. This opinion is explicitly illustrated in the following statements.

If teachers do not participate in teacher study group meetings to develop new curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials for the new English Language Project, gradually they will not be assigned to teach any classes. (Manager 4).

The faculty assigns better classes with better payment rates to teachers who have made good improvements via PD activities, so their income will be increased in comparison with other teachers' income. As a result, the other teachers who were assigned to teach classes at lower training levels will have a better awareness of improving themselves

and the importance of PD, and then they will make plans for PD participation. (Manager 3)

#### *Payment rate*

A few teachers (8.6%, n=3) indicated that they were motivated to engage in PD in an attempt to receive a better payment rate. These teachers explained that the institution offered a variety of training levels, from vocational training to doctoral training, and the payment rates for teachers of different levels were not the same. The higher the level they taught, the more money they would be paid. As a result, the teachers tried to improve their expertise and English proficiency to be assigned to teach at high training levels. Additionally, teachers who obtained a higher degree were given better rates of pay, so teachers were encouraged to study continuously.

Three out of four managers acknowledged payment policy as an enabler to teachers' engagement in PD activities. Participants repeated that the better payment policy for better classes encourages teachers to engage in PD activities to improve their expertise to be assigned to those classes. Furthermore, teachers tried to improve their English proficiency and teaching methods to be more confident when they applied to teach extra classes outside the institution and to ask for a much higher payment rate. Manager 4 underlined the further argument that teachers would not positively engage in PD activities if the payment rate was not varied to distinguish the good teachers and the less effective ones.

#### *Division of labour*

Teachers became more motivated to engage in various PD activities to fulfill their responsibilities of professional learning when their managers properly performed their roles in facilitating teacher PD.

### *Managers' duties of enhancing PD*

Some teachers (25.7%, n=9) felt that their managers played a significant role in enabling them to fulfill their duties of professional learning.

If managers did a good job in supporting teachers to deal with the time conflict between teaching timetables and PD activities, teachers' engagement in PD would be enhanced. (Teacher 8)

The teachers added that they became more motivated to improve themselves in working conditions in which managers fairly recognized and complimented 'teachers on their learning efforts.

More specifically, two out of four managers further explained that different responsibilities of managers, such as directly assessing and supervising PD, and encouraging and constantly supporting teachers to participate in PD activities, could enhance PD. When managers do a good job of supervising and assessing PD, teachers consider PD as a significant task that is worth undertaking, and gradually teachers would have a better awareness of taking part in PD. Amongst several motivators to PD, *managers play a significant role in motivating teachers and raise teachers' awareness of the necessity of PD* for their teaching career (Manager 4). Managers therefore play a pivotal role in developing and strictly implementing PD policies to force teachers to engage in PD activities from the beginning. Participants emphasized that without managers' strong commitment to implement the PD policies issued, there would be a limited number of teachers who would consider and fulfil those policies. Additionally, when faculty managers did a good job of promoting teachers' collaboration, the faculty would enhance teachers' information sharing of PD activities such as workshops and conferences. Information sharing could enable teachers to register to attend those workshops and conferences and develop networks with teachers from other institutions.

The faculty managers believed that by working, discussing, and sharing experiences with teachers from other institutions, *teachers' motivation for further engagement in PD might be increased (Manager 4).*

#### *Teachers' responsibilities in professional learning*

Only managers (n=3) mentioned teachers' responsibility for professional learning as a factor in their engagement in PD activities. First of all, the managers emphasized teachers' responsibility to participate in PD activities and continuously update themselves on new trends and teaching approaches. In order to fulfill this duty, teachers had to balance their time for teaching and PD. Another factor was that the faculty *put teachers into different teacher study groups based on their expertise and teaching competence*, and many teachers tried to improve their expertise by engaging in various PD activities to be put in groups of good teachers (Manager 4).

It is crucial for teachers to have good expertise and teaching methods that can meet the needs of the current educational trends. As a result, teachers are required to update new professional knowledge and teaching skills through PD and apply them in real classroom teaching to satisfy the current requirement. (Manager 2)

#### Subject

##### *Teachers' self-motivation*

More than half the teachers (62.9%, n=22) strongly believed that self-motivation played an essential role in enhancing their engagement in PD, which in turn improved their knowledge and teaching capacity. The teachers explicitly explained that if they were interested in participating in PD and learning, they would find a way to engage.

Self-motivation is the most important factor that encourages teachers to engage in PD. Teachers find it beneficial to figure out the solutions to their own problems or to explore the issues they are interested in. (Teacher 7)

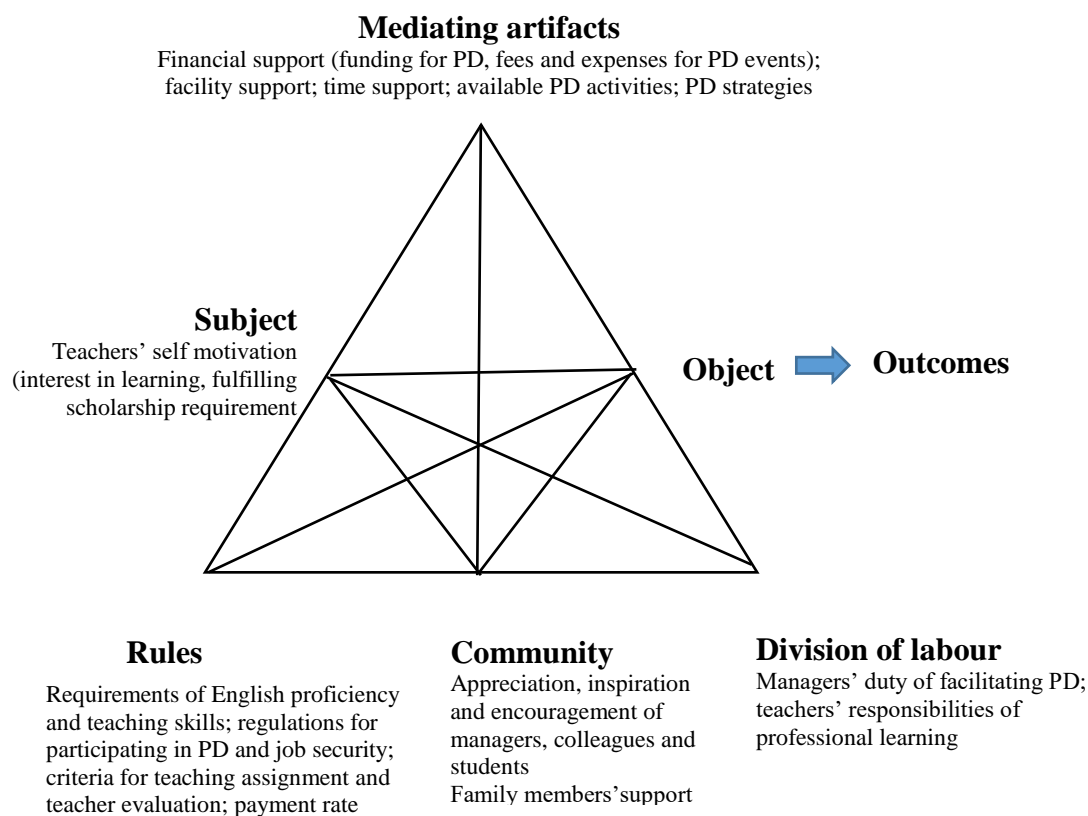
The motivation for personal improvement encourages teachers to keep learning to constantly renew themselves. (Teacher 25)

According to Teacher 3, teachers would be motivated to take part in PD to *achieve their personal career goals*. By contrast, if their participation in PD was *merely their response to obligation*, their attitude towards PD would be negative, and the *result of PD would not be as good as expected* (Teacher 13, 31).

Similarly, most managers (n=3) viewed teachers' self-motivation as a key factor in their engagement in PD activities. Teachers' self-motivation concerns teachers' personal interest in learning or building up networks and their personal growth encapsulated in their desire to pursue a scholarship to study abroad. Manager 3 explained that for one-third of teachers in the faculty who were good teachers and had attended several PD activities and learned much from those activities, their love for PD was then instilled gradually, and they became increasingly fascinated by PD activities. In addition, the teachers undertook some PD activities such as *preparing for the IELTS test or doing research and writing journal articles for their scholarship application to study further abroad* (Managers 2,3).

## 6.2. Discussion

Factors motivating teachers' engagement in PD activities can be graphically presented within an activity system framework, as in Figure 6.2. These factors were perceived as enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities by a variable number of teachers and managers (from 8.6% to 100% as indicated in the previous section).



*Figure 6.2: Enablers for teachers' engagement in PD*

Of the findings, there are six prominent factors (financial support, requirements for English proficiency level and new teaching approaches, criteria for teacher evaluation, colleagues' and students' appreciation and encouragement, and teachers' self-motivation) which respectively belong to four activity system components: *Mediating artifacts*, *Rules*, *Community*, and *Subject*.

Specifically, financial support was perceived as a key enabler to teachers' engagement in PD activities by all participants in this study. According to Scribner (1999), monetary incentives or rewards such as stipends and other remuneration play an important role in enabling teachers' professional learning, especially when many EFL teachers are at the early stage of their career and struggling with the financial budget for their family

livelihood. This finding is consistent with the finding of Tran's (2016) study, which also focused on PD for EFL lecturers in Vietnam. Tran (2016) indicated that great financial support optimised EFL lecturer engagement in PD. Similarly, many previous studies (Easton, 2008; Lohman, 2006; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Shafer, 2008; Wan & Lam, 2010; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009) agree that financial support significantly facilitates teachers' engagement in PD activities generally. However, this finding does not align with Bayar's (2013) study in which teachers' engagement in PD actually decreased when funding for PD increased. The main issue was that teachers' salary and income could easily support their cost of living in Osmaniye, a city in the Çukurova region of Turkey, so they might not care about money offered for PD opportunities as much as teachers in larger cities in Turkey (Bayar, 2013). By contrast, the salary for Vietnamese teachers in general, especially those who have just started their teaching career, is not high enough for both their family livelihood and PD (Pham, 2001; Thu Huong, 2018). Therefore, an institution's funding or payment for teacher PD is a facilitator for teachers' participation in PD activities.

It should also be noted that the EFL teachers in the present study considered rules and regulations as a dominant factor that strongly influenced their engagement in PD activities. Many of the teachers indicated that they engaged in PD activities to comply with obligatory rules and regulations, such as new requirements from educational reforms, criteria for teacher evaluation, and regulations for contract renewal.

Certification or contractual agreements generally encourage teachers' participation in PD activities (Guskey, 2002b), and requirements for English and tertiary teaching certification for EFL teachers not only raised their awareness of their responsibilities for continuous PD but also inspired teachers to engage in professional learning. Similarly, Duke and Stiggins (1990) emphasized that teacher evaluation encourages teachers to

participate in PD activities, because it can considerably enhance teachers' awareness of the requirements, policies and practices of their institutions. Furthermore, criteria for teacher evaluation explicitly illustrate the required professional knowledge and skills which can guide and motivate teachers to learn and improve their professionalism (Liu et al., 2014; Rendos, 2005). More importantly, some teachers in the present study strongly emphasized that satisfying the English proficiency standard is causally related to their job security because of the regulations for contract renewal.

Besides structural enablers such as financial support and rules and regulations, EFL teachers and managers highlighted the positive influence of *Community*, which includes students, colleagues, and managers. Similar to many previous studies, cooperation and support from colleagues facilitate teachers' learning and enable them to engage in PD activities (Bayar, 2013; Evers et al., 2016; Geijsel et al., 2009; Kontoghiorghes, 2001; Kwakman, 2003). Teachers can also be advised of PD opportunities by their colleagues (Hargreaves, 2004; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000; Wan & Lam, 2010). Additionally, the teachers in this study tried to pursue professional learning to improve their expertise and teaching competence, which would be highly valued and acknowledged by their colleagues and students. According to Duong (2003), most teachers strive to have a good reputation and do not want to lose face in front of their students. Similarly, in the study by Amin and Saukah (2015), Indonesian EFL teachers became more willing to participate in PD activities to improve their teaching performance, to avoid their students' negative evaluation, and to enhance their students' motivation.

In addition to cultural and structural factors (*Mediating artifacts, Rules and Community*), teachers' desire to achieve personal goals and satisfaction from engagement in an activity has a substantial influence on teachers' engagement in PD

activities. Teachers' motivation can be inspired by intrinsic goals, such as satisfying their interest in professional learning for their aspiration of becoming a better teacher, achieving their personal career goals, or fulfilling scholarship requirements. Many researchers in the literature also confirmed the decisive role of teachers' desire to achieve their personal goals and purposes in motivating them to engage in learning activities (Duong, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Guskey, 2002b; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Musanti & Pence, 2010). It is strongly argued by the teachers in this study that they became more autonomous in their learning when they did not do it because of obligation, but for their own personal goals.

The remaining factors (facility support, PD activities, strategies for PD, regulations regarding payment and job security, and managers' support) were seen as enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities by less than 50% of focus group participants. Amongst these factors, teachers were mainly concerned about strategies for PD (45.7%) and regulations related to their job security (37.1%). Teachers argued that PD strategies work as comprehensive instruction showing them a direction to go in their PD process. In addition, teachers' engagement in PD is prominently controlled by the regulations for contract renewal, which can pose a threat of punishment to teachers, for example, their contract termination.

In all, the present study provides strong evidence to highlight that enablers to EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities in the Vietnamese HE context not only involve teachers' intrinsic goals and motivation such as interests, personal growth or the feeling of self-worth, but more strongly to external goals (e.g., image, recognition) and external regulations or events (e.g., rewards, or punishment).

## Chapter conclusion

In summary, the most influential factors on teachers' engagement in PD activities are rules, financial support, and students' evaluation used as a way of assessing teachers' teaching capabilities. Understandably, the perception of managers, as policymakers, when developing or issuing any regulations or supporting and encouraging policies for teacher PD, was that these policies would be effective ways to control and optimize teachers' engagement in PD. This actively represents the top-down leadership style in Vietnam which highlights power distance, hierarchical order, and respect and obedience toward leaders who are seen as decision-makers (Borton, 2000; Dang, 2017; Hofstede, 1991; Pham, 1999; Vietnamese Government, 1998). In particular, the managers in this study used rules and regulations related to PD as a 'stick' to force teachers to participate in PD, and managers found it much more challenging to control teacher participation in PD activities without that 'stick'. In addition, the policy-based PD initiatives, developed by Project 2020 in order to enable teachers to learn, are top-down directives carried out by the authorities (Nguyen, 2018). Being under the control of a top-down leadership style, EFL teachers, as decision implementers (Dang, 2017; Truong, 2013), have no other way but to follow the rules and regulations to keep themselves 'on track' and retain their jobs. It is therefore understandable that participants in this study, especially the managers, expressed their most positive attitude in relation to the effectiveness of rules and regulations in ensuring EFL teachers participated in PD activities. However, the effectiveness of rules and regulations in getting teachers engaged in those activities for transformative practice was still limited.

Teachers' personal motivation is the second most influential enabler to their engagement in PD activities, reflecting findings from other studies that one of the major factors motivating teachers' engagement in PD is their desire to learn and become better

teachers (Guskey, 2002b; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011). The more the teachers engaged in PD activities, the more motivated they became in relation to PD. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Guglielmino, 2008) in which teachers take part in learning based on their commitment to lifelong learning and their interest to learn new things. However, this does not mean that their learning in this case was transformational (Guskey, 2009; Hargreaves, 2004). More research is needed to see whether their engagement was at a surface or a deeper level.

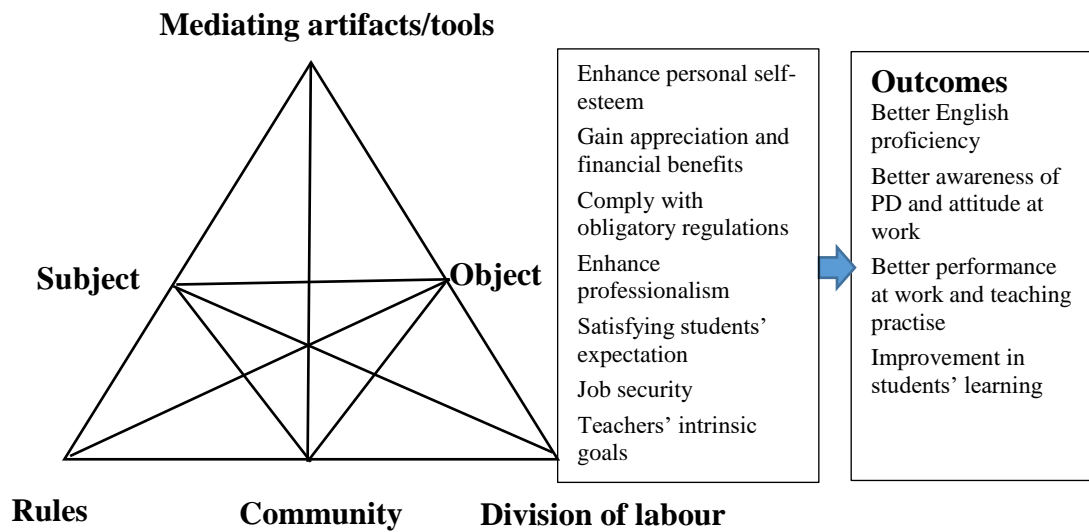
As mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter, the components in the activity system of teachers' engagement in PD can either positively or negatively influence teachers' decisions to engage in PD activities. This chapter has focused solely on the factors that are motivating to teachers' engagement in PD activities. To complete the answers to the second research question regarding factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities, the next chapter will analyse and discuss hindering factors from both EFL teachers' and managers' perspectives.

## CHAPTER 7: BARRIERS TO TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN PD ACTIVITIES

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### Chapter overview

This chapter follows the same structure as Chapter 6 in responding to the second research question regarding enablers and barriers to university EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities. In this chapter, factors inhibiting teachers' engagement in PD activities will be highlighted and categorised under all CHAT components of the 'teachers' engagement in PD' activity system, with the exception of *Object* and *Outcomes* which were both presented in detail in Chapter 5 (as summarized in Figure 7.1).



*Figure 7.1: Goals and outcomes of teachers' engagement in PD*

In section 7.1, the findings regarding barriers will draw upon three sources of data: teachers' questionnaires (n=133), teacher focus groups (n=35), and manager interviews (n=4). The main barriers perceived by teachers were structural or contextual factors, which include, but are not limited to, teachers' excessive workload, which leads to a lack of time for teacher PD; inadequate financial support for teacher PD; difficulty for teachers in accessing relevant literature due to a lack of institutional support; and institutional regulations or action plans which are issued too late to be useful. Managers not only similarly viewed inadequate financial support as a big barrier to teachers' engagement in PD activities, but also added a number of negative factors related to teachers themselves: teachers' inadequate expertise and awareness of PD, teachers' limited knowledge of and access to PD, and teachers' older age.

In section 7.2, further explanations and discussion on the findings will be made using the existing literature and knowledge of the Vietnamese culture and context, as

described in Chapter 2. The chapter conclusion reviews the main findings of this chapter.

## 7.1. Barriers to EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities

### 7.1.1. Findings from teachers' questionnaires

Teachers were asked to evaluate nine given factors in terms of how they hindered them from engaging in PD, based on a scale from 1 (Not influential at all) to 4 (Very influential). For ease of reporting, the third and fourth levels of influence (influential/very influential) are conflated in the findings and discussion below. For example, 'excessive workload' is described as 'influential' by 40.15% of participants and 'very influential' by 43.94%. This will be reported below as 'influential' (84.09%). The breakdown for each level appears in Table 7.1. Again, the participants were asked to comment on any additional barriers to their PD, and these will be analysed with the focus group data.

*Table 7.1: Influence of the nine factors which hindered EFL teacher engagement in PD*

Influence level	Factor number in questionnaire	Hindering factors	Level of influence (%)				Total of levels 3 & 4
			1	2	3	4	
			Not influential at all	Slightly influential	Influential	Very influential	
1	2	Excessive workload	0	15.91	40.15	43.94	84.09
2	9	Difficulty in accessing literature in the field in order to keep up to date	6.02	18.05	54.14	21.8	75.94
3	7	Lack of institutional support for PD.	8.33	16.67	41.67	33.33	75
4	8	Lack of facilities (e.g. office space, classroom facilities)	8.27	22.56	43.61	25.56	69.17
5	1	Personal financial problems	7.52	28.57	42.11	21.8	63.91

Influence level	Factor number in questionnaire	Hindering factors	Level of influence (%)				Total of levels 3 & 4
			1	2	3	4	
			Not influential at all	Slightly influential	Influential	Very influential	
6	3	Lack of self-motivation	15.2	24.24	36.36	24.24	60.6
7	6	Lack of collaboration among colleagues	12	32.33	39.85	15.79	55.64
8	4	Insufficient educational background	17.3	30.83	31.58	20.3	51.88
9	5	Lack of communication among colleagues	15.9	34.85	43.94	5.3	49.24

Table 7.1 indicates nine factors related to different components in the activity system:

*Mediating artifacts* (factors 7 and 8), *Community* (factors 5, 6, and 9), *Division of labour* (factor 2), and *Subject* (factors 1, 3 and 4). The level of influence varied from factor to factor and from component to component.

#### Division of labour

Excessive workload (factor 2) was the factor that most hindered teachers from PD engagement, with the highest rate of teachers (84.09%) selecting “Influential” and “Very influential”. The remaining 15.91% believed that excessive workload slightly hindered them from taking part in PD. In other words, no participant indicated that this factor did not obstruct their participation in PD at all.

#### Mediating artifacts

The factors related to *Mediating artifacts* (factors 7 and 8) came second in terms of hindrance. Many participants (75%) believed that inadequate institutional support (factor 7) was influential, while 79.27 % considered the lack of facilities such as office space or classroom facilities (factor 8) as also influential. The number of teachers who

indicated that factors 7 and 8 were not a hindrance to their PD participation accounted for only 8.33% and 8.27% respectively.

### Community

The community factors (factors 5, 6, and 9) had different levels of hindrance. Factors 5 and 6 (lack of communication and collaboration among colleagues) were believed to hinder engagement in PD by around 50% of the teachers. Only 5.3% of the teachers indicated that a lack of communication with colleagues could be a real barrier to their PD engagement. By contrast, the factor related to working and learning conditions (factor 9) was seen to be influential and very influential by a much bigger number of teachers (75.94%).

### Subject

Finally, the *Subject* factors (factors 1, 3, and 4) relatively hindered the teachers' participation in PD. Teachers' personal financial problems (factor 1) were thought to be influential by 63.90% of the teachers. Similarly, lack of self-motivation (factor 3) was believed to be a hindering factor at level 3 (influential) and level 4 (very influential) by about 60% of the teachers. A slightly smaller number of teachers (51.88%) selected factor 4 (insufficient educational background), while nearly 50% of the teachers thought that insufficient educational background had little or no impact on their engagement.

In summary, amongst the nine given factors, excessive workload (factor 2), related to the division of labour, was considered to be the most influential factor in discouraging teachers from engaging in PD, whereas lack of collaboration among colleagues (factor 6, related to community) was the least influential factor.

### 7.1.2. Findings from open comments

Open comments refer to data from three sources: the comments that EFL teachers added to their responses to the questionnaires (if any), sharing and discussion in focus groups with EFL teachers (n=35), and individual interviews with managers (n=4). Their responses are illustrated here under the relevant activity system components, namely *Mediating artifacts; Community; Rules; Division of labour; and Subject* (the teachers themselves).

#### Mediating artifacts

Several artifacts were identified by participants as negatively influencing teachers' engagement in PD activities, with the level of influence varying from factor to factor.

#### *Inadequate financial support*

Three-quarters of the teachers in the focus groups (74.3%, n=26) believed that a lack of financial support or inadequate financial support strongly hindered teachers from engaging in PD. The teachers argued that they needed to pay money to take part in a number of PD activities such as conducting an inquiry or research, and attending workshops or IELTS preparation courses. However, the teachers were supported with little or no money to participate in these fee-paying PD activities. As a result, the teachers *rarely registered to attend any workshop or conference in other cities or abroad and teachers' limited participation in PD might have originated from the lack of institutional supporting policies* (Manager 3). Teacher 17 even emphasized *the necessity of PD for sessional teachers*, as they were in charge of teaching many classes, but *they were not financially supported in taking part in any PD activities*. Some teachers stated that if they were not granted money, but *were forced to participate in PD activities*,

their *attitude towards the participation would not be as good as expected* (Teacher 15).

The barrier of financial support was clarified in the following statements.

The proposed budget for the research project was not always approved or usually cut down to the lowest. This made it impossible for teachers to conduct research with limited funds. (Teacher 2)

Teachers would like to attend conferences on their expertise or interest, but they were not offered any research funds for that activity. (Teachers 12, 14)

Three out of four managers also argued that a tight budget for PD would prevent teachers from taking part in PD activities which they could not afford. According to Manager 4, there were beneficial conferences held in other cities or countries, but teachers could not attend as they could not afford the registration fee and other expenses such as transportation and accommodation due to the limited financial support from the institution. Manager 1 explained that the institution could not spend much money on PD for EFL teachers, as teachers in other faculties also applied for monetary support for their PD. Consequently, the institution did not often organize training workshops or courses within its campuses for EFL teachers. Moreover, the institution had no stable fund for PD, and any financial support applications were processed and approved case by case (Manager 3). This manager added that the lack of PD funds caused great difficulties for teachers in working out plans for their PD.

There are few teachers attending training workshops or courses if the institution does not pay some money for their participation. [.....]  
Due to the limited budget, the faculty could not offer all the teachers opportunities to attend training courses. (Manager 3)

### *Unavailability of PD activities*

Two teachers gave additional comments to their questionnaire response, explaining that there was a lack of relevant PD programs in their context for them to engage in. The teachers indicated that they found it challenging to find appropriate PD programs to register for by themselves, as the information about institutions or organizations which offered programs for in-service teacher PD was not made available to teachers. Consequently, it was sometimes impossible for them to improve themselves even when they were ready and in need of doing so.

In addition, three of the four participating managers expressed their opinion that it was the unavailability of PD activities that hindered EFL teachers' PD, who stated that there was no conference organized at the institution for teachers in general and EFL teachers in particular. The other PD activities provided for teachers at the institution were merely limited to the annual teaching festival and scientific research festival which was just at the beginning of its journey. This limited number of regular PD activities held within the institution was a restricting factor. In addition, Manager 4 discussed the significant impact of the non-English environment in Vietnam, limiting the number of conferences, training workshops or courses for EFL teachers, so that if teachers missed any of those PD events, there might be no similar ones for them to attend later on. The following statement can illustrate this issue.

In Vietnam, where English is only one of the foreign languages taught at school, there are few conferences and training workshops for EFL teachers. Moreover, this limited number of workshops is not regularly and systematically organized. This is a great hindrance to PD.  
(Manager 4)

### *Lack of facility support*

Only teachers (22.9%, n=8) viewed a lack of facility support as an inhibitor to their participation in study group meetings. Good facilities for PD activities were regarded as a very necessary condition to create and maintain teacher PD. The teachers believed that the lack of essential facilities, such as meeting rooms and internet access, made it challenging for them to effectively carry out PD activities such as teacher study groups. Specifically, the lack of work rooms negatively impacted the effectiveness of their teacher study group meetings, and this negative effect could discourage teachers from participating in this PD activity.

There were not enough rooms for different groups to have meetings, so many groups had to share one room when they scheduled the meetings on the same day. As a result, teachers became distracted by other groups easily, and the quality of the meeting was badly influenced. (Teacher 15)

Additionally, the teachers were demotivated when *the unexpected internet interruption during the study group meetings prevented them from working productively* (Teacher 13).

### *Previous negative experience of PD activities*

Some teachers (22.9%, n=8) indicated that PD activities with poor quality and irrelevant content could discourage teachers from engaging in subsequent programs. The teachers argued that when they had managed their time to engage in PD programs, they were likely to have certain expectations. However, often the main issues or contents of those programs were *merely theoretical and unfeasible to be applied in real contexts* (Teachers 11, 13), or even far from their expectations, making them demotivated for the next time.

I was not interested in attending some workshops, as I had experienced similar ones and gained nothing but an advertisement for their books. (Teacher 12)

#### *Lack of managerial strategies for PD*

From the viewpoint of two managers interviewed, the lack of PD strategies developed at both institutional and faculty levels could be regarded as a definite barrier to PD. The standard requirements to be met by EFL teachers were described in Project 2020, but there was no specific PD strategy or plan which would guide teachers to know how to improve their professional knowledge and skills (Manager 3). The policy and requirements were mostly in documents without instructions and examples of practical and effective implementation in real contexts. As a result, teachers became thoroughly confused and found it difficult to make their PD plans. Additionally, according to both managers 3 and 4, the institution and faculty had never developed any overarching PD strategy or action plan for their teachers, and only a few PD matters were mentioned in a small section of the institutional school year reports and development strategies for the coming year. They further explained that teachers had a habit of following what the institution and faculty required them to do, so if they were not reminded of their PD requirements by any institutional PD strategy, teachers would have limited participation in PD. The faculty had organized some training courses for teachers based on their recent situation and short-term plans. According to faculty managers, they just did what came to their minds in the moment, and would develop long-term and regular PD plans later.

There are no regular or long-term PD strategies, and the faculty only organizes some training workshops whenever it can manage to. Teachers were provided with no guidelines to build up their PD plans. (Manager 4)

## Community

Managers, colleagues, students, and family members are those community members who can directly make an impact on teachers' engagement in PD. These people can sometimes be enablers for teachers to participate in professional learning, as mentioned in Chapter 6; they can also negatively influence teachers' engagement in PD activities in the following ways.

### *Family hindrance*

Many teachers (42.9%, n=15) and two out of the four managers believed that female teachers would face considerable difficulties in PD participation for professional improvement without their family members' support, as they had to balance their time for their job and family duties. Specifically, teachers' family hindered them from PD in two ways. Firstly, some teachers argued that many EFL teachers were in the first stage of their teaching career, and their family financial situation was not good. Female teachers were expected to spend time earning money for the family and taking care of other family members as well. Their tight family budget urged them to teach extra classes for extra income. As a result, they had little time and effort to invest in PD.

The limited family budget is a barrier to teachers' engagement in PD, as teachers need to spend time earning money to support their families. (Teacher 16)

Secondly, the teachers indicated that *most EFL teachers were of childbearing age, and they were required to spend much time nurturing their children* (Teacher 4). It was seen as natural for babies to be cared for by their mothers, especially when the children were not in good health, so teachers were easily distracted from their work and PD.

EFL teachers are often young and female. They are at the age of giving birth and nurturing their babies. These family issues seriously

hinder teachers' PD. [.....]. Notably, some husbands do not agree to or support their wives to participate in PD to improve their expertise. (Manager 2)

In short, family issues will be barriers to PD for EFL female teachers when husbands do not sympathise and support their wives to learn further and improve their expertise, or if their family budget is not enough for them to invest in professional improvement (Manager 2).

### *Managers and colleagues*

Only a few questionnaire teachers (n=12) offered comments on the negative influence of their managers and colleagues on their engagement in PD activities. The teachers explained that they felt demotivated to improve their expertise when they received unfair and unfriendly evaluations from their managers despite their great effort to take part in PD activities and improve their expertise. In addition, the lack of sharing among colleagues discouraged them from engaging in PD group activities such as teacher study groups, or peer class-observations. They stated that some of their senior colleagues were not open to share and discuss the problems raised in group discussions, so the work environment was not productive or motivating.

### *Rules*

In terms of barriers, three rules and regulations were believed to hinder EFL teacher PD: inappropriate regulations, untimely issue of regulations, and unfair or low payment rates.

### *Inappropriate regulations*

Some teachers (20%, n=7) stated that unclear and tough regulations regarding weekly teacher study group meetings and assigning classes for teachers could be discouraging factors in relation to teacher PD. The teachers shared the opinion that they were under pressure because they were asked to attend different teacher study group meetings for at

least 6 hours a week even though they had so much other work to do. The teachers argued that this regulation was not really appropriate, and it *wasted lots of their time meeting each other but did not work productively* (Teacher 4). They sometimes *went to the meetings to just fulfill the hours they were required to attend, especially when they had a time conflict with their group meetings and attended the meeting with other groups and made no contribution to the group discussion* (Teacher 3). In addition, Teacher 6 indicated that the *unclear regulations of assigning classes made teachers thoroughly confused* about the reasons why they were assigned to teach students at certain training levels. According to this teacher, those who were assigned to teach at the low training level would be really discouraged, as they were *unclear about the basis of that assignment, and did not know what they needed to improve*. In short, demanding and unclear regulations were considered a barrier to teacher PD by a number of teachers.

From the managers' viewpoint (n=2), it was extremely difficult for them, the faculty managers, to ask teachers to take part in PD activities when it was not compulsory for teachers in other faculties. Teachers tended to show stiff resistance to managers' requirements for PD participation. In this case, *the nonsystematic regulations within the institution could be viewed as an inhibitor to teachers' engagement in PD activities* (Manager 3). In addition, the managers indicated that it was unfair for teachers who actively and regularly participated in PD to improve themselves to be paid the same as the weaker teachers who rarely engaged in PD to update and refresh their knowledge and skills.

The same payment rate for every teacher discourages the active teachers from engaging in PD. (Manager 4)

### *Regulations issued late*

More than half the teachers (54.3%, n=19) believed that criteria for teacher evaluation issued too late could discourage teachers from participating in PD activities. Teacher 5 indicated that she felt *hurt, disappointed, and demotivated* when she was not granted any title for teacher of the year *due to the unfair criteria for teacher evaluation*. This teacher was even considered not to have fulfilled her duties, although *she was assigned a number of tasks including some PD tasks, and successfully completed all those tasks*. However, she did not conduct research or write any journal articles, which meant that she did not satisfy the criteria for annual teacher evaluation. According to the teachers, they would not try their best to participate in PD activities such as the teaching festival, conducting research, or writing journal articles, when they were not advised in time of clear criteria for teacher evaluation. Furthermore, if the criteria for annual teacher evaluation were not understandable or issued in time, teachers would not try to participate in any PD activities, as these might not match the evaluation criteria (Teachers 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

### *Traditional beliefs*

Some teachers (42.9%, n=15) agreed that *it was traditionally believed that taking care of the family was mainly women's duty* (Teacher 16), so the female teachers had to balance their time to complete their work both at home and at university. Consequently, teachers lacked time to spend on PD. In addition, the teachers stated that many other people traditionally believed that teaching is not a challenging and demanding job, so teachers would have more spare time for the family. This led to the fact that *teachers could be criticised if they spent less time than their family members expected, or they spent time at home doing their professional work* (Teacher 11, 15).

In addition, most managers (n=3) emphasized cultural hindrances to PD. Several cultural norms or teachers' beliefs strongly demotivated teachers' engagement in PD. The first cultural belief mentioned was that teachers are always better than students. Therefore, some teachers did not find it crucial to improve their professional knowledge and skills as they believed that they were well qualified enough to teach their students. The second belief referred to teachers' mindset on the stability of teaching jobs, and that their contract would never be terminated, so nothing could change their position once they became permanent staff. This understanding made teachers spend time doing many other things rather than engaging in PD to improve their expertise. The last cultural factor was related to Vietnamese women's roles and values in the family. It was traditionally believed that wives were responsible for taking care of family members and devoting most of their time to the family. This traditional thinking hindered female teachers from spending time improving their expertise via PD activities.

Many female EFL teachers merely complete the minimum required teaching hours at school and spend the rest of their time on their family instead of taking part in PD activities to improve their professional knowledge and skills. (Manager 2)

One of the biggest hindrances to teachers' engagement in PD is their traditional belief in a teaching job as a stable job, which makes teachers think that there is no need for them to keep learning to secure their job. (Manager 3)

#### *Low payment rate*

Only a few teachers (8.6%, n=3) argued in focus group discussions that a low payment rate or low salary was one of the biggest barriers to teacher PD, while, two survey participants commented that their salary was not high or attractive enough to devote their time to PD. They had to earn money to support their family and their children's

schooling, but their salary was not sufficient and it was necessary for them to teach extra classes or do other casual jobs. When financial issues were worrying them, teachers became somewhat distracted and could not devote themselves entirely to teaching and improving their expertise.

#### *Division of labour*

In terms of roles and labour distribution among different stakeholders, teachers viewed their workload as set by managers as a barrier to their PD engagement. Meanwhile, managers discussed the overload work of both managers and EFL teachers as barriers to PD.

#### *Teachers' excessive workload*

Many teachers (82.9%, n=29) affirmed that their work overload hindered them from spending time on PD. These teachers gave a further explanation that they were required to teach from 20 up to even 35 hours a week on different campuses including one in another province. Moreover, teachers were assigned a number of other tasks such as marking, supervising examination rooms, designing tests and developing teaching materials, which were often under pressure of deadlines.

I even did not dare to register for some interesting workshops as I needed to complete a number of other tasks to meet the deadlines.  
(Teacher 11)

Teachers really wanted to engage in a variety of PD activities, but their workload was huge. (Teacher 18)

The teachers also added that they had to attend two or three teacher study group meetings a week. The teachers even indicated that they sometimes had to partly carry out their work at home to meet the deadlines. The fact that teachers were required to

fulfill multiple tasks both at university and at home left them stressed and without time for PD.

In addition, two managers admitted that EFL teachers were overloaded with plenty of tasks at work such as teaching, developing curriculum, syllabus, marking, and examination supervising apart from engaging in PD. Each year, one teacher was required to complete at least 500 face-to-face classroom teaching hours out of 1760 working hours. This great number of teaching hours seriously challenged teachers' ability to spare time for PD activities.

Teaching and accomplishing other assigned tasks took teachers nearly all their time, so they had little or no time for taking part in and sustaining PD (Manager 3).

The two managers also presented that the majority of EFL teachers were young and female, and they had to complete heavy duties at home. Accordingly, their excessive workload both at home and at work prevented them from engaging in PD.

Most female teachers spend nearly the whole day teaching at school and then doing other tasks at work. They are also required to do most of the housework, especially those teachers who are in the maternal age group. As a result, many teachers could not manage the time to attend any training courses, workshops, or conferences. (Manager 4)

#### *Managers' work overload*

The faculty managers (n=2) expressed a positive attitude to promoting PD for their EFL teachers, but pointed out that they had little time to realise their PD initiatives as they were particularly busy dealing with their enormous workload. Manager 4 shared that this was the first time PD had been considered seriously, and the initial period was always tricky, but they had only two faculty managers to manage all issues in the faculty, so that it was impossible for them to spend enough time enhancing teacher PD.

Both the Dean and Associate Deans were required to govern the faculty and teach as well. Therefore, teachers' PD engagement would mainly depend on their own awareness and autonomy, as faculty managers could not regularly spend time boosting PD by developing PD action plans, supporting PD, and supervising teachers' PD participation. They considered that teachers could become less dedicated to PD engagement without managers' boosting and supervising. According to Manager 3, one barrier to stimulating PD was a lack of PD administrative specialists who could take the responsibility to develop both short-term and long-term PD strategies and implement those strategies regularly.

Faculty managers are well aware of the significance of PD and have had various ideas to enhance PD. However, we had no time to realise most of the ideas, as we, faculty managers, are overloaded with other prioritized work. As a result, most of the ideas are presented on paper only. (Manager 3).

#### Subject

According to the managers, teachers played a vital role in promoting their own PD, and it was also teachers who significantly obstructed their PD process. Obstructing factors having a negative impact on teachers' engagement in PD are illustrated below.

#### *Middle age*

About half the teachers (48.6%, n=17) believed that teachers' greater age considerably hindered them from engaging in PD. The teachers argued that the older teachers got, the more passive they would become, and they would be unlikely to change their traditional teaching methods. In addition, in these teachers' opinion, middle-aged teachers found it hard to acquire new knowledge and skills such as modern information technology or English proficiency skills. As a result, teachers were likely to avoid the activities of learning or improving their expertise. Teacher 5, who was in her forties, shared her

opinion that *she was not interested in doing research as she found it difficult to read so many books and articles, and she easily built up a terrible headache*. Teacher 16 added *it was very difficult for teachers to improve their expertise such as improving their IELTS band score when they get older*.

The managers (n=3) also believed that the older teachers were, the more reluctant they become to learn new skills such as information technology skills or the new software or modern technology used in teaching. According to the managers, older teachers who had graduated from university *more than 15 years ago*, found it difficult to study new things. It would take older teachers longer to learn similar things to the younger teachers, but they might see no change in their career after learning. Teachers who graduated from university many years ago would be *reluctant to change themselves, and their learning ability seemed to be more limited*. (Manager 2)

The faculty managers showed that some middle-aged teachers failed to improve their English proficiency and achieve the desired IELTS band score after attending an IELTS preparation class several times, and practicing to take the IELTS test. Accordingly, they gave up taking part in more PD activities for English proficiency improvement.

The engagement level of teachers in PD significantly varied among teachers of different age groups. It is seen that older teachers are more reluctant to take part in PD activities to learn and improve their professional knowledge and skills. (Manager 3).

#### *Poor expertise*

Two of the four managers indicated that teachers' poor expertise could discourage them from taking part in PD activities. The managers argued that teachers with low English proficiency would not perform their other professional tasks very well. Manager 3 gave some evidence to support this argument. For example, there were a number of teachers

with poor expertise who were likely to protest against the faculty requirement for PD; or weak teachers who did not want to participate in PD activities to learn as they made little or no progress after several attempts. In addition, some teachers took part in group PD activities such as teacher study groups to develop the curriculum or teaching materials with other teachers in their groups, but their inadequate expertise kept them far behind the stronger teachers. Weak teachers actually found it hard to follow the strong teachers and gradually became marginalised or were even excluded from their group by the group leader as their work quality could not meet the required standard. The following statement illustrates this situation.

We divided teachers in the faculty into two halves, one half of good expertise teachers and the other half of poor expertise teachers. The half of poor expertise teachers were likely to avoid participating in PD activities and tended to make excuses such as their children's illness or taking care of their young babies, or personal emergency incidents. The faculty had to employ various ways to force the poor expertise teachers to engage in PD activities. (Manager 3)

#### *Teachers' negative attitude and feelings*

Only a few teachers (14.3%, n=5) insisted that it was the teachers' perspective that could prevent them from engaging in PD. It was explained that a number of teachers were not active and insisted on keeping to their usual teaching methods. They tended to be reluctant to update their knowledge and skills or to apply new ideas.

The barrier to teacher PD is teachers' unwillingness to change and participate. (Teacher 33)

Secondly, the teachers argued that a number of teachers stayed away from group PD activities because they were worried about negative comments.

Teachers did not want to participate in the teaching festival or mutual class observation as they were not open to discussion or comments on

their lesson. They had anxiety about receiving negative feedback.  
(Teacher 34)

#### *Poor awareness of PD*

Three of the four managers stated that teachers' poor awareness of PD significance in their teaching career could be considered one of the decisive factors which prevented them from PD engagement. Accordingly, the managers found it very difficult to encourage teachers to engage in PD to improve their expertise if teachers did not want to take PD opportunities offered to them. Manager 3 further explained that the faculty had developed regulations for PD, and as stated in those regulations, teachers were required to participate in a number of PD activities. However, the result of the regulations implementation might *not be as good as expected due to teachers' understanding of that policy as an obligation, but not as a scaffolding way to gradually support them to develop a good habit of PD engagement*. Additionally, if teachers did not acknowledge the importance of PD to their teaching, they would be quite reluctant to learn and update themselves with new knowledge and modern teaching approaches which might be different from their traditional methods. As a result, teachers would insist on keeping to their usual ways of teaching instead of continuously learning and employing new teaching methods which can work much better in the changing education environment (Manager 4). The following statements explicitly present this barrier.

Teachers' autonomy in PD engagement is weak. This is caused by teachers' poor awareness of PD importance which can be regarded as the main hindering factor to PD. Teachers have tended to avoid communicating and cooperating with foreign teachers working at the faculty to improve their English proficiency. (Manager 3)

Teachers have not entirely recognized the significance of PD activities to their teaching career such as doing research, writing journal articles, or other publications. As a result, teachers have merely developed the habit of teaching, but not of engaging in PD activities to improve their professional knowledge and skills. (Manager 1)

However, none of the participating teachers viewed their poor awareness of PD as a hindrance to their engagement in PD activities.

#### *Limited access to PD information*

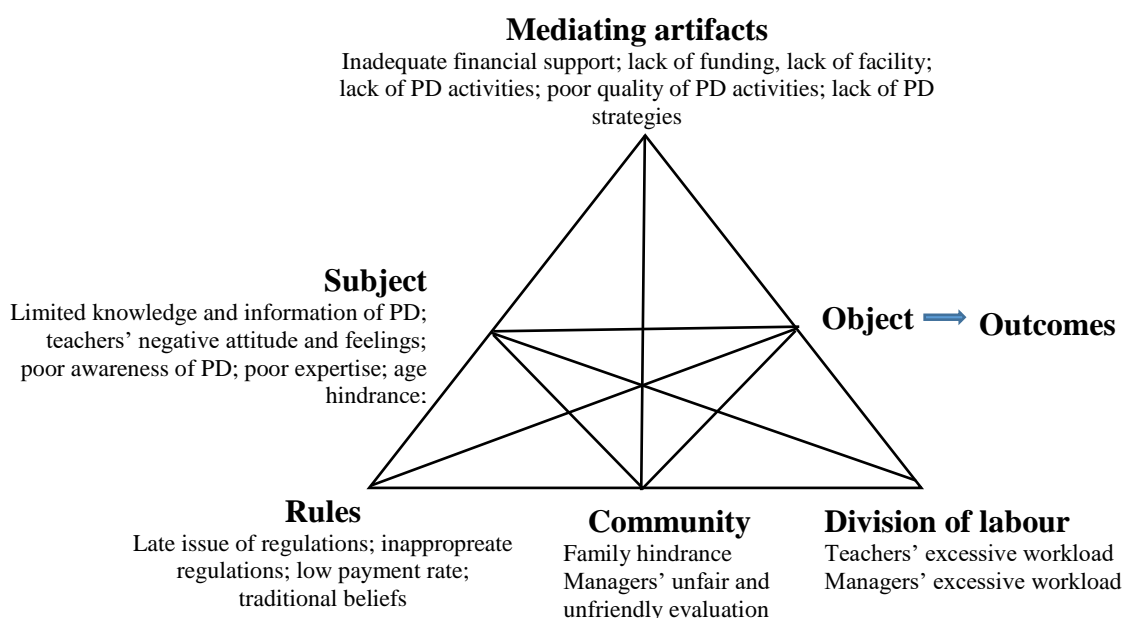
Half of the participant managers (n=2) and some teachers (20%, n=7) stated that teachers did not engage in PD because they had no information about PD activities, and teachers' background knowledge of doing research was limited. They indicated that teachers mainly focused on their teaching, and had little or no information and knowledge of significant PD activities such as conducting an inquiry, writing journal articles, writing books or writing other types of publications (Manager 1). As a result, teachers became almost indifferent to those activities. Teachers 14 and 15 did not conduct inquiries as *they did not know how and where to start*.

Limited knowledge of research methods seriously hindered me from conducting an inquiry. I did not have the confidence to conduct research or write journal articles as I had no background knowledge of it. (Teacher 5)

In addition, teachers had little or no experience of seeking appropriate workshops and conferences to attend. In short, *lack of PD information is one of the teachers' weaknesses* which could hinder them from PD activities and *limit their access to other activities apart from teaching activities* (Managers 1, 2).

## 7.2. Discussion

The findings in sections 7.1 and 7.2 show similarities and differences between teachers and managers regarding factors hindering teachers' engagement in PD activities. These will be discussed in Chapter 8. Here, I discuss key barriers viewed by both teachers and managers, linking to the literature and the Vietnamese context. Figure 7.2 summarizes the hindering factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities from both teachers' and managers' perspectives.



*Figure 7.1: Barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities*

Of the findings, teachers' excessive workload and inadequate financial support were viewed as the two most influential barriers by both teachers and managers.

It is undeniable that the workload of EFL teachers in this study was heavily influenced by the educational innovation, Language Project 2020, which led to new tasks and requirements for teachers. Teachers' duties were the heaviest ever, given that they had to cover their usual teaching tasks (at least 500 periods of face-to-face teaching each

year) as well as new non-teaching tasks such as developing curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials, question banks, and evaluating syllabus and teaching materials. It is therefore not surprising that excessive workload acted as such a strong deterrent to the teachers' engagement in PD. This finding is also consistent with the findings of other Vietnamese researchers (Pham, 2001; Tran, 2016), in which time and workload negatively influence English lecturers' participation in PD activities in Vietnamese HE. The English lecturers in Tran's (2016) study had to apply new teaching methods, teach all day, and complete extra workload arising from implementing the language reform project. International studies also show that teachers' excessive workload directly causes a lack of time for teachers to engage in PD activities (Badri et al., 2016; Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000, 2003, 2006; Nabhani et al., 2014). In order to enhance teachers' engagement in PD activities, it is advisable for managers to balance teachers' usual teaching tasks and any new non-teaching tasks, rather than simply adding more duties to teachers' workload.

Inadequate financial support was highlighted by participants as another big hindrance to engagement in PD activities. As demonstrated through an activity system model, subjects use mediating artifacts/ tools, which are material resources, to achieve the object (Trust, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). In the activity system of teachers' engagement in PD, financial support is viewed as an important tool that enables teacher PD. Therefore, if teachers face a tight budget due to a lack of funding or inadequate financial support for their PD, their engagement in PD activities will consequently be limited. This finding is consistent with the teachers' and managers' opinion of the significant role of financial issues in enhancing teachers' participation in PD activities and the findings of previous studies (Darkenwald &

Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Kosgei, 2015; Lohman, 2000, 2005; Lohman & Woolf, 2001; Nabhani et al., 2014; Sinyangwe et al., 2016) in which a lack of funding dramatically inhibits teachers' participation in PD, especially for younger teachers. In fact, the teachers in this study had never been advised about the institutional fund for teacher PD, so they were not sure if funding for PD was available. The lack of financial support prevents teachers from actively seeking and engaging in their desired PD events such as conferences, workshops or training courses which can cost a lot for fees, daily expenses or transportation (Schibeci & Hickey, 2004). Tran's (2016) study indicated that although financial support was available for some PD activities, limited funding for many other PD activities significantly hindered teachers' PD participation.

In addition, some teacher-related factors such as middle age, family, and teachers' limited access to PD information were also viewed as hindrances. The teachers stated that the older they got, the more reluctant they were to undertake professional learning. This finding is similar to the finding by Bayindir (2009) and Özer and Beycioglu (2010) that the more the teachers' teaching experience increases (especially after ten years), the more their participation in PD activities decreases. Nevertheless, the finding is in contrast to that by Bayar (2013), whose study indicated a positive relationship between age and teachers' engagement in PD activities, concluding that as teachers' age increases, they tend to engage in PD activities more frequently. However, the teachers in this study found it challenging to learn new knowledge or master new skills because they had finished their initial studies a long time previously, after their Undergraduate or Masters Degree.

Family responsibilities also inhibit female teachers' engagement in PD activities. Traditionally, Vietnamese women are in charge of family duties which comprise

domestic responsibilities and caring for the children (Nguyen, 2012; Pamela LaBorde, 1996). The role of women has become increasingly important in Vietnam at the current time when they play the dual roles of main laborer to earn money for family living as well as family carer. Although gender roles have changed somewhat, women are still predominantly doing the family housework (Nguyen, 2012). Accordingly, the participants in this study affirmed that it was challenging for female teachers to engage in PD activities due to their responsibilities at home.

Limited knowledge and information about PD activities considerably challenge teachers to undertake PD activities. Professional learning was not a familiar activity in the Vietnamese HE context until the implementation of Project 2020 (V. C. Le, 2011; Pham, 2001). Consequently, most teachers have no habit of continuous learning during their teaching career because they mainly focus on teaching and teaching-related tasks, such as lesson preparation, designing tests and marking. This leaves little or no time and attention for PD activities such as doing research, writing journal articles or writing books that require teachers' knowledge and skills. Moreover, teachers have few or no opportunities to learn how to do research or write articles and other types of publications.

## Chapter conclusion

In summary, hindering factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities draw on all the components in the activity system of teacher PD participation, apart from the *Object* component which carries influence only indirectly through the *Subject's* agency, as discussed in Chapter 8 (8.3). Amongst those factors, teachers' excessive workload and inadequate financial support, which relate to *Division of labour* and *Mediating artifacts*

respectively, are the two factors that most hindered teachers' engagement in PD activities.

Together with Chapter 6, this chapter has helped to answer the question of factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities by discussing the barriers using the CHAT framework. In Chapter 8, teacher agency will be viewed in the light of Self Determination Theory to gain insights into the levels of self-determination of different stakeholders in the teacher PD process. The differences between teachers' and managers' perspectives on barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities will also be discussed in Chapter 8.

## CHAPTER 8: FURTHER DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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### Chapter overview

This chapter summarizes and discusses the main findings related to the two key focus points of this study: the current situation of teacher PD in the Vietnamese HE context

and factors influencing EFL tertiary teachers' engagement in PD activities. The thesis conclusion and implications then bring the chapter to a close.

The chapter begins with a synthesis of the findings on the overarching picture of the current situation of teacher PD in which teachers' goals for PD participation and managers' goals for planning teacher PD are compared to each other using the third generation of CHAT. The outcomes of teachers' engagement in PD activities and managers' plans for teacher PD are also discussed.

The next section refers to factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities. Specifically, enabling factors, which have been analysed and discussed in Chapter 6, will be viewed again from the perspective of Self Determination Theory (SDT) in order to understand agency concerning those impacting factors. Analysis from this SDT perspective indicates that most factors motivating teacher PD participation are extrinsic, and teachers' level of self-determination in engaging in PD is limited. The differences between teachers' and managers' perspectives on hindering factors are also discussed. Significantly, teachers view structural factors such as high workload, which leads to a lack of time, as a primary hindrance to professional learning. Although managers also recognize teachers' workload as a problem, they added that teacher-related factors also considerably inhibit their PD participation.

The subsequent section discusses how the findings of this study can be translated into meaningful implications, and thereby into recommendations for both EFL teachers and policymakers to develop appropriate policies and better enhance teachers' engagement in PD activities. At the same time, an indication is given to how the present research contributes to scholarly knowledge.

Limitations of this study and some recommendations for further research will end the chapter.

## 8.1. Current situation of teacher participation in PD

The current situation of teacher PD pictured in this study is closely connected to the current Vietnamese educational reform, Project 2020. Project 2020 has positively influenced teachers' motivation to enhance their professional learning in an attempt to update the changes and improve their teaching practice, which can enhance their students' learning outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2019). The new requirements not only make teachers aware of the necessity of PD but also create learning opportunities for teachers (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Although teacher PD is a newly emerging area in the context of Vietnamese HE (Nguyen et al., 2019) and EFL teachers still face a number of difficulties related to their PD process, the teachers in this study are becoming more and more engaged in professional learning. The range of PD activities recently taken by EFL teachers is also various.

### 8.1.1. Teachers' awareness of PD and PD activities recently engaged in

The findings presented in Chapter 6 indicated the positive status of teacher PD concerning managers' and teachers' awareness of PD significance and their roles in the teacher PD process. It is stated in many documents that PD plays a vital role in enhancing quality teaching. Similarly, the teachers in this study explicitly expressed their appreciation toward PD in enhancing the knowledge and skills which support them in improving their teaching performance.

The findings also revealed that Project 2020 could be viewed as a catalyst to significantly foster managers' and EFL teachers' awareness of the necessity for PD. Since the implementation of Project 2020, managers at institutions are required to make plans for teacher PD, in terms both of teachers' English proficiency level and their instructional methods. Similarly, Bui and Nguyen (2016) emphasized that teachers' self-directed learning was considerably enhanced by PD strategies within the implementation for Project 2020. In this study, EFL teachers were inspired and required to seek opportunities for PD participation to improve their expertise and meet the new requirements of their institution, which are based on the requirement of Project 2020.

Partly as a result of teachers' increasing awareness of the significance of PD, EFL teachers in this study had recently engaged in a number of PD activities with the hope of improving their social and content knowledge and skills, which are necessary for them to perform well at work. However, similar to many other reform initiatives which are top-down from MOET to the institutions and then to the teachers (Le, 2019a), many PD activities recently taken by the teachers in this study were not voluntary but mandatory, notably teacher study groups, attending workshops organized within the institution, joining the teaching festival and mutual class observation. Participation in some other PD activities, such as doing research or preparing for the IELTS examination to achieve a high IELTS band score, was for their personal goals (e.g., scholarship applications). Apparently, teachers' goals for their engagement in PD contribute to both their personal objectives and their response to institutional requirements.

Although the managers in the participating institution viewed doing research and publishing their research as one of the most critical duties of university teachers, not

many teachers showed an interest in those activities. The common PD activities recently taken mainly focused on improving teachers' instructional skills and necessary knowledge for them to complete teaching-related tasks such as designing tests, developing curriculum and syllabus, and developing teaching materials. There were few or no opportunities for PD undertaken through classroom-based action research, which is known to improve the quality of language teaching and learning because it enables teachers to investigate and problematise their teaching and reflect on their locally situated knowledge (Le, 2018) and to link theory and practice (Johnson, 2015). There exist a number of factors that hinder teachers from conducting an inquiry or action research. Teachers have not perceived research as their primary duty, but regarded research as "the job of well-trained researchers" (Le, 2018). Moreover, teachers find it too difficult because they lack background knowledge in research methods such as systematic data collection and analysis (Borg, 2013; Le, 2018; Nunan, 2006). Also, teachers may not be supported with an adequate budget and access to reading materials, which makes it more challenging for them to conduct any research. Such inadequate support is also discussed as a barrier to teachers' engagement in PD activities in section 8.3 of this chapter. Consequently, although the participating teachers are required to annually conduct or publish their research, doing research or writing journal articles or other publications are still not common activities amongst the teachers. This finding is supported by Pham (2006) and Le (2018), who indicate that conducting and publishing research is not common amongst university teachers due to a lack of transparent criteria for research evaluation and little effect of research achievement on teachers' professional careers. Le (2018) also argued that local journals have a poor editorial standard and low academic credibility, and there has not yet been a professional journal of international standard in Vietnam for teachers to publish their research.

### 8.1.2. Teachers' goals for engaging in PD and managers' goals for planning teacher PD: Similarities and discrepancies

In an attempt to investigate the similarities and differences between teachers' goals for PD participation and institutional and faculty goals for planning teacher PD, a model of two interacting activity systems has been developed using the third generation of CHAT (see Figure 8.1 on the next page).

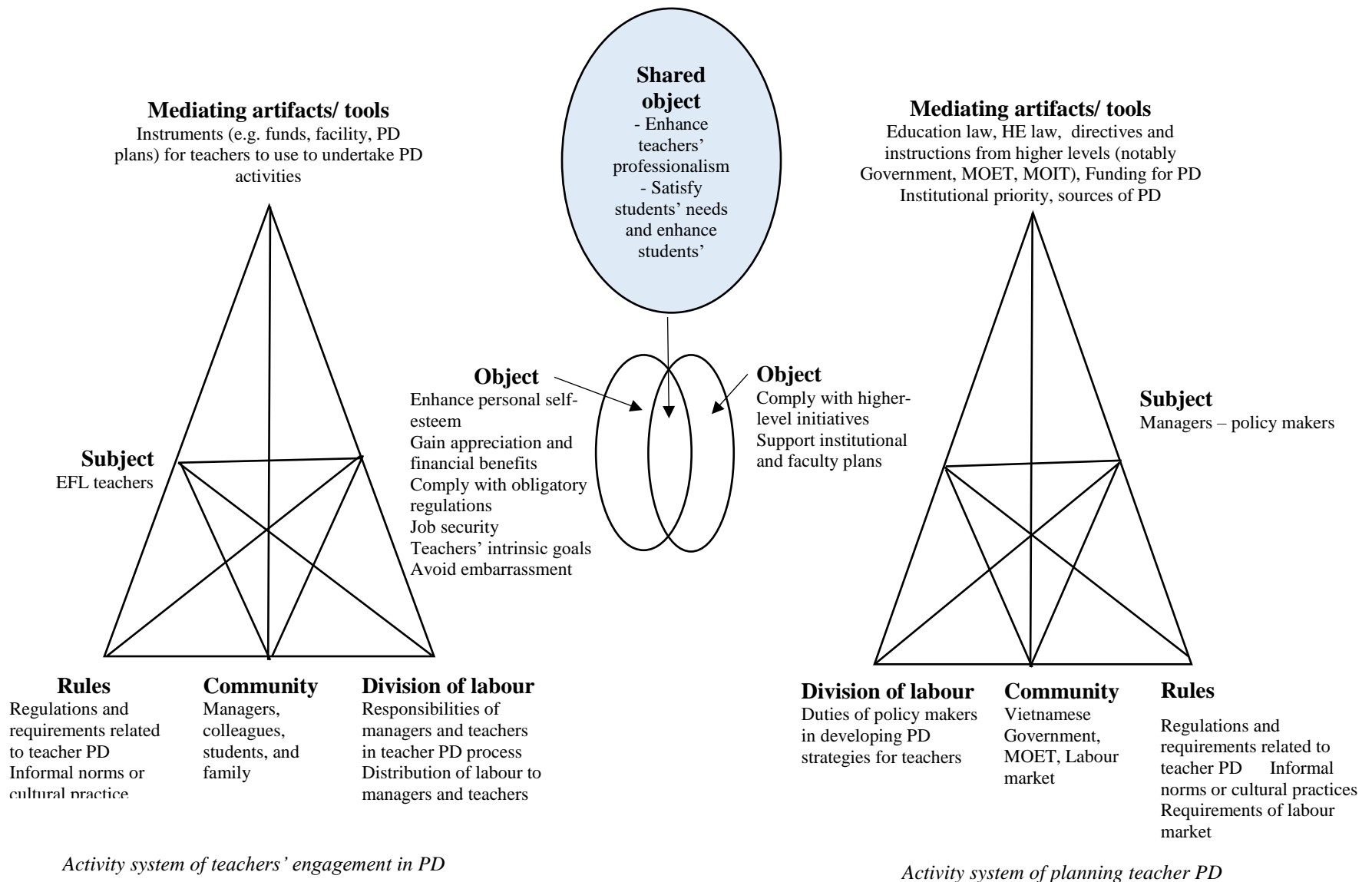


Figure 8.1: Teachers' goals for engaging in PD vs. managers' goals for planning teacher PD

The central object component represented in Figure 8.1 is where the two activity systems interact, clearly illustrating the similarities and differences between teachers' goals for participating in PD activities and managers' goals for planning teacher PD.

On the left in Figure 8.1 is the teachers' activity system for participating in PD, the major part of which was represented in Figure 4.4 based on the earlier literature review and context description. The additional *Object* component in the centre of the diagram is based on the data presented in Chapter 5 and shows teachers' goals for engaging in PD activities. On the right is the managers' activity system for planning teacher PD, with the goals again drawing on data presented in Chapter 5. While this PD planning system is not a focus in the present study, the other components are sketched in, based both on the earlier review of the HE context in Vietnam, as well as local information from participating managers. This is therefore not an exhaustive representation but it is offered simply to provide an overview of that system because it may help to explain the occurrence of similarities and differences between objects of these two systems.

As can be seen in Figure 8.1, while teachers and managers share two goals related to teachers' and students' development, they also have separate goals. Both similarities and differences are discussed below.

### Similarities

Not unexpectedly, managers and teachers share the two central goals of the teacher PD process: building the professional knowledge and skills of EFL teachers, the key participants of the PD process, and enhancing students' learning outcomes. These two goals are in accordance with definitions of PD as systematic and intentional processes with activities designed to improve teachers' professional knowledge, attitudes and skills to enhance students' learning outcomes

(Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Fullan, 1995; Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hassel, 1999; Hirsh, 2009; Kwakman, 2003; Mizell, 2010; Scott & Scott, 2010; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Walker, 2010). Both goals also reflect the view that teacher PD makes a significant contribution to teachers' improvement of content knowledge, instructional strategies, and teaching performance (Dunne et al., 2000; Garet et al., 2016; Lee, 2013; Strahan, 2003; Vo & Nguyen, 2009). From the PD activities described by the teachers, it can be assumed that these goals encompass improving the English language proficiency of teachers because a lack of language self-efficacy has been "found to be near synonymous to lack of teaching self-efficacy" (Hiver, 2013, p. 1). Also, if teachers can master new skills, they would know how to effectively instruct their students using their experience as a learner (Harnett, 2012; Medgyes, 1994). In this study, Manager 3 underscored that it was challenging for English teachers to teach well if their English proficiency level did not meet the standard; this relates to the fact that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p.13). Arguably, from the managers' perspective, teachers' improvement and the increase in students' learning outcomes significantly contribute to the sustainable development of the organization.

### Differences

Although teachers and managers share two goals, it can be expected that these have somewhat different meanings for them, shaped by their different roles within the institution. This is because there always exist inherent discrepancies between organizational imperatives and individual learning goals toward PD (Scribner, 1999). The differences between managers' goals and teachers' goals in this study can be clearly illustrated from the relationship between teachers' and managers' shared goals and their separate goals.

### *Managers' goals for planning PD*

Specifically, besides the two main objectives mentioned above, managers focus on two additional objectives: compliance with higher-level initiatives and preparation of teachers in support of the institutional and faculty plans. These two managerial goals are in a close relationship with the two shared goals.

The first objective refers to the institution's duties to implement higher-level directives and educational reform goals and develop the institution as a whole. Regarding PD for EFL teachers and English teaching and learning, the participating institution followed Project 2020 and tried to realize Project 2020 based on its financial conditions, facilities and human resources. In fact, the institution has set up new regulations and requirements for teachers, for example: the minimum English standard requirement (IELTS 6.5, equivalent to C1 of CEFR) that teachers are required to achieve by 2018 (in accordance with Project 2020), teachers' engagement in regular PD activities such as teacher study group meetings, mutual class observations, or the annual teaching festivals. Teachers' participation in those PD activities and their improvement in English proficiency could be regarded as a way for the institution to comply with the requirements of Project 2020, MOET, and the Vietnamese government more broadly. In other words, PD could somehow enable schools to address educational reform goals (Borko et al., 2002; Starkey et al., 2009).

The second managerial goal refers to the preparation of well-qualified teachers able to contribute to the fulfillment of faculty and institutional development plans. In other words, the goals of teacher PD planning closely align with the faculty development plans, such as opening a language centre to offer various English courses for learners or starting up a centre for English language assessment. Previous studies (King & Newmann, 2001; Vescio et al., 2008) indicate

that PD activities not only aim to improve the performance of teachers but also greatly contribute to better performance of the institution as a whole. Thus, managers in this study aimed to prepare enough good quality teachers to maintain and make the new centres competitive, or satisfy the requirement for teachers with good knowledge and skills in assessment and testing. A faculty manager shared that at the beginning, a number of key teachers were selected to participate in assessment workshops organized within the institution to build up a team of well-qualified teachers to support the faculty plan. In this case, the improvement of teachers' professionalism is not only for teachers' benefit but also for fulfilling the faculty plan. The better performance of teachers and the institution as a whole can enhance its ranking and reputation to attract more students. It is logical because managers' responsibilities and roles include not only maintaining the operation of organization, but also continually developing it. Most successful organizations give high priority to their staff development and training processes (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Teachers' career growth makes a vital contribution to their institutions' teaching quality, diversity, and reputation (Tran, 2009). As a result, managers tend to link the goals of teacher PD to the development of the institution as a whole.

Regarding managers' interpretation of the goal of enhancing students' learning outcomes, there is a strong focus on meeting the requirements of educational reform and students' potential employers. When students can satisfy their potential employers' requirements, their job opportunities will increase. In this way, the institution will have a better reputation and attract more students, and the increasing number of students makes a great contribution to the development of the institution.

### *Teachers' goals for participating in PD*

In contrast, teachers' personal goals for participation in PD are mainly related to themselves as individuals within the institution rather than to the institution itself. These include teachers' duties to comply with institutional and faculty regulations, achieving positive change in their performance at work, and other individual benefits such as personal self-esteem, gaining appreciation and financial benefits, job security, avoiding embarrassment, or addressing their intrinsic desires. The relationship between the two shared goals of improving teachers' professional knowledge and skills and students' learning and teachers' personal goals is discussed below.

Enhancing professionalism is closely related to the goals of gaining financial benefits and job security. As mentioned and discussed in Chapter 5, one aspect of teachers' professional learning aims to achieve the required IELTS band score to satisfy the requirements and maintain their contract. Teachers will not have their contract renewed if their English proficiency level is lower than the standard requirement or if they do not engage in the required PD activities and are evaluated as underperforming for two consecutive years. In addition, teachers participate in PD activities such as teaching festivals, conducting an inquiry, or writing journal articles to improve their professional knowledge and skills in an attempt to achieve awards. These awards can be certificates of merit from the institution or higher-level organizations, and monetary awards (e.g., salary increase or a free traveling tour). Finally, teachers would like to enhance their professionalism to receive praise from colleagues and managers.

According to Guskey (2002b, p. 382), "although teachers are generally required to take part in PD by certification or contractual agreements, most report that they engage in these activities because they want to become better teachers". In this study, the teachers' goal of enhancing their

English proficiency levels and instructional skills is also related to the goals of enhancing their self-esteem and gaining appreciation from managers and colleagues. Once teachers' professionalism is improved, they become more confident in raising their voice when they attend meetings and workshops. Consequently, their colleagues and managers would value their ideas, and teachers would have a better feeling of their capabilities. This finding aligns with Cho's (2014, p. 58) study in which Korean EFL teachers were "haunted by perfect English" and highly valued the crucial role of English proficiency in their self-confidence. Teachers engage in professional learning to improve their professionalism, which not only helps them to avoid embarrassment in front of their colleagues and managers but also to be better valued at their workplace.

Similarly, the teachers' goal of satisfying students' expectations is related to teachers trying to build up a good image in their students' eyes. Teachers are aware that students' English proficiency is good in general, so their students will expect more from the teachers. If they do not continually engage in professional learning, they will not satisfy their students' needs and will not have a feeling of job satisfaction. They try to improve their knowledge and skills and actively supported their students' learning to save face in front of their students or receive a good reputation from students, which can, in turn, help teachers to be assigned more classes to teach in the future.

Finally, the rest of the teachers' personal goals refer to their intrinsic goals, including their interest in professional learning and connecting with other teachers, and their personal plans (e.g., applying for a scholarship to study further abroad). Although these intrinsic goals may have some connection to their career development, they are definitely for teachers' individual benefits and plans.

In summary, organizational imperatives and individual learning goals toward PD (Scribner, 1999) are different. While managers focus on institutional and faculty purposes, teachers attempt to optimise benefits to themselves. From the managers' perspective, positive change in teachers and students ultimately supports the purposes of developing the institution as a whole and expanding the faculty in particular. By contrast, teachers engage in PD to comply with institutional and faculty regulations or rules, and to maintain job security, to receive awards and praise, or merely to save face or satisfy their interests.

## 8.2. Outcomes of engaging in and planning for teacher PD

Plans and regulations for teacher PD and teachers' participation in PD activities have made some positive changes for both teachers and students, which were presented in detail in Chapter 6 and can be summarized in Table 8.1. These changes can be considered as the initial outcomes of the teacher PD process.

*Table 8.1: The outcomes of the teacher PD process*

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Change in teachers</b>	Better awareness of PD and attitude at work	A better attitude to learning, sharing, cooperating with other teachers More active participation in their PD activities More teachers registered to attend the workshops
		Enthusiastically contributing to group discussions
	Better performance at work	Better knowledge of teaching methods and assessment More confident and capable of designing tests

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Details</b>
	Better English proficiency and teaching performance	Higher IELTS band score (a small number of teachers left under English standard requirements) More effective teaching practice using the skills gained from PD activities
<b>Change in students</b>	Improvement in students' learning	More actively engaged in the lesson More excited at English lessons Enjoyed learning English more

Teachers' English proficiency has become much better, and most of the teachers have met the English standard requirement of 6.5 IELTS band score, and become a good user of advanced English. The participating institution required teachers to take the IELTS test or equivalent international English tests instead of the locally developed language proficiency test called the Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) (Le, 2019a). The managers in this study confirmed that when teachers achieve the required IELTS band score, it demonstrates that their English proficiency level has improved, and teachers became more confident in communicating in English. This finding contrasts with the outcomes of Project 2020 in other educational institutions in different parts of Vietnam where teachers' English language proficiency was assessed using VSTEP and their English language skills were not as good as expected. According to Le (2017), many universities in Vietnam require their teachers to take international English tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC because of their international credibility. The Minister of MOET, Phung Xuan Nha, when reviewing Project 2020's progress in 2016, concluded that the quality and quantity of English teachers in Vietnam are falling short of the project's requirements (as cited in Tuoi Tre News, 2016). Furthermore, Dang (2018) claimed

that despite many workshops and training courses organized by Project 2020, EFL teachers were still not confident about their English proficiency after taking language proficiency training courses. This situation also lends support to the opinion that the real quality of those teachers who were reported to have met the English standard was still a matter for skepticism (Hoang, 2016; Le, 2017). According to Dr. Pham Van Hung, the director of Thua Thien Hue Department of Education and Training, many teachers found different ways to achieve the required English proficiency level by attending training courses at ‘easy’ centers and taking the English test there, or by cheating on their tests (as cited in Tuoi Tre News, 2016). This indicates a trend amongst teachers to illegally obtain language ability certificates. How to solve this problem is still an unanswered question. Mr. Minh Tri Nguyen suggested that the local English tests and CEFR band scores, which are used to assess teachers’ English proficiency levels, should be internationally accepted (Hoang, 2016).

Although English proficiency levels of EFL teachers at the participating institution have improved, it is still difficult for them to maintain their English proficiency due to lack of a suitable environment for them to constantly practice their advanced English (Le, 2019a; Mai, 2014). After meeting the English standard and coming back to their daily teaching schedule at their institution, teachers’ English proficiency would decrease quickly because they have few or no opportunities to use their advanced English (Le, 2019a; Le & Nguyen, 2017; Mai, 2014). In fact, teachers are often assigned to teach at one level throughout their teaching career (Mai, 2014), and not many EFL teachers have students whose English is good, so teachers tend to use simple and basic English in the classroom (Le & Nguyen, 2017), not the advanced English which helped them to achieve the required IELTS band score. Consequently, from the perspective of Le and Nguyen (2017), it is necessary to set up a threshold level of English proficiency which is

practical and achievable for teachers, instead of a very challenging standard. Le and Nguyen (2017) added that it was more important for PD to focus on enabling teachers to organize interactive activities in the classroom to facilitate students to use simple English confidently. In short, in order to improve and maintain teachers' English proficiency, it is advisable for managers not only to set up reasonable requirements for teachers but also to create a good environment for teachers to practice their English, such as organizing faculty seminars, workshops, and symposiums on a regular basis. In this way, teachers can use English to share their research findings, or simply their teaching experiences, which will also help teachers to develop their research skills and improve their instructional skills.

In this study, teachers' performance at work was also enhanced through their engagement in PD activities. By engaging in PD activities, teachers updated new teaching approaches or learned from their colleagues' teaching experience, and became more competent in classroom teaching. This outcome is attributed to institutional and faculty PD strategies and plans and teachers' participation in a range of PD activities, namely teacher study groups, sharing and cooperating with their colleagues, teaching festivals, workshops, and conferences in the field. As synthesized in the study of Guskey (2003a), the characteristics of effective PD include but are not limited to being school or site-based, the promotion of collegiality and collaborative exchange. Therefore, participating in the PD activities mentioned above helps teachers to improve their professional knowledge and skills, which enables them to perform their work better. In addition, from the perspective of adult learning theory, effective PD should fulfill participants' practical and relevant needs, and enable them to practice in real contexts (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Piggot-Irvine, 2006). In this study, the faculty managers decided their PD strategies for teachers based both on the development plan of the

institution and faculty and on the teachers' needs. In this way, most of the participating teachers appreciated and acknowledged the significant role of the provided workshops in enhancing their performance.

In addition to the improvement of teachers' English proficiency levels and their work performance, teachers' awareness of and attitude to PD also improved. This aligns with previous findings that PD activities can give rise to positive attitudes in teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). Many previous researchers confirmed that teachers' positive attitudes toward PD play a crucial role in enhancing their PD participation (Bayar, 2013; Torff & Sessions, 2008, 2009). Consequently, the more teachers engage in PD activities, the more they can learn, and the better they can perform their teaching practice.

Teachers' positive changes ultimately lead to positive change in students' learning and their learning outcomes (Guskey, 2000, 2002b; Hirsh, 2009; Mizell, 2010). The teachers in this study confirmed this, saying that their students became more interested in English, more excited, and actively engaged in the lesson.

In summary, plans for teacher PD and teachers' participation in PD have had a positive impact on teachers and students. PD activities have not only improved teachers' content knowledge and their professional skills but also improved their awareness and attitude to PD. Teachers' improvement, in turn, has made a significant contribution to the improvement of students' learning outcomes. It can therefore be said that both managers and teachers in this study have achieved the main objectives of the PD process which are "change in the classroom practices of teachers, change in their beliefs and attitudes, and change in the learning outcomes of students" (Guskey, 1986, p. 5).

### 8.3. Understanding agency in relation to the factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities

Before investigating agency in relation to the factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities, a summary of those factors is presented through an activity system diagram based on the findings from Chapters 6 and 7 (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 illustrates the whole picture of factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities under five components of an activity system of teacher engagement in PD: *Mediating artifacts*, *Subject*, *Rules*, *Community* and *Division of labour*. Those factors can either positively or negatively influence teachers' participation in PD activities as presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

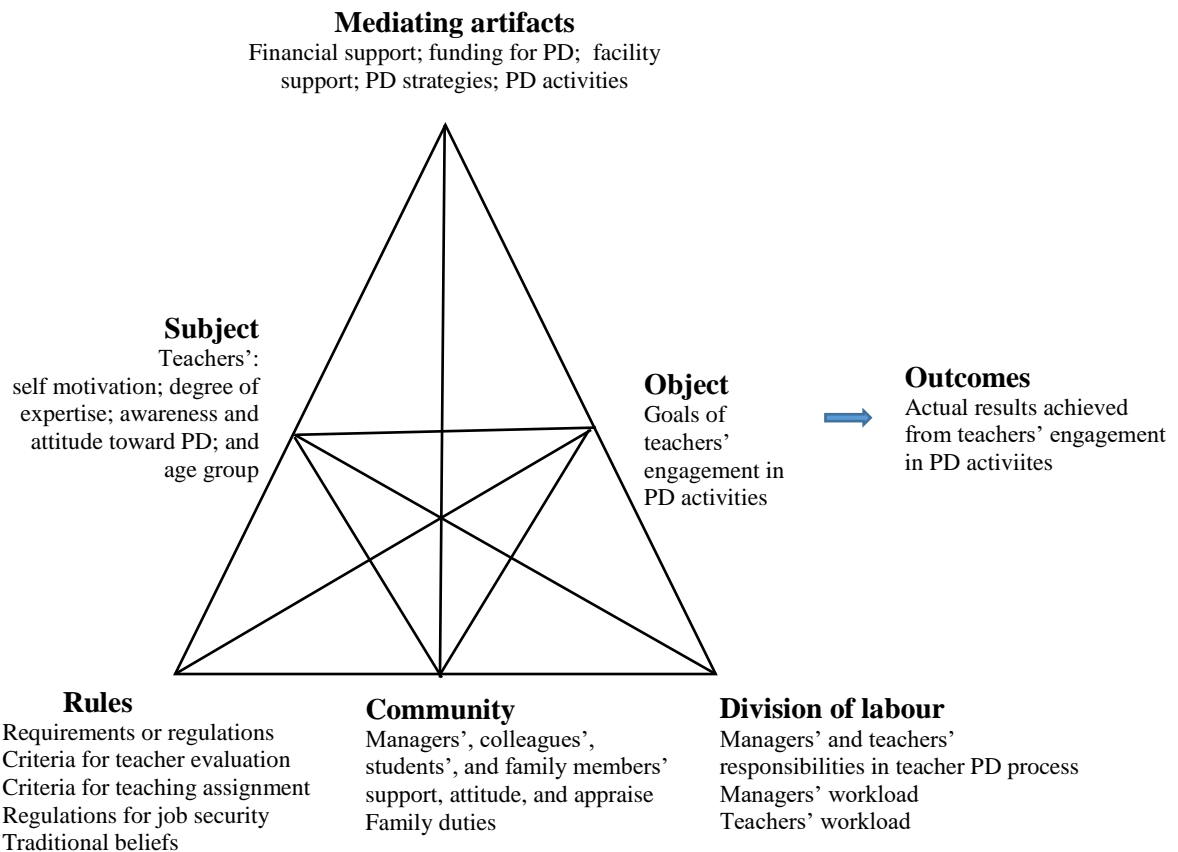


Figure 8.2: Factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities in the Vietnamese HE context

This section focuses on further analysis and discussion of barriers and enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities to better understand the roles of different stakeholders in teachers' engagement in PD.

### 8.3.1. Barriers—similarities and differences between teachers' and managers' perspectives

As discussed in Chapter 7, teachers and managers shared opinions about two key hindering factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities: teachers' excessive workload and inadequate financial support. Both sets of stakeholders also indicated other teacher-related deterrents, which include but are not limited to age hindrance, family hindrance, and teachers' limited access to PD information.

Besides the similarities regarding barriers to teachers' engagement in PD activities, there are differences between teachers' and managers' opinions on this issue.

#### Teachers' perspectives

In addition to shared opinions with managers about some hindering factors, a majority of teachers also considered other factors, notably lack of facilities, difficulty in accessing the research literature, late issue of regulations, and poor quality of PD activities, as barriers to their engagement in PD activities.

Lack of facilities and lack of support for teachers to get access to reading materials in the literature can be seen as significant inhibitors to teachers' learning and doing research. The materials which are available on the internet are not enough for teachers to do research, but those are all they can have because the institution does not provide them with the right to have access to any research articles. No previous studies have viewed a lack of facilities and support for

teachers' access to reading materials as a barrier to teachers' learning and doing research.

However, in the context of Vietnamese HE, doing research or writing articles is difficult and challenging, especially in those institutions where EFL teachers are provided with no access to research articles. This finding also shows an internal contradiction between the institution's goal of enhancing teachers' capability of researching, as the participating managers stated, and the fact that the institution does not offer teachers access to those research materials that are indispensable for their study.

Although regulations and requirements strongly enhance teachers' awareness of PD and motivate them to engage in PD activities, as mentioned in section 7.2, regulations issued too late can adversely influence teachers' engagement in PD activities. The teachers clearly explained that a definite issue was delayed teacher evaluation criteria, which include teachers' engagement in PD activities such as doing research, writing journal articles, or joining in teaching festivals, as it was occurring too late to be useful. Criteria for teacher evaluation are seen as a guideline showing teachers the requirements for good and excellent teaching staff (Liu et al., 2014; Rendos, 2005), so teachers will be motivated to engage in professional learning to satisfy those demands (Duke & Stiggins, 1990). Arguably, the criteria can motivate teachers to engage in PD activities if they have been advised about those criteria in advance (Duke & Stiggins, 1990). However, the teachers in this study could not design their PD plan based on the criteria because these were issued at the end of the academic year, only about one month before the annual teacher evaluation meeting. Moreover, such delay can discourage teachers' participation in PD activities because, when teachers are not sure whether or not their participation in PD activities will be assessed and evaluated in the next year, they will become indifferent to those activities

(Teachers 2, 9, 15). According to Tran (2016), it is essential for leaders to provide timely directions and support for lecturers' PD activities in order to enhance teachers' engagement.

In addition, teachers discussed the negative impact of poor quality PD on their engagement in other PD activities. Due to inadequate financial support, the teachers tended to seek free conferences or workshops organized within the institution or in their city. However, many of those PD events were not practical and relevant to teachers' expectations, and they found them a waste of time, gradually losing their belief and interest in attending similar PD events. Similarly, some researchers (Drage, 2010; Kosgei, 2015; Sinyangwe et al., 2016) argue that irrelevant or poor-quality PD activities discourage teachers from engaging in PD.

#### Managers' perspectives

Whilst acknowledging the teacher perspectives, managers also viewed their own work overload and lack of PD planning time as possible deterrents to teachers' participation in PD activities, as well as additional teacher-related factors such as teachers' poor awareness of PD and teachers' inadequate expertise.

Managers were well aware of the significance of PD, but they were working hard to control the faculty as a whole, especially dealing with new issues emerging from the implementation of educational reform in English teaching and learning. Educational innovation brings new roles and duties to both teachers and administrators (Guskey, 2000), and implementing Project 2020 in the context of their institution required significant efforts from managers as institutional policymakers, given that it was the first comprehensive educational reform in foreign languages in Vietnam. The managers in this study also complained that a lack of human resources prevented them from spending enough time developing plans for teacher PD and firmly

supporting teachers with necessary guidance or encouraging and pushing teachers to engage in PD activities. This finding is entirely new in comparison with findings of previous studies, which mainly discuss the work overload of teachers as an inhibitor to teacher PD, and no study has so far revealed the work overload of managers as a barrier. In the context of Vietnamese HE, when leaders are regarded as the “thinkers” or “decision-makers”, and teachers as the “doers” or “decision implementers” (Vietnamese Government, 1998; Truong, 2013; Truong et al., 2017), the role of managers in PD is highly significant. This explains why a lack of administrators in charge of PD is seen as a deterrent to enhancing PD.

From the managers’ perspective, teachers’ poor awareness and competence is another factor that can create barriers to their engagement in PD activities. Teachers may not put great effort into professional learning because of their limited expertise and their lack of vision about the beneficial impact of PD on ‘positive change for them (Tran, 2016). The teachers in this study did not acknowledge the good intention of managers to gradually guide their PD process and build up their good habits in on-going professional learning via PD regulations. On the contrary, the teachers negatively perceived those regulations as stressful obligations. Consequently, the result of teachers’ engagement in PD could not be optimised. The finding of this study lends support to the finding of Tran’s (2016) study in which the academic leaders believed in the contribution of lecturers’ beliefs, awareness, and competence to ‘their poor vision of PD significance, which considerably hindered their PD.

In order to completely answer the question of the main deterrents to teachers’ engagement in PD in the Vietnamese HE context—teachers’ reluctance or structural barriers—further investigation is necessary. However, it is still worth looking at some evidence from this study related to this issue. The findings show that teachers have to follow the regulations developed by managers

because of the top-down leadership style. Specifically, teachers' workload is set by managers; financial support for teacher PD and payment policies are mainly decided by managers; and teachers are required to follow many other top-down requirements and directives, and are expected to overcome any difficulties in meeting the requirements. As a result, teachers are caught in the dilemma of earning a living and looking after their family or having time to participate in professional learning. Notably, it is more challenging for those teachers who have just started their teaching careers with a low salary level (Pham, 2001; Thu Huong, 2018). Such teachers have to teach extra hours for income to support their families, but then they have no time to follow the policy of working 1760 hours a year, fulfill the requirement of doing research (MOET, 2008) and also participate in PD activities (Le, 2018). Although the teachers in this study could sometimes receive approval to reduce their teaching load to engage in PD activities, their income would accordingly be decreased. As a result, teachers would again face difficulty in choosing time for PD or money for their family. Arguably, teachers are not only responsible for their teaching career, but also for their personal life with their family, and they are in definite need of institutional support to complete their duties in both their professional life and personal life.

In summary, while teachers perceived structural factors (work overload, inadequate financial support, lack of facility support, or late issue of regulations) as the most influential barriers to their engagement in professional learning, managers included not only inadequate financial support but also a number of factors related to teachers themselves (teachers' poor awareness and expertise, age hindrance, teachers' limited knowledge of doing research and limited access to PD information) as significant hindrances. Managers in this study considered that teachers played the most crucial role in their PD process and that if their participation in PD activities is limited,

it is because of the teachers themselves. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Tran (2016), showing that academic leaders considered lecturers' beliefs, limited awareness and competence as major factors hindering lecturers' engagement in PD activities, but lecturers referred more to contextual barriers such as time constraints, workload, and policies.

Teachers' perception of structural factors as the biggest hindrance to PD participation is related to the fact that they are obliged to follow their managers' imperatives. Put differently, it can be implicitly interpreted that there is no space for teachers' agency in their decisions on both their teaching-related tasks and PD, with teachers carrying these out because of external forces. The following section can provide a better understanding of agency in relation to factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities through the analysis of enabling factors and how they relate to motivation.

### 8.3.2. Enabling factors—types of motivation

In this section, enablers to teachers' engagement in PD activities are categorised and explained in the light of self-determination theory (SDT) (see Table 8.2).

*Table 8.2: Categories of enabling factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities in the light of Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

Enabling factors		Level of self-determination
<b>Extrinsic motivation</b>	<b>Types of extrinsic motivation</b>	
Obligatory requirements or regulations	External regulation	The least autonomous/ self-determined form of extrinsic motivation
Satisfying institutional criteria for teacher evaluation		
Satisfying faculty criteria for assigning teaching job		

Enabling factors	Level of self-determination	
Encouraging policies (awards, incentives)		
Higher payment rate		
Managers' recognition		
Students' good evaluation	Introjected regulation	Still low level of self-determination, quite controlling and external
Colleagues' good evaluation		
Financial support	Identified regulation	Exercises a moderate level of self-determination, acknowledging the significance of the activity
PD strategies/plans		
Availability of PD activities		
Other support (from managers, colleagues)		
Fulfilling personal goals (i.e. scholarship requirement)	Integrated regulation	The most advanced form of extrinsic motivation; fully self-determined
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>		
Teachers' interest in learning (e.g. learning for its own sake, learning in order to build personal confidence), meeting people and networking.		Fully self-determined, for interest or self-development

As illustrated in Table 8.2, the enabling factors identified in Chapter 6 can be viewed as related to either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. To recap from Chapter 4, intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's engagement in a task for their own pleasure or satisfaction, and not because of rewards, threats, or control (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Deci et al., 1991). Extrinsic motivation refers to an individual's engagement in an activity because of external forces such as monetary rewards, praise, and punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985b). It involves four types of regulation – external, introjected, identified and integrated – progressing respectively from minimal self-

determination to full self-determination (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vallerand et al., 1993).

#### Teachers' engagement in PD activities – responses to external forces

As can be seen from Table 8.2, most of the enabling factors identified by teachers and reported in Chapter 6 refer to extrinsic motivation, with each type of regulation being clearly represented, although not with equal distribution.

External regulation, the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, is the type which most strongly influences teachers' engagement in PD activities. When teachers are motivated by external regulation, they engage in PD activities to get external rewards or avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2002). In this study, teachers may not want to engage in some PD activities such as taking IELTS tests, doing research, writing articles, or participating in teaching festivals, but they have to do so to avoid punishment. More specifically, if teachers do not engage in those PD activities or do not satisfy the English standard requirement, they will be evaluated as underperforming. Consequently, they may be assigned to teach classes with a low payment rate or face difficulty in having their contracts renewed. In addition, teachers reported engaging in PD activities to receive praise from their managers or to achieve monetary awards such as higher payment rates, salary increases, or free overseas tours. The managers in this study confirmed that teachers would be more interested in professional learning when they saw some benefits such as monetary support, or the title of excellent teacher of the year, which can help them to have their salary increased earlier than usual. This finding lends support to previous studies (Birman et al., 2000; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Liu et al., 2014; Lohman, 2006; Rendos, 2005; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004) which confirmed the significance of funding or monetary reward or incentives in encouraging and facilitating teachers' engagement in PD. The

study also lends support to other studies (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Wan & Lam, 2010; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009) whose findings reveal that teachers become motivated to engage in PD activities if their PD participation is seen as a criterion for salary increases. Unlike the finding by Rendos (2005) that teacher evaluation was viewed as only a slight influence on motivating teachers to engage in PD, the present study shows that institutional rules, requirements, and regulations can, in fact, be viewed as strong motivators to teachers' engagement in PD activities.

Most teachers also participated in PD activities to improve their expertise to avoid feelings of shame in front of their colleagues or students. In the light of SDT, when teachers engage in PD activities in order to avoid feelings of shame or embarrassment or to obtain the approval of other people, they can be said to have introjected regulation, which is still very largely controlled by external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Teachers in this study would like to have the confidence to contribute their ideas to academic discussion with their colleagues or be evaluated as performing well at the end-of-year meeting. Thus, they do not have to suffer from the feeling of being less worthy than their colleagues, and more importantly, they can enjoy being highly valued by surrounding people. As part of introjected regulation, teachers are also motivated to enhance their teaching practice 'in an attempt to save face in front of their students and be highly appreciated by their students.

With slightly more involvement of self-determination associated with the external enablers, teachers were motivated to participate by financial support, time support, availability of PD activities and PD strategies, and informative communications by managers and colleagues about PD opportunities and their benefits. Such communications led teachers to identify the significance of PD in improving their professionalism. With this identification and being

supported with money and time, teachers can have a sense of choice and desire to engage in PD activities such as workshops and conferences (Deci et al., 1991; Ngo, 2015). Teachers' engagement in PD, therefore, becomes more autonomous or self-determined. In other words, they strive to complete their PD tasks based on identified regulation, which stems from recognition of the significance of PD and is a moderately autonomous form of extrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1991).

The final extrinsic motivation which contributes to teachers' engagement in PD activities is integrated regulation, the most advanced form of extrinsic motivation, integrating the regulatory process and the individual's coherent sense of self (Deci et al., 1991). In this study, teachers decided to engage in PD activities like improving English proficiency, doing research, or writing journal articles because those activities supported them to fulfill the requirement for their scholarship application. As shared by both teachers and managers, those teachers who intended to apply for scholarships to study further abroad became autonomous in professional learning, even giving it a priority and spending most of their time learning. Although with integrated regulation, teachers' engagement in PD activities is fully self-determined, it is still different from intrinsic motivation, which is related to interest in the activity itself, and in this study occurs as an interest in learning for its own sake, as well as socializing and networking.

#### Teachers' engagement in PD activities – responses to teachers' motivation

Teachers' intrinsic motivation is influential in their engagement in PD activities in this study, confirming previous studies indicating that one of the major factors motivating teachers' engagement in PD is their desire to learn and become better teachers (Guskey, 2002b; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011). The managers in the present study shared their views that many teachers participated in professional learning because of their interests and passion. The more the teachers

engaged in PD activities, the more motivated they became towards PD. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Guglielmino, 2008) in which teachers take part in learning based on their commitment to lifelong learning and their interest in learning new things. From the perspective of SDT, teachers have three innate psychological needs: a need for autonomy, a need for competence, and a need for relatedness, so their engagement in PD activities to pursue their intrinsic goals such as pleasure, satisfaction or personal growth tends to satisfy these psychological needs. Moreover, in pursuit of intrinsic goals, teachers' learning and performance can be more in-depth and better (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). However, only a small number of teachers, "about one-third of teachers in the faculty," said Manager 3, keep engaging in PD activities solely because of their love for them. This is closely connected to the point made at the start of the previous section that teachers most frequently engaged in PD activities in response to external forces.

In conclusion, while it is ideal for an individual to be intrinsically motivated to undertake a task, in this study, most motivating factors for the teachers' engagement in PD are external forces.

This finding links to the fact that managers in this study believe that the most effective way to push teachers to undertake the PD process is using obligatory requirements, such as regulations for teacher evaluation, and concerns about job security or teaching assignments. Because teachers' engagement in PD activities was mainly controlled by their extrinsic motivation, they were under much stress and pressure at the beginning of their PD process. However, after participating in various PD activities and having their professional knowledge and skills improved, many teachers gradually found those activities valuable and even essential, and became increasingly autonomous in learning (see section 5.5.2 in Chapter 5 and section 6.1.2 in Chapter 6). Deci and Ryan (2002) assume that human beings are innately able to internalise

external regulation and integrate external values into an internal value system. When this internalisation process happens, teachers can become aware of the significance of engaging in PD activities and become more autonomous instead of feeling obligated to engage in required tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985b). This study offers some confirmation of that position.

### 8.3.3. Sociocultural construction of teacher agency

This section focuses on discussing the importance of teacher motivation to teacher agency and how teacher agency is mediated or restricted by contextual and structural factors in order to understand teacher agency in engaging in PD activities in the light of CHAT.

As previously discussed in section 8.3.2, teachers' motivation plays a significant role in teacher agency to engage in PD activity, and different types of motivation contribute to different levels of teacher agency. In this study, there was a minority of teachers, accounting for about one-third of teachers in the faculty, who engaged in PD activities clearly because of intrinsic motivation such as their interests or passion (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004), resulting in in-depth learning. However, most of the participating teachers in this study were extrinsically motivated to engage in PD activities by contextual and structural factors. The participating managers developed and adopted the regulations regarding PD to initially force teachers to engage in PD activities. According to Le (2019b), mandated PD is more likely to get teachers involved only in surface learning rather than get them engaged for transformative practice, which results from deep learning. However, the managers in this study emphasized that they did not consider mandated PD as the answer to the question of how to fully engage teachers in PD activities, but as a stepping stone in developing a new learning habit for teachers. To be more explicit, the mandated policies were carried out with the hidden objective that teachers' motivation for PD would be gradually developed when they found the PD

activities, which they were required to participate in, valuable for improving their professional knowledge and skills. The managers shared that this objective was primarily achieved, and many teachers started showing their own interest and desire for professional learning.

While teacher agency can be supported by teachers' motivation, it is also mediated or restricted by a number of contextual and structural factors, as made clear through the CHAT analysis.

These include rules (i.e. payment regulations), surrounding community (i.e. family members and managers), mediating artifacts (i.e. financial support, facility support, and time support), and division of labour (i.e. teachers' workload). Understandably, it is impossible for teachers to realise their desire for learning when they cannot manage time for PD due to their excessive workload both at home and at work (Badri et al., 2016; Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Knight, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2000, 2003, 2006; Nabhani et al., 2014; Pham, 2001; Tran, 2016). Teachers' limited budget for PD is another factor constraining their engagement in PD (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Drage, 2010; Kosgei, 2015; Lohman, 2000, 2005; Lohman & Woolf, 2001; Nabhani et al., 2014; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004, Sinyangwe et al., 2016; Tran, 2016). The teachers in this study indicated that they could not participate in many interesting and beneficial PD activities, such as workshops or conferences, because they were not financially supported by the institution or the financial support was inadequate. Moreover, teachers' salaries were not high enough for them to support both their family and their PD (Pham, 2001; Thu Huong, 2018). In short, such contextual and structural factors significantly influenced teachers' choices in engaging in PD activities.

Arguably, the managers' intention to develop teachers' motivation for PD might be considered contradictory to their inadequate support for teacher PD, resulting in the teacher agency for PD being limited. Therefore, in order to encourage teachers to exercise their agency in professional

learning, it is essential for their managers, as the policymakers, to provide them with more support in terms of both finance and time. In this way, teachers will find it much easier to make a choice about fully engaging in PD activities and in-depth learning, and finding the most effective way to bring the knowledge and skills that they gain from PD activities into their actual teaching classes.

#### 8.4. Limitations of the study

The findings and recommendations of this study must be read in light of several inevitable limitations, which include but are not limited to the research design, the choice of participants, and the research methodology.

First, this present study adopted a case study approach and selected a multidisciplinary university as the research site and EFL teachers and faculty and institutional managers at this institution as the participants. In other words, the scope is limited. Although the number of participants is still big enough for teacher questionnaires (n=133), teacher focus groups (n=35) and manager individual interviews (n=4), I acknowledge that each institution is unique regarding its working conditions, internal policies, and working cultures. It should not be assumed that these EFL teachers and managers can represent a broader population of Vietnamese tertiary teachers and managers. Therefore, the findings of the present research should not be generalised for EFL teachers from other HE institutions.

Second, this study focuses on teacher PD at the HE level, which is becoming more autonomous in the Vietnamese education system. Each institution will have its own plan and strategies for its teacher development and institutional development as a whole. Consequently, structural and

contextual factors impacting EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities in the participating institution may be different from those in other institutions, or other education training levels.

Third, using the CHAT framework was useful for analysing and presenting both enablers and barriers to EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities from various components in an activity system. However, the discussion of this study on the influencing level of each factor was based only on the number of participants opting for it, not on the participants' own judgment and ordering. In addition, the dynamic interaction of the factors impacting teachers' engagement in PD activities was not deeply investigated. The influential level of each factor and the interaction of the factors are essential for managers and policymakers to set their priorities when developing teacher PD policies and planning for teacher PD. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how those factors interact with each other and how they influence teacher PD to more clearly inform policymakers and managers of better ways of enhancing the quality of teacher PD.

## 8.5. Contributions of the study

Despite the three limitations just mentioned, this research project makes contributions both to knowledge and to practice, not just in the context of Vietnam and EFL, but for teacher PD more generally.

### Contribution to practice

This research project is significant for enhancing the teacher PD process in the Vietnamese HE context regarding both the quality of PD programs and activities and teachers' engagement in PD. It offers important implications and recommendations, which may help both teachers and managers to improve their roles in the teacher PD process.

In particular, in order to enhance the quality of teacher PD activities, it is essential for managers to understand teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards PD, the PD activities currently engaged in, and their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of those activities. Although teachers in this study agreed that workshops, one of the most common PD activities, are beneficial to them, many teachers complained that they are not long enough for the experts or speakers to thoroughly cover the critical content and for teachers to acquire knowledge and practice in their context with follow-up support. The finding implies that sufficient time for teachers to deepen their understanding and apply the knowledge gained in their real contexts is extremely important (Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003a), and should be taken into consideration when planning teacher PD. Moreover, while effective PD should focus on relevant and practical content, as well as supporting teachers to link theory to practice using their prior knowledge and experience, and being easy to implement in their own context (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Loucks-Horsley et al., 2009; Piggot-Irvine, 2006), teachers in this study indicated that some workshops did not satisfy their expectations because their contents were irrelevant or unfeasible in the teachers' own contexts. In short, the findings of the current situation of teacher PD in the present research can be viewed as a guide for PD planners and PD activity organizers to minimize the drawbacks and optimise the benefits of PD to teachers.

In addition, this study's findings regarding factors motivating and hindering teachers' engagement in PD activities can provide managers with a more overarching picture of factors positively and negatively impacting 'teachers' PD participation from both teachers' and managers' perspectives. Notably, the discrepancies between these two groups' opinions on hindering factors greatly support managers to consider their PD plans and PD regulations and policies from the teachers' perspective to make them more appropriate and effective. Due to the

influence of Vietnamese top-down leadership, in which managers are regarded as the decision-makers, and teachers are the decision implementers or followers (Truong, 2013), managers might assume that their top-down policies would work. However, although the top-down policies have achieved some positive results, teachers obliged to engage in PD activities felt stressed even when they found PD essential and beneficial. Therefore, a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches can facilitate managers and policymakers to better guarantee the success of the development and implementation of initiatives (Le, 2019b; Wedell, 2009). In the context of teacher PD, if managers understand teachers' desires and difficulties or involve teachers in discussing and developing PD regulations and policies, they can develop more practical and feasible PD policies that represent both institutional objects and teachers' needs and goals. Those policies, in turn, are more likely to foster teachers' autonomy in professional learning and enhance teachers' engagement in PD.

To the best of my knowledge, this research is the only empirical study that views motivating factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities in the Vietnamese HE context in the light of self-determination theory. The findings show that most motivating factors are related to different kinds of extrinsic motivation, as outlined in SDT (external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation). Although external regulation did force teachers to engage in PD activities, this kind of motivation considerably stressed teachers, which led to poor teacher wellbeing, and teachers may not have achieved the expected outcomes from their PD. When teachers exercise their full self-determination and become voluntarily engaged in their PD, they are more likely to exhibit high levels of commitment to learning and attain the expected goals (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Therefore, in order to enhance teachers' PD, managers should

support teachers to exercise a moderate level of self-determination by identified regulation or a full level of self-determination by integrated regulation when engaging in PD activities.

For EFL teachers, the findings of this study enable them to have a comprehensive overview of PD in the Vietnamese HE context from not only the teachers' perspective but also the managers' perspective. The findings of differences between teachers' and managers' opinions about barriers to teacher PD and the different goals of participating in and planning for teacher PD will help teachers to understand more about the issues related to their PD process. By acknowledging those differences, teachers can be more active in expressing their ideas and expectations about supporting policies instead of merely following all directives from authorities. Although Vietnamese leadership culture is top-down, and it is obligatory for teachers to comply with the directives of leaders, teachers still have the right to propose different ideas (Vietnamese Government, 1998). Maybe not many people have exercised that right because they are afraid of conflict with their leaders, which can lead to problems for them at work (Truong, 2013), or simply because their ideas are always rejected or disregarded (Lohman, 2000). However, if teachers do not communicate their ideas and desires to their authorities, it is more difficult for managers to understand their teachers' expectations and difficulties. To sum up, it is necessary for teachers to actively contribute their ideas on the development of teacher PD regulations and policies, and this study can provide them with some relevant information about their managers' perspective towards factors impacting teacher PD.

### Contribution to knowledge

As concluded in Tran's (2016) study, it is necessary to conduct more research that investigates tertiary EFL teachers' attitudes toward PD and their actions to realise their duties regarding PD. The present study's findings clearly illustrate the attitudes of EFL teachers at a multidisciplinary

university in the North of Vietnam towards PD and what they have done to carry out their PD responsibilities. In particular, most teachers in this study showed a positive attitude towards, and beliefs in, the significance of PD to their teaching careers. Teachers have participated in PD activities for several key objectives which cover both their responses to obligatory requirements, and their personal goals. As a result, several primary outcomes have been reached, notably teachers' increasing awareness of PD, a better attitude at work, more effective teaching practice, better English proficiency level, and improvement of students' learning outcomes.

In addition, because teacher PD is a newly emerging field in Vietnam, there are only a few empirical studies in this area, and little is known about motivating and hindering factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities. To the best of my knowledge, there is no empirical study that mainly focuses on investigating both enablers and barriers to teachers' PD participation from both EFL teachers and managers in the Vietnamese HE context. This study also indicated the differences and similarities between teachers' goals for their PD engagement and managers' goals for planning teacher PD. Therefore, this research has made a significant contribution to the literature in this area. The findings of this study will advise managers and policymakers about teachers' goals, desires, expectations, and difficulties in engaging in professional learning. Based on the findings on motivating factors to teachers' engagement in PD activities, it is clear that rules, regulations, and requirements are the most influential factors operating on teachers' PD participation. However, both teachers and managers viewed some regulations and requirements as inappropriate because they were not flexible enough or issued too late to be useful, or not systematic. As a result, those regulations or requirements had a negative impact on teacher PD.

Furthermore, both participating groups indicated that teachers' engagement was also strongly influenced by social, contextual, and cultural factors, which are mainly related to their

community, notably the influence of students', colleagues', and family members' attitudes towards and beliefs in a teaching career and the teacher PD process. So, the present study will facilitate these significant people to find effective ways, including appreciation, recognition and supportive attitudes, to encourage teachers to engage in PD to improve their expertise and teaching practice, which ultimately enhance students' learning outcomes.

Despite shared opinions on the majority of factors motivating teachers' PD engagement, managers and EFL teachers showed different opinions regarding the barriers. While teachers said they struggled more with structural factors (notably excessive workload and time constraints), managers viewed teacher-related factors (teachers' poor expertise, limited access to PD information, poor background knowledge of doing research) as significant hindrances to their engagement in PD. Understandably, managers and EFL teachers have different ideas because they hold different positions and have different duties at work. However, the findings of this study enable managers to understand more about teachers' difficulties, which are related to structural factors. As a result, managers will be informed of a better way to develop appropriate supporting policies that are more concerned with teachers' wellbeing instead of putting more pressure on their shoulders through external regulations such as awards, punishment, or fears about job security. These external forces may cause teachers stress and tiredness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

## 8.6. Recommendations for further research

Workshops are considered by authorities as the main way to train teachers, and teachers in this study showed an interest in attending workshops to gain and update their knowledge from experts in the field. However, teachers also complained about the short duration for the contents

to be properly delivered, the impractical contents which sound good in theory but cannot be applied in teachers' actual contexts, and a lack of follow-up support for application in teaching contexts. Although many previous researchers have highlighted that one-off workshops have no benefit to teachers' improvement (Braden, Huai, White, & Elliott, 2005; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Germuth & Evalworks, 2018; Linn et al., 2010; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002), workshops seem to be still appropriate in the Vietnamese HE context. However, further research needs to be conducted on how to effectively organize such workshops to optimise their benefits to teachers.

The findings of this study also indicated that a limited number of teachers conducted an inquiry or wrote journal articles and other publications which are considered as one of the most significant roles of university lecturers to improve their expertise and develop their identity (Le, 2018; Tran, 2016). Also, the lack of support regarding access to the literature was mentioned as a barrier to teachers' engagement in PD activities as it can negatively influence teachers' engagement in doing research and publishing their research results. However, further research should investigate the factors that influence teachers' research and how to enhance teachers' research capacity.

## 8.7. Concluding remarks

Conducting this thesis has provided me with valuable experience to learn how to enhance teacher PD and how to make teacher PD effective from the position of an educational manager. The main objective of this study was to identify factors influencing teachers' engagement in PD activities. In order to deeply understand factors motivating or hindering teacher PD, an overarching picture of the current situation of PD for EFL teachers was also captured.

First, it is clear that teachers' goals for PD activities are not completely the same as managers' goals for planning teacher PD. While teachers' goals for engaging in PD activities are mainly related to their personal goals (e.g. gaining financial benefits, applying for scholarship) and their professional improvement, which consequently help to enhance their students' learning and achievement, the managers' goals for planning teacher PD highlight not only teachers' and students' improvement but also faculty and institutional development. Fruitful results of teacher PD activities could not be achieved if they do not satisfy teachers' expectations. Therefore, it is crucial for managers to consider teachers' goals when planning teacher PD, in addition to their separate goals for the preparation and implementation of faculty and institutional plans.

Second, the common PD activities recently undertaken by EFL teachers were mostly mandatory, and teachers were put under enormous pressure to participate in PD to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Factors motivating teachers' engagement in PD activities mostly referred to external forces such as financial benefits, mandatory requirements or regulations, appreciations of managers, colleagues, and students. In addition, amongst various deterrents, factors that hindered teacher PD the most were structural and contextual: inadequate financial support and teachers' work overload which leads to a lack of time for PD. This suggests that managers, first and foremost, need to productively exercise their role as policy makers, teacher PD planners, and teacher PD facilitators in order to enhance teacher PD and make teacher PD effective. In particular, discussing the specific goals of PD and critically assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of their PD plans must be the starting point of all planning activities (Guskey, 2000). Moreover, it is essential for managers to facilitate the teacher PD process by reducing teachers' workload and making teacher PD a feasible process in which teachers can balance their time for both teaching tasks and PD engagement.

Last but not least, teacher PD will be more successful when teachers become self-determined or autonomous and voluntarily participate in PD activities. Ideally, teachers would engage in PD activities because of their intrinsic motivation drawing on a full level of self-determination. However, it is much more likely for teachers to participate in PD activities due to extrinsic motivation. Therefore, managers need to acknowledge the significance of the two kinds of extrinsic motivation that involve most self-determination (identified regulation, and integrated regulation) rather than relying on external regulation and introjected regulation (e.g. monetary rewards, praise, and punishment). Identified regulation supports teachers to identify the importance of PD in their professional improvement, leading to an increasing self-determination level in PD participation. Integrated regulation integrates the regulatory process and the individual's coherent sense of self, resulting in teachers' more nearly complete autonomy for participating PD.

In all, it is advisable for educational managers to acknowledge that teachers and managers have different goals for teacher PD and different perspectives on factors motivating and hindering teachers' engagement in PD activities. Therefore, getting teachers involved in contributing ideas to develop policies related to teacher PD should be seriously considered in order to guarantee the fruitful results of the teacher PD process.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview protocols

#### Appendix A1: Teacher focus group protocol in English and Vietnamese

##### **EFL TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

**Fieldwork stage:** Teacher focus group session

**Type of interview:** Semi-structured

**Site/ Venue:**

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Language used:** Vietnamese

##### **Interview questions:**

1. What do you think about the role of professional development in teachers' improvement in professional practice?
2. What professional development activities have you undertaken?
  - What do you like/ what don't you like about those activities? Why?
3. Have you engaged in any structured and formalized professional development activities? (seminars, workshops, online programs, peer observations, professional learning communities, coaching or mentoring, university courses, conferences, and the like)
  - If yes, describe your experience
  - How did your institution and faculty facilitate those structured P.D activities?
4. How have professional development activities impacted your development and teaching practice?
5. Are there any things that need to be improved, so that professional development activities can enhance teachers' development?
6. What professional development activities are the most effective in the Vietnamese university context? Why?
7. What factors affect the effectiveness of English teachers' professional development in university context?

8. What are the barriers and facilitators to English teachers' professional development? What factors do you think are the most influential in English teachers' professional development?
9. What factors can make English teachers' professional development effective?
10. What factors can promote/ hinder teachers' engagement in professional development?
11. How could the impact of professional development on teachers' teaching practice be increased?
12. What should the institution and the Faculty of Foreign Language do to encourage English teachers to engage in professional development?
13. What should the institution/ faculty do to enhance teacher professional development/ facilitate teachers to apply new knowledge in teaching?

### **EFL TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

**Fieldwork stage:** Teacher focus group session

**Type of interview:** Semi-structured

**Site/ Venue:**

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Language used:** Vietnamese

**Interview questions:**

1. Bạn đánh giá thế nào về tầm quan trọng của công tác bồi dưỡng đối với việc nâng cao năng lực giảng dạy của giáo viên?
2. What professional development activities have you undertaken? Bạn đã từng tham gia hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên nào?
  - Bạn thích/không thích điều gì về các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên đó? Tại sao?
3. Have you engaged in any structured and formalized professional development activities? Bạn đã tham gia vào chương trình bồi dưỡng giáo viên hay hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên nào được triển khai tổ chức chính thức chưa? (Hội thảo, hội nghị, chương trình bồi dưỡng giáo viên trực tuyến, dự giờ chéo, cộng đồng bồi dưỡng giáo viên, hướng dẫn hay đào tạo giáo viên khác, các khóa học trong trường đại học, vv)
  - Nếu có, hãy chia sẻ về kinh nghiệm tham gia của bạn
  - Trường/khoa bạn đã hỗ trợ các hoạt động bồi dưỡng đó như thế nào?
4. Các hoạt động bồi dưỡng đã ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến quá trình phát triển của bạn cũng như việc giảng dạy của bạn?
5. Cần phải cải tiến vấn đề gì không để các hoạt động bồi dưỡng có thể giúp giáo viên phát triển hơn?

6. Theo bạn, hoạt động bồi dưỡng nào là hiệu quả nhất trong môi trường các trường đại học ở Việt Nam? Tại sao?
7. Những yếu tố nào ảnh hưởng đến tính hiệu quả của công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên ở môi trường đại học?
8. Những yếu tố nào thúc đẩy/ gây cản trở đến công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên? Theo bạn yếu tố nào là có tầm ảnh hưởng lớn nhất đến công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên tiếng Anh
9. Những yếu tố nào sẽ làm cho công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên tiếng Anh hiệu quả hơn?
10. Yếu tố nào sẽ khuyến khích/ cản trở giáo viên tiếng Anh tham gia vào công tác bồi dưỡng?
11. Làm thế nào để tăng cường mức độ ảnh hưởng của công tác bồi dưỡng với công tác giảng dạy của giáo viên?
12. Trường và khoa nên làm gì để khuyến khích giáo viên tiếng Anh tích cực tham gia vào công tác bồi dưỡng?
13. Trường/ khoa nên làm gì để tăng cường công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên/ hỗ trợ giáo viên áp dụng kiến thức học được vào thực tế giảng dạy?

### **Manager interview**

**Fieldwork stage:** Manager interview session

**Type of interview:** Semi-structured

**Site/ Venue:**

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Language used:** Vietnamese

#### **Interview questions:**

1. What do you think about the role of professional development in improving teachers' professional practice?
2. Does the institution/ faculty have any policy or support for teacher professional development? If yes, how has the institution/faculty developed these policies?
3. Does the institution have any professional development plans?

#### **If yes**

- How does/do this (these) plan(s) align with the institution's/faculty's objectives?
- How long does it take to finish this (these) plan(s) once they are put into practice?
- And what are the expected results of this (these) plan(s) implementation?

#### **If no**

- What do your English teachers do for professional development?
  - How often do English teacher professional development activities take place?
  - Can you please name any professional development activities that happen in your institution?
  - What activities do you acknowledge as the most effective ones? What factors make those activities effective?
4. What do the institutional professional development documents focus on?/ What are the main objectives of the institutional professional development documents?

5. How often does the institution organize structured professional development activities for teachers?
6. What does the institution do to encourage teachers to participate in professional development?
7. To what extent does professional development help teachers improve their teaching practice?
8. To what extent do teachers apply new knowledge in their real teaching practice?
9. What are the barriers and facilitators to English teachers' professional development? What factors do you think are the most influential in English teachers' professional development?
10. How do these factors impact English teachers' engagement in professional development?
11. What should be done to encourage English teachers to undertake professional development?
12. What should the institution/ faculty do to enhance teacher professional development/ help teachers to apply new knowledge in teaching?
13. What does the faculty/ institution plan to do to improve English teacher professional development? (professional development activities? Teachers' engagement in professional development? Teachers' application of new knowledge in teaching?).

### **Manager interview**

**Fieldwork stage:** Manager interview session

**Type of interview:** Semi-structured

**Site/ Venue:**

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Language used:** Vietnamese

**Interview questions:**

1. Bạn đánh giá thế nào về tầm quan trọng của công tác bồi dưỡng đối với việc nâng cao năng lực giảng dạy của giáo viên?
2. Nhà trường/ Khoa có chính sách hay hỗ trợ nào cho công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên không? Nếu có, Nhà trường/Khoa xây dựng các chính sách này dựa trên các tiêu chí gì?
3. Trường/khoa có xây dựng kế hoạch bồi dưỡng giáo viên không?

**Nếu có**

- Các kế hoạch này gắn với mục tiêu của trường/ khoa như thế nào?
- Từ khi triển khai, cần bao nhiêu thời gian để hoàn thành các kế hoạch đó?
- Sau khi hoàn thành các kế hoạch đó, kết quả mong muốn đạt được là gì?

#### **Nếu không**

- Giáo viên tiếng Anh ở trường/ khoa thường làm gì để bồi dưỡng, phát triển chuyên môn nghiệp vụ?
  - Các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên tiếng anh diễn ra thường xuyên như thế nào?
  - Bạn có thể kể tên một vài hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên thường diễn ra trong trường/khoa bạn?
  - Hoạt động nào bạn thấy là hiệu quả nhất? Yếu tố nào làm cho các hoạt động đó hiệu quả?
4. Các tài liệu, văn bản liên quan đến công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên ở trường/khoa bạn thường tập trung vào vấn đề gì? Mục tiêu chính của các văn bản nhà trường về bồi dưỡng giáo viên là gì?
  5. Trường/khoa bạn tổ chức các khoa bồi dưỡng cho giáo viên thường xuyên như thế nào?
  6. Trường/ Khoa bạn làm gì để khuyến khích giáo viên tham gia vào công tác bồi dưỡng?
  7. Công tác bồi dưỡng đã giúp giáo viên phát triển như thế nào trong việc giảng dạy?
  8. Mức độ áp dụng các kiến thức mới học của giáo viên vào thực tế giảng dạy như thế nào?
  9. Những yếu tố nào thúc đẩy/ gây cản trở đến công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên? Theo bạn yếu tố nào là có tầm ảnh hưởng lớn nhất đến công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên tiếng Anh
  10. Những yếu tố này ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến sự tham gia của giáo viên tiếng Anh vào công tác bồi dưỡng?
  11. Trường/ khoa cần phải làm gì để khuyến khích giáo viên tham gia vào công tác bồi dưỡng?
  12. Trường/Khoa cần làm gì để hỗ trợ giáo viên áp dụng các kiến thức học được và trong thực tế giảng dạy?
  13. Trường/ khoa dự định làm gì để phát triển công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên?

## Appendix B: Questionnaire for EFL teachers in English and Vietnamese

Thank you for agreeing to complete this 10-15 minute questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises two sections. Section one asks for your demographic information. Section two includes four questions about different aspects of your professional development experiences in the university context in Vietnam. As responses will be treated confidentially, no names of individuals or the university will be used in reporting the results of this questionnaire.

### SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Read the following questions and answer them either by writing your answer in the space or ticking the appropriate box:

1. **Your gender:**  Female  Male
2. **Your age:** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **How long have you been teaching English?**  
 Less than 1 year  1-<3 years  3-5 years   
more than 5 years
4. **What did you major in during your university degree?**  
 English pedagogy  
 English linguistics  
 English translation and interpretation  
 Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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5. **Are you a tenured lecturer or a seasonal lecturer?**  
 Full-time lecturer  Sessional lecturer
6. **How many hours do you teach a week at your institution?**  
 Less than 10 hours  10-14 hours  15-20 hours  more than 20 hours

### SECTION 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

#### Question 1

**- To what extent do you think the following professional development activities are important for English teachers' development?**

**Please put a tick (✓) in the box.**

**Importance level:**

1. Not important at all
2. Relatively unimportant
3. Relatively important
4. Very important

Professional development activities	Level of importance			
	1 Not	2	3	4 Very
Gathering information about one's own teaching performance (through surveys, interviews, etc.)				
Keeping a teaching journal to reflect on own teaching				
Following research literature in the field				
Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues				
Asking for help from colleagues				
Training other teachers				
Developing new materials with colleagues				
Developing techniques and activities with colleagues				
Taking part in peer observation (mutual observation and feedback)				
Participating in lessons observed by the academic head and Faculty and University administrators				
Conducting teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems				
Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice				
Attending in-service training (workshops, seminars, etc.)				
Attending conferences and symposia in the field				
Attending professional development programs				
Writing articles for teaching journals or other publications				
<i>Other activities (please indicate below)</i>				

Optional comments on your choices:

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**Question 2**

**To what extent do you think the following factors hinder your engagement in professional development as an English teacher?**

**Please put a tick (✓) in the relevant box.**

**Level of influence:**

1. Not influential at all
2. Slightly influential
3. Influential
4. Very influential

**Factors**

**Level of influence**

	<b>1 Not</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4 Very</b>
Personal financial problems				
Excessive work load				
Lack of self-motivation				
Insufficient educational background				
Lack of communication among colleagues				
Lack of collaboration among colleagues				
Lack of institutional support for professional development				
Lack of facilities (e.g. office space, classroom facilities)				
Difficulty in accessing literature in the field in order to keep up to date				
<i>Other factors (please indicate below):</i>				

Optional comments on your choices:

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**Question 3**

**To what extent do you think the following factors promote English teachers' engagement in professional development?**

**Level of influence:**

1. Not influential at all
2. Slightly influential
3. Influential
4. Very influential

**Please put a tick (✓) in the relevant box.**

Factors	Level of influence			
	1 Not	2	3	4 Very
Self-motivation				
Communication among colleagues				
Collaboration among colleagues				
Payment for professional development activities that take place outside regular work hours				
Full or partial financial support for fees and expenses related to graduate studies				
Funding for conference or workshop fees				
Funding for travel and/or daily expenses				
Increase in salary or other pay increases				
Formal recognition or higher ratings on annual teacher evaluations				
Appreciation by colleagues, administrators and others in your workplace				
<i>Other factors (please indicate below)</i>				

Optional comments on your choices:

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#### **Question 4**

**- Which professional development activities below have you undertaken?**

**- To what extent do you think these activities have influenced your teaching practice?**

**Level of influence:**

1. Not influential at all
2. Slightly influential
3. Influential
4. Very influential

**Please put a tick (✓) in the relevant boxes.**

<b>Professional development activities</b>	<b>Undertaken?</b>		<b>Level of influence</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>1 Not</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4 Very</b>
Gathering information about my own teaching performance (through surveys, interviews, etc.)						
Keeping a teaching journal to reflect on my own teaching						
Following research literature in the field						
Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues						
Asking for help from colleagues						
Training other teachers						
Developing new materials with colleagues						
Developing techniques and activities with colleagues						
Taking part in peer observation (mutual observation and feedback)						
Participating in lessons observed by the academic head and Faculty and University administrators						
Conducting teacher-initiated inquiry for solving classroom problems						
Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice						
Attending in-service training (workshops, seminars, etc.)						

Professional development activities	Undertaken?		Level of influence			
	Yes	No	1 Not	2	3	4 Very
Attending conferences and symposia in the field						
Following professional development programs						
Writing articles for teaching journals or other publications						
<i>Other activities (please indicate below)</i>						

Optional comments on your choices:

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**Are you willing to participate in an interview to share your professional development experience?**

Yes

No

If Yes, please provide your contact details, and the researcher will contact you directly to schedule the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

## BẢNG CÂU HỎI KHẢO SÁT DÀNH CHO GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH

Cảm ơn bạn đã đồng ý tham gia trả lời các câu hỏi điều tra của chúng tôi. Phiếu điều tra này gồm 2 phần. Phần 1 sẽ hỏi các thông tin về nhân khẩu học. Phần 2 sẽ tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm bồi dưỡng giáo viên của bạn ở bậc đại học. Tất cả các thông tin cá nhân như tên, hay trường của bạn sẽ được bảo mật trong phần trình bày kết quả của nghiên cứu.

### PHẦN 1: THÔNG TIN NHÂN KHẨU HỌC

Hãy đọc kỹ các câu hỏi dưới đây, viết câu trả lời vào chỗ trống hoặc chọn đáp án đúng nhất với bạn:

1. **Giới tính của bạn:**  Nam  Nữ
  2. **Tuổi:** \_\_\_\_\_
  3. **Bạn dạy tiếng Anh được bao nhiêu lâu rồi?**  
 dưới 1 năm  từ 1 đến dưới 3 năm  từ 3 đến 5 năm  trên 5 năm
  4. **Chuyên ngành bạn học ở đại học là gì?**  
 Phương pháp giảng dạy tiếng Anh  
 Ngôn ngữ Anh  
 Biên phiên dịch tiếng Anh  
 Chuyên ngành khác (hãy ghi rõ): \_\_\_\_\_
- 
5. **Bạn là giáo viên cơ hữu hay giáo viên mời giảng?**  
 Giáo viên cơ hữu  Giáo viên mời giảng
  6. **Mỗi tuần bạn dạy bao nhiêu giờ ở trường?**  
 Dưới 10 tiếng  10 đến 14 tiếng  15 đến 20 tiếng  
 trên 20 tiếng

### PHẦN 2: KINH NGHIỆM VỀ THAM GIA BỒI DƯỠNG GIÁO VIÊN

#### Câu hỏi 1

**Bạn đánh giá như thế nào về tầm quan trọng của các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên dưới đây đối với sự phát triển chuyên môn và phương pháp giảng dạy của giáo viên?**

**Hãy đánh dấu tích (✓) vào ô trả lời tương ứng.**

**Mức độ quan trọng:**

1. Không quan trọng
2. Khá là không quan trọng
3. Khá là quan trọng
4. Rất quan trọng

Hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên	Mức độ quan trọng			
	1	2	3	4
Tự thu thập thông tin đánh giá về quá trình giảng dạy của mình (thông qua bảng hỏi, phỏng vấn, vv)				
Tự đánh giá quá trình giảng dạy của mình để tự rút kinh nghiệm. Ví dụ: ghi lại nhật ký giảng dạy				
Tìm hiểu về kiến thức chuyên môn thông qua việc đọc các đề tài nghiên cứu hoặc bài báo.				
Chia sẻ kinh nghiệm giảng dạy với đồng nghiệp				
Nhờ đồng nghiệp cùng trao đổi để tìm ra giải pháp cho các vấn đề mình gặp phải trong giảng dạy				
Bồi dưỡng giáo viên khác				
Xây dựng tài liệu mới cùng với đồng nghiệp				
Xây dựng các kỹ thuật giảng dạy và các hoạt động giảng dạy với đồng nghiệp.				
Dự giờ chéo theo cặp (dự giờ chéo và góp ý)				
Dự giờ trong dịp hội giảng, có sự dự giờ và đánh giá của các cấp quản lý tổ môn, khoa, và nhà trường				
Tham gia nghiên cứu khoa học để giải quyết các vấn đề trong giảng dạy				
Thử nghiệm ý tưởng hoặc đề xuất mới trong giảng dạy				
Tham gia các khóa đào tạo cho giáo viên (hội thảo, hội thảo chuyên đề)				
Tham gia hội nghị, và hội nghị chuyên đề trong lĩnh vực chuyên ngành của mình				
Tham gia các chương trình bồi dưỡng giáo viên				
Viết bài đăng trên các tạp chí, hoặc các tài liệu xuất bản khác				
<i>Các hoạt động khác (hãy nêu cụ thể)</i>				

Giải thích cho lựa chọn của bạn (không bắt buộc):

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## **Câu hỏi 2**

**Theo bạn, những yếu tố dưới đây gây cản trở như thế nào tới sự tham gia vào quá trình bồi dưỡng của giáo viên?**

**Hãy đánh dấu tích (✓) vào ô trả lời tương ứng.**

**Mức độ gây cản trở:**

1. Không cản trở
2. Cản trở ít
3. Cản trở
4. Cản trở nhiều

Các yếu tố	Mức độ gây cản trở			
	1	2	3	4
Vấn đề tài chính cá nhân				
Khối lượng công việc quá tải				
Thiếu động lực				
Thiếu kiến thức nền				
Thiếu sự giao lưu, chia sẻ giữa các đồng nghiệp với nhau				
Thiếu sự cộng tác giữa các đồng nghiệp				
Thiếu sự hỗ trợ của nhà trường cho các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên				
Thiếu cơ sở vật chất (ví dụ: phòng làm việc, cơ sở vật chất trên lớp học như mạng internet...)				
Khó tiếp cận các tài liệu liên quan đến chuyên ngành để có thể cập nhật kiến thức				
<i>Các yếu tố khác (hãy nêu cụ thể)</i>				

Giải thích cho lựa chọn của bạn (không bắt buộc):

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### Câu hỏi 3

Theo bạn, các yếu tố sau thúc đẩy giáo viên tham gia vào công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên như thế nào?

Hãy đánh dấu tích (✓) vào ô trả lời tương ứng.

**Mức độ thúc đẩy:**

1. Không thúc đẩy
2. Thúc đẩy ít
3. Thúc đẩy
4. Thúc đẩy nhiều

Các yếu tố	Mức độ thúc đẩy			
	1	2	3	4
Động lực cá nhân				
Giao tiếp giữa các đồng nghiệp				
Cộng tác giữa các đồng nghiệp				
Thanh toán cho các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên ngoài giờ làm việc				
Hỗ trợ toàn bộ hoặc một phần phí và chi phí cho các khóa học.				
Tài trợ cho giáo viên tham gia hội thảo hoặc hội nghị				
Tài trợ tiền đi lại và ăn ở cho giáo viên				
Tăng lương hoặc tăng mức thù lao khác				
Được công nhận và đánh giá cao trong bình xét thi đua cuối năm				
Được đồng nghiệp và lãnh đạo đánh giá cao				
Các yếu tố khác (hãy ghi cụ thể)				

Giải thích cho lựa chọn của bạn (không bắt buộc):

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#### **Câu hỏi 4**

- Bạn đã tham gia vào hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên nào dưới đây?

- Những hoạt động này ảnh hưởng/ có thể ảnh hưởng tới quá trình giảng dạy của bạn như thế nào?

Hãy đánh dấu tích (√) vào ô trả lời tương ứng.

**Mức độ ảnh hưởng:**

1. Không ảnh hưởng
2. Ảnh hưởng ít
3. Ảnh hưởng
4. Ảnh hưởng nhiều

<b>Professional development activities</b>	<b>Tham gia?</b>		<b>Mức độ ảnh hưởng</b>			
	<b>Có</b>	<b>Không</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Tự thu thập thông tin đánh giá về quá trình giảng dạy của mình (thông qua bảng hỏi, phỏng vấn, vv)						
Ghi nhật ký giảng dạy để tự đánh giá và rút kinh nghiệm						
Theo dõi cập nhật các kiến thức trong lĩnh vực chuyên môn của mình						
Chia sẻ kinh nghiệm và các vấn đề mình gặp phải với đồng nghiệp						
Nhờ đồng nghiệp giúp đỡ để tìm ra giải pháp cho các vấn đề mình gặp phải						
Bồi dưỡng giáo viên khác						
Xây dựng tài liệu mới cùng với đồng nghiệp						
Xây dựng các kỹ thuật giảng dạy và các hoạt động giảng dạy với đồng nghiệp.						
Dự giờ chéo theo cặp (dự giờ chéo và góp ý)						
Dự giờ trong các tiết dạy có sự đánh giá của các cấp quản lý tổ, khoa, và nhà trường						
Tham gia nghiên cứu khoa học để giải quyết các vấn đề trong quá trình giảng dạy						
Thử nghiệm ý tưởng hoặc đề xuất mới trong giảng dạy						

Professional development activities	Tham gia?		Mức độ ảnh hưởng			
	Có	Không	1	2	3	4
Tham gia các khóa đào tạo cho giáo viên (hội thảo, hội thảo chuyên đề)						
Tham dự hội nghị, và hội nghị chuyên đề trong lĩnh vực chuyên ngành của mình.						
Tham gia các chương trình bồi dưỡng giáo viên						
Viết bài đăng trên các tạp chí hoặc xuất bản các tài liệu khác						
<i>Các hoạt động khác (hãy nêu cụ thể)</i>						

Giải thích cho lựa chọn của bạn (không bắt buộc):

**Bạn có sẵn sàng tham gia phỏng vấn để chia sẻ thêm về kinh nghiệm và quan điểm về hoạt động bồi dưỡng chuyên môn không?**

Không

Có

**Nếu có, hãy cung cấp thông tin liên lạc của bạn, nghiên cứu sinh sẽ liên lạc trực tiếp với bạn để lên kế hoạch cụ thể cho buổi phỏng vấn.**

Họ và tên: \_\_\_\_\_

Địa chỉ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Số điện thoại di động (nếu có): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Ethics approval



THE UNIVERSITY  
of ADELAIDE

RESEARCH BRANCH  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS, COMPLIANCE  
AND INTEGRITY  
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CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

**Applicant:** Dr J Miller

**School:** School of Education

**Project Title:** The enablers and barriers to professional development  
for in-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language  
(EFL) in a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam

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The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee  
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions)

**ETHICS APPROVAL No:** H-2016-114 **App. No.:** 0000021653

**APPROVED for the period:** 01 Jun 2016 to 30 Jun 2019

Thank you for the response dated 31.5.16 and 1.6.16 to the matters raised. It is noted that this study will be conducted by Thi Thu Thuy Hoang, PhD candidate.

PROFESSOR RACHEL A. ANKENY  
Co-Convenor  
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group  
(Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions)

*RJ* DR JOANNA HOWE  
Co-Convenor  
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group  
(Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions)

## Appendix D: Participant information sheet



### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**PROJECT TITLE:** The enablers and barriers to professional development for in-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam

**HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER:** H-2016-114

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Julia Miller

**STUDENT RESEARCHER:** Thi Thu Thuy Hoang

**STUDENT'S DEGREE:** PhD

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

#### **What is the project about?**

The research aims to identify the perspectives of Vietnamese university English teachers and administrators on the factors that enable and obstruct effective professional development. In order to fulfil this aim, the researcher will investigate how university English teachers and administrators view the strengths and weaknesses of current professional development activities. The research will also discover any hindrances that prevent English teachers from engaging in professional development. Finally, based on those findings, the researcher will develop a best-practice model for professional development activities to the Vietnamese university context.

#### **Who is undertaking the project?**

This project is being conducted by Thi Thu Thuy Hoang

This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Dr Julia Miller (Principal supervisor) and Dr Michelle Picard (Co-supervisor).

#### **Why am I being invited to participate?**

Potential participants for this study will be as follows:

- English teachers from Faculty of Foreign Languages
- A Vice Rector who is responsible for teachers' professional development
- The Head of Department of Human Resource Management that makes the policies, requirements and plans for teachers' professional development
- The Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages
- A Vice Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

Participation would involve a survey questionnaire and possibly an interview.

Specifically, participants will be invited to complete a questionnaire, either online or in a paper copy. The participants may have an interview with the researcher if they consent. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with administrators and focus group (ie group) interviews with English teachers.

Interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device. The researcher wishes to ask general, personal and topic-related questions during the interview.

Individual interviews will be conducted in the administrators' offices and focus group interviews will be in a quiet and separate room in the Faculty of Foreign Languages.

#### **How much time will the project take?**

Survey questionnaires will take participants about 15-30 minutes to complete.

It takes about 30-60 minutes to conduct individual interviews with administrators and about 60-90 minutes to conduct focus group interviews with English teachers.

#### **Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?**

There are no foreseeable risks in this research other than those associated with a regular interview process.

#### **What are the benefits of the research project?**

By participating in the project, participants will have the chance to find out about some useful professional development activities that are not now popular in their context. As a result, they can fully update themselves on various ways to improve their professionals. Additionally, participants may help to recommend some measurements to mitigate any hindrances to their professional development. Consequently, a good working and learning environment for participants can in turn be developed.

Furthermore, the project aims to ascertain effective professional development activities for university English teachers and the factors that enable or obstruct English teacher professional development. These factors may help the researcher to recommend the way to make English teacher professional development effective. Although there are no direct benefits, these findings tend to be beneficial to participants.

#### **Can I withdraw from the project?**

Participation in this project will be completely *voluntary*. This means you do not have to answer any question that you don't like and you can withdraw from the study at any time. It also means that your non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your progress or your work in your institution.

#### **What will happen to my information?**

All the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidentiality during the research process (ie. recruitment, data collection, data analysis) and during the reporting of research results and publications.

We will take the following precautions: All names and identifying information will be separated from interview data. No individual or identifiable data will be reported in publications or reported to the participating institution.

All information collected will be kept confidential and anonymous. Specifically, the recordings of the focus group discussions will be protected by password, and only accessible by the researcher and her supervisors. The transcriptions of the focus group interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within the researcher's office.

All the records and materials will be retained by the researcher for five years from the date of thesis submission.

The use of the data in the future projects will only be done upon approval from the participant. Therefore, the researcher is obliged to fully inform the participant for any future use of the data. The participant may refuse to give permission for the use of his/her data in the future project, and their decision will not affect the participant's professional status at the affiliated institution.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?**

Should the participant have questions or inquiries regarding to the project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors in the following details:

<b>Name, Title</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>Email</b>
Thi Thu Thuy,	+84 983939395 (Vietnam number)	
Hoang, Ms	+61 8 8313 6064 (Australia number)	<a href="mailto:thithuthuy.hoang@adelaide.edu.au">thithuthuy.hoang@adelaide.edu.au</a>
Julia Miller, Dr.	+61 8 8313 4721	<a href="mailto:julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au">julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au</a>
Michelle Picard, Dr.	+61 8 8313 5725	<a href="mailto:michelle.picard@adelaide.edu.au">michelle.picard@adelaide.edu.au</a>

### **What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2016-114). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone +61 8 8313 6028 or by email to [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au). Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

### **If I want to participate, what do I do?**

If you would like to participate in this research project, please complete the survey online using the link enclosed in the email or collect a paper copy from the Faculty of Foreign Languages office. Online answers will be collected online. Paper surveys can be returned to a box at the Faculty of Foreign Languages office.

Completing the survey will imply consent to participate. At the end of the survey you will be invited to take part in an interview. Those who take part in interviews will be given a separate consent form to sign.

Yours faithfully,

**Ms Thi Thu Thuy Hoang**

**Dr Julia Miller**

**Dr Michelle Picard**

## BẢNG THÔNG TIN DÀNH CHO KHÁCH THỂ NGHIÊN CỨU

**Tên đề tài:** Những yếu tố thúc đẩy và yếu tố cản trở công tác bồi dưỡng giảng viên tiếng Anh tại một trường Đại học đa ngành ở Việt Nam.

**SỐ PHÊ DUYỆT CỦA HỘI ĐỒNG BẢO VỆ TÍNH NHÂN VĂN:** H-2016-114

**GIÁO VIÊN HƯỚNG DẪN CHÍNH:** Dr Julia Miller

**NGHIÊN CỨU SINH:** Thi Thu Thuy Hoang

**BẠC HỌC:** TIẾN SỸ

Gửi các anh/chị tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu,

Anh/chị được mời tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu dưới đây.

### **Đề tài nghiên cứu về vấn đề gì?**

Nghiên cứu nhằm mục đích xác định quan điểm của các cấp quản lý và giáo viên tiếng Anh ở bậc đại học về các yếu tố thúc đẩy và cản trở đến hoạt động bồi dưỡng của giảng viên tiếng Anh. Để đạt được mục đích nghiên cứu, nghiên cứu sinh sẽ tìm hiểu quan điểm của lãnh đạo các cấp và giảng viên Tiếng Anh về những điểm mạnh và điểm hạn chế của các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên hiện nay. Nghiên cứu cũng sẽ tìm ra những yếu tố cản trở giáo viên tham gia vào hoạt động bồi dưỡng. Dựa trên các kết quả trên, nghiên cứu sinh sẽ đề xuất các hoạt động bồi dưỡng có tính hiệu quả và tính thực tế cao nhất trong bối cảnh giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam.

### **Ai là người thực hiện đề tài nghiên cứu?**

Đề tài được thực hiện bởi Hoàng Thị Thu Thủy

Nghiên cứu này là cơ sở cho việc hoàn thành bậc học Tiến sĩ tại Trường Đại học Adelaide, với sự hướng dẫn của Tiến sĩ Julia Miller (Giáo viên hướng dẫn chính) và Tiến sĩ Michelle Picard (Giáo viên hướng dẫn phụ)

### **Tại sao tôi lại được mời tham gia vào nghiên cứu?**

Các khách thể tham gia nghiên cứu này bao gồm:

- Giảng viên tiếng Anh
- Phó hiệu trưởng phụ trách công tác bồi dưỡng cán bộ
- Trưởng Phòng Tổ chức Hành chính, đơn vị đề xuất các chính sách, yêu cầu và kế hoạch cụ thể cho công tác bồi dưỡng giáo viên trong trường.
- Trưởng khoa và Phó trưởng khoa Ngoại Ngữ

### **Tôi sẽ phải làm gì?**

Anh/chị sẽ tham gia hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi điều tra và có thể tham gia vào buổi phỏng vấn.

Cụ thể, anh/chị sẽ được mời hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi điều tra, hoàn thành bản mềm qua mạng hoặc bản cứng. Nếu đồng ý, anh/chị có thể tham gia buổi phỏng vấn với nghiên cứu sinh. Nghiên cứu sinh sẽ thực hiện phỏng vấn cá nhân với lãnh đạo cấp trường, cấp khoa; và phỏng vấn theo nhóm đối với các giảng viên Tiếng Anh.

Các buổi phỏng vấn sẽ được ghi âm bằng thiết bị ghi âm. Nghiên cứu sinh sẽ hỏi một số thông tin về khách thể và các câu hỏi liên quan đến chủ đề nghiên cứu.

Các buổi phỏng vấn cá nhân sẽ được thực hiện tại văn phòng làm việc của các lãnh đạo trường, và lãnh đạo khoa. Phỏng vấn nhóm giáo viên sẽ được thực hiện tại 1 phòng làm việc/ phòng học tại khoa Ngoại Ngữ.

### **Tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu mất bao nhiêu thời gian?**

Anh/chị mất khoảng từ 15 đến 30 phút để hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi điều tra.

Mỗi cuộc phỏng vấn cá nhân với lãnh đạo cấp trường, cấp khoa kéo dài từ 30 đến 60 phút. Mỗi cuộc phỏng vấn các nhóm giảng viên kéo dài từ 60 đến 90 phút.

### **Có nguy hại gì cho khách thể khi tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này không?**

Không có điều gì gây ảnh hưởng không tốt tới bạn khi tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này.

### **Lợi ích mà đề tài nghiên cứu mang lại là gì?**

Tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu, anh/chị sẽ có cơ hội tiếp cận với một số hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên mà hiện nay có thể chưa phổ biến ở Việt Nam. Do vậy, anh/chị có thể cập nhật thêm nhiều cách khác nhau để nâng cao kiến thức nghề nghiệp của mình. Thêm vào đó, anh/chị có thể đề xuất một số giải pháp giải quyết các yếu tố gây cản trở cho việc phát triển bồi dưỡng chuyên môn nghiệp vụ của mình. Từ đó, môi trường học tập và làm việc tốt cho anh/chị có thể được xây dựng và phát triển.

Hơn nữa, đề tài nghiên cứu nhằm tìm ra các hoạt động bồi dưỡng giáo viên hiệu quả cho giảng viên tiếng Anh và các yếu tố thúc đẩy và cản trở công tác bồi dưỡng của giảng viên tiếng Anh. Những điều này sẽ giúp cho nghiên cứu sinh đề xuất các cách để làm cho công tác bồi dưỡng giảng viên tiếng Anh có hiệu quả cao hơn. Mặc dù không mang lại các lợi ích trực tiếp, những kết quả nghiên cứu này cũng sẽ mang lại những lợi ích nhất định cho anh/chị.

### **Tôi có thể dừng tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu không?**

Việc tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Điều này có nghĩa là anh/chị không phải trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào mà anh/chị không thích, và có thể dừng không tiếp tục tham gia tại bất kỳ thời điểm nào. Việc tham gia hay không tham gia của anh/chị sẽ không có bất kỳ ảnh hưởng nào đến quá trình công tác và thăng tiến của anh/chị tại trường.

### **Điều gì sẽ xảy ra với thông tin tôi cung cấp?**

Tất cả thông tin sẽ được bảo mật hoàn toàn trong suốt quá trình nghiên cứu (tuyển khách thể nghiên cứu, thu thập số liệu, phân tích số liệu) và trong suốt quá trình báo cáo và trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu.

Chúng tôi xin lưu ý: tên và các thông tin nhận diện khác sẽ được tách khỏi phần số liệu phỏng vấn. Các thông tin cá nhân sẽ không được trình bày trong bất kỳ một báo cáo nào, và cũng không được gửi đến cơ quan công tác của anh/chị.

Tất cả các thông tin thu thập được sẽ được bảo mật và bỏ tên. Cụ thể, phần băng ghi âm nhóm giáo viên sẽ được đặt mật khẩu bảo vệ, và chỉ có nghiên cứu sinh và giáo viên

hướng dẫn được truy cập vào. Bản ghi lại cuộc phỏng vấn với nhóm giáo viên sẽ được lưu giữ trong tủ khóa tại văn phòng của nghiên cứu sinh.

Toàn bộ phần ghi âm và tài liệu khác sẽ được nghiên cứu sinh lưu lại trong 5 năm kể từ này nộp luận án.

Việc sử dụng số liệu thu thập được cho các nghiên cứu trong tương lai sẽ chỉ được tiến hành khi các bạn đồng ý. Do vậy, nghiên cứu sinh sẽ phải thông tin đầy đủ đến anh/chị trong bất kỳ lần sử dụng số liệu nào trong tương lai.

### **Tôi sẽ liên hệ với ai nếu có câu hỏi nào về đề tài nghiên cứu?**

Nếu khách thể nghiên cứu có câu hỏi nào, hãy liên hệ trực tiếp với tôi hoặc các giáo viên hướng dẫn theo thông tin liên lạc cụ thể như sau:

<b>Tên, chức danh</b>	<b>Điện thoại liên lạc</b>	<b>Email</b>
Hoàng Thị Thu Thủy	+84 983939395 (Số ở Việt Nam) +61 8 8313 6064 (Số ở Úc)	<a href="mailto:thithuthuy.hoang@adelaide.edu.au">thithuthuy.hoang@adelaide.edu.au</a>
Julia Miller, Tiến sỹ	+61 8 8313 3604	<a href="mailto:julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au">julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au</a>
Michelle Picard, Tiến Sỹ.	+61 8 8313 5725	<a href="mailto:michelle.picard@adelaide.edu.au">michelle.picard@adelaide.edu.au</a>

### **Nếu tôi muốn phàn nàn nay phản ánh thì sẽ làm gì?**

Đề tài nghiên cứu này đã thông qua bởi Hội đồng bảo vệ tính nhân văn trong nghiên cứu tại Trường Đại học Adelaide (theo số H-2016-114). Nếu anh/chị có câu hỏi hay vấn đề thắc mắc nào về các lĩnh vực tham gia của anh/ chị trong đề tài nghiên cứu, hoặc muốn phàn nàn hay phản ánh gì về đề tài nghiên cứu, hãy liên lạc với giáo viên hướng dẫn chính. Nếu anh/chị muốn trao đổi với 1 người độc lập về những phàn nàn của anh/chị, hãy liên lạc với Thư ký của Hội đồng bảo vệ tính nhân văn trong nghiên cứu theo số điện thoại +61 8 8313 6028 hoặc gửi thư tới địa chỉ email [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au). Ý kiến phản ánh hay phàn nàn của anh/chị sẽ được xem xét và giải quyết triệt để. Kết quả giải quyết sẽ được thông báo tới anh/chị.

### **Nếu tôi muốn tham gia, tôi phải làm gì?**

Nếu anh/chị muốn tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu, hãy hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi điều tra trực tuyến theo đường link được gửi kèm trong thư hoặc lấy 1 bản câu hỏi điều tra tại văn phòng Khoa Ngoại Ngữ. Câu trả lời trực tuyến sẽ được thu thập trực tuyến. Bảng câu hỏi điều tra sau khi hoàn thành sẽ được mang trả lại vào 1 cái hộp đặt tại văn phòng khoa Ngoại Ngữ.

Việc hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi điều tra cũng có nghĩa là anh/chị đồng ý tham gia. Ở cuối phần câu hỏi điều tra, anh/chị sẽ được mời tham gia phỏng vấn. Các khách thể nghiên cứu tham gia phỏng vấn sẽ được đưa 1 bản xác nhận đồng ý tham gia riêng.

Chân thành cảm ơn anh/chị.

**Hoàng Thị Thu Thủy**  
**T.S. Julia Miller**  
**T.S. Michelle Picard**

## Appendix E: Consent form for interview and focus group participants in English and Vietnamese



Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

### CONSENT FORM

(For managers and EFL teachers attending individual interviews or focus groups)

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

<b>Title:</b>	The enablers and barriers to professional development for in-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam
<b>Ethics Approval No:</b>	<b>H-2016-114</b>

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.
3. Although I understand the purpose of the research project it has also been explained that involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
4. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.
5. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
6. I agree to the interview being audio/video recorded. Yes  No
7. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

#### Participant to complete:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research to \_\_\_\_\_ (*print name of participant*) and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

## BẢN ĐỒNG Ý THAM GIA ĐỀ TÀI NGHIÊN CỨU

(Dành cho quản lý và giáo viên tham gia phỏng vấn cá nhân hoặc phỏng vấn theo nhóm)

1. Tôi đã được bản thông tin kèm theo và đồng ý tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu sau:

<b>Tên đề tài:</b>	Những yếu tố thúc đẩy và cản trở công tác bồi dưỡng giảng viên tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học đa ngành ở Việt Nam.
<b>Ethics Approval Number:</b>	<b>H-2016-114</b>

2. Tôi đã được nghiên cứu sinh đã giải thích đầy đủ và cặn kẽ về đề tài nghiên cứu. Sự đồng ý của tôi là hoàn toàn tự nguyện.
3. Mặc dù tôi hiểu mục đích của đề tài nghiên cứu, nhưng tôi cũng vẫn được giải thích cụ thể rằng việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu có thể sẽ không mang lại lợi ích gì cho tôi.
4. Tôi đã được thông báo rằng, khi số liệu thu thập được có thể được công bố, tên tôi và các thông tin cá nhân của tôi cũng sẽ không bị tiết lộ.
5. Tôi biết rằng tôi có thể dừng tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu bất kỳ lúc nào
6. Tôi đồng ý để các cuộc phỏng vấn được ghi âm. Có  Không
7. Tôi biết rằng mình nên giữ một Bản tham gia đồng ý, sau khi đã được hoàn thành, và một Bản thông tin dành cho khách thể nghiên cứu.

### Phần dành cho khách thể nghiên cứu:

Tên: \_\_\_\_\_ Chữ ký: \_\_\_\_\_

Ngày: \_\_\_\_\_

### Nghiên cứu sinh/ Người làm chứng

Tôi đã miêu tả bản chất của đề tài nghiên cứu cho \_\_\_\_\_

(*in tên của khách thể nghiên cứu*) và tôi nghĩ cô ấy/ anh ấy đã hiểu rõ những gì tôi giải thích.

Chữ ký: ..... Chức danh: ..... Ngày: .....

## Appendix F: Complaint forms



The University of Adelaide

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This document is for people who are participants in a research project.

### CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project Title: The enablers and barriers to professional development for in-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam

Approval Number: H-2016-114

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>).

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name: Dr Julia Miller

Phone: +61 8 8313 4721

Email: [julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:julia.miller@adelaide.edu.au)

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:  making a complaint, or

- raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
- the University policy on research involving human participants, or
- your rights as a participant,

contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 83136028 or by email to [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au)