

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Continuing Professional Development: A Case of Iranian High School Teachers

La percepción de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera acerca del desarrollo profesional continuado: el caso de profesores iraníes de bachillerato

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English, particularly regarding a foreign language teachers' professional development, has been studied in depth. However, it is not known how Iranian English as a foreign language teachers perceive continuing professional development. This study explored the perceptions of Iranian English as a foreign language teachers of continuing professional development and identified their main professional development activities. For the study, a phenomenological research design was applied. Twenty English teachers were interviewed. The data were content analyzed in line with the Randor model. The results showed that the participants perceived continuing professional development to entail skills development, continuous learning, keeping up to date, learning for interest, and professional revitalization. Additionally, they developed professionally through work, formal education, and attending and presenting at continuing professional development events.

Key words: Continuing professional development, CPD activities, English as a foreign language teachers.

El desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera se ha estudiado ampliamente. Sin embargo, se desconoce cómo los profesores iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera perciben el desarrollo profesional continuado. En este estudio se exploran dichas percepciones y se identifican las principales actividades que estos docentes llevan a cabo para desarrollarse profesionalmente. Con este fin, se diseñó una investigación fenomenológica aplicada a 20 profesores entrevistados. Los datos se analizaron de acuerdo con el modelo propuesto por Radnor. Los resultados mostraron que los docentes perciben el desarrollo profesional continuado como: mejora de habilidades, aprendizaje continuo, actualización, aprendizaje motivado por el interés y revitalización de la labor docente. Asimismo, los docentes crecen profesionalmente por medio del trabajo, la educación formal y la asistencia y presentación en eventos de desarrollo profesional continuado.

Palabras clave: actividades para el desarrollo profesional continuado, profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera.

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How to cite this article (APA, 6th ed.): Alibakhshi, G., & Dehviri, N. (2015). EFL teachers' perceptions of continuing professional development: A case of Iranian high school teachers. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 17(2), 29-42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/profile.v17n2.44374>.

This article was received on July 9, 2014, and accepted on January 31, 2015.

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Introduction

After the Second World War, countries around the world placed more emphasis on English language teaching (ELT) as an important requirement of education (Collins, 2010). Additionally, in countries in which English is not an official language, the prominence of English as an international language has been widely recognized. Thus, ELT has become a part of both secondary and tertiary education systems in countries where English is acknowledged as a foreign language. In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, teachers face challenges because of school environments. They tend to teach their students independently from their colleagues. Sometimes teachers—especially novices—become overwhelmed by school bureaucracy demands, and if teachers do not receive insightful feedback or regular supervision, they might become frustrated and less effective (Murray, 2010). Therefore, professional development activities can solve some of these problematic issues (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001).

Professional development is any attempt to increase teachers' professional knowledge both during and after the initial preparatory stages (Craft, 1996; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). However, it is believed that professional development consists of career-building activities that are undertaken by practitioners after they complete their teacher training (Shawyer, 2010). For the purposes of the present study, teacher training and professional development are not assumed to be synonymous.

Therefore, because of the importance of professional development and its impacts on teachers' teaching effectiveness, it is expected that an exploratory study can provide insight into the continuing professional development (CPD) experiences of teachers employed in Iranian high schools and the types of CPD options they might have. The results are expected to be significant in better understanding the CPD situation in Iran from the

perspectives of Iranian EFL teachers by gaining insight into their experiences. Through these insights, we try to highlight the CPD of high school teachers in a particular sociocultural context (Iran) that to the best of our knowledge has not received appropriate analysis to date. This may also deepen an understanding of the interplay between sociocultural settings and CPD.

Review of the Literature

It is argued that CPD is a consistent cycle of teacher learning beginning with initial training and lasting for as long as a teacher remains in the profession. Teaching as a public profession encourages teachers and increases their societal expectations to find ways to improve students' achievement (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009).

To be effective, teachers need a combination of professional knowledge and specialized skills as well as their own personal qualities and experiences. Moreover, acquiring new skills and adding to their knowledge are among the major reasons teachers endeavor to attend activities designed for professional development (Bailey et al., 2001). According to Murray (2010), learning about new techniques and ways to empower teachers in English language teaching seems to be both motivating and encouraging for both experienced and novice teachers.

As is the case with teachers of the other fields, English language teaching experts believe that ongoing professional development is of great significance, particularly in today's rapidly, constantly, and technologically changing world. Teachers of English as a foreign language are more likely to try the recent innovations in language teaching theories and education technology with their students (Allwright, 2005) that enable them to continue to evolve in the adaptation and application of their art and craft, which is important for their professional development. As Day and Sachs (2004) argue, the term CPD suggests all of the activities teachers that engage in during the

course of their careers to enhance their work. Such activities, as Kelly (2006) believes, are intended to result in a process, ongoing teacher learning, through which teachers become experts.

A number of studies have argued in support of professional development for teachers. For instance, Karabenick and Noda (as cited in Jafri, 2009) argue that teacher development allows teachers to improve their practice and to keep abreast of recent findings in the field. In the same vein, Mizell (2010) believes that ongoing professional development activities help teachers define the best pedagogical approaches for the betterment of students' learning processes. Richards and Farrell (2005) also emphasize the significance of ongoing teacher development for in-service practitioners to become acquainted with the most recent resources and methodologies.

Teachers' CPD has been studied and presented in the relevant literature in different ways (to name just a few, Kelly, 2006; Mann, 2005; Roberts, 1998), although always understanding that professional development that is highly related to teachers' learning and transforming their knowledge into practice has always been at the center of such attempts (Bolam, 2000). Teachers' professional learning is a complex process that requires their cognitive and emotional engagement and their willingness to investigate where each stands (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Reis-Jorge, 2007; Romano, 2006; Sandholtz, 2002).

The instruments used to trigger teachers' development also depend on their objectives and needs as well as those of their students. Therefore, formal structures including courses and workshops might serve some purposes, and involvement in producing curricula and discussing assessment data might serve other purposes (Avalos, 2011). It is also believed that not every form of professional development, even that with positive impact, is of itself relevant to all teachers (Craig, 2003).

In sum, it seems that teachers tend to do a variety of activities to develop professionally. They also view CPD as needed so that they can keep themselves updated. Iranian EFL teachers, owing to the nature of their profession (teaching English as a foreign language and being nonnative speakers of English) need to emphasize CPD as an integrated part of their profession. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is no study on Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of CPD and the activities they prefer for developing professionally.

Purpose of the Study

This study is an attempt to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of CPD and the types of activities they prefer to develop professionally. More specifically, the following research questions are raised: (1) What do Iranian high school EFL teachers understand by CPD? and (2) What types of CPD activities do Iranian EFL teachers engage in while teaching EFL?

Research Method

This study aimed at investigating Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of CPD and the CPD activities they engage in to develop professionally. Therefore, in attempting to investigate and interpret the meaning of CPD from the participants' perspectives within the researched context, a qualitative research design within the interpretive paradigm was used. Because we wanted to describe the phenomenon (CPD) that the participants directly and individually experienced, we used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a research strategy that examines "how human beings construct and give meaning to their actions in concrete social situations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 204). It focuses on "understanding the meaning events have for persons being studied" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 3). Thus, the role of phenomenologists is to first understand how

people within a context collectively and individually understand and interpret phenomena. Then, they aim to record, explain, and interpret and explain the meanings these individuals make of their experiences.

Participants

A purposive sample was selected of both male and female teachers of English as a foreign language who had more than 10 years of experience in teaching at public high schools in Tehran. The data saturation point was reached when the sixteenth participant was interviewed. Therefore, the purposive sample size was 20 EFL teachers. They were both male and female participants with two degrees: master's and bachelor's (BA) of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The main reason for including such a wide selection of full-time experienced teachers was to be able to generate a broad range of perceptions, insights, and EFL teachers' experiences of CPD. Teachers' demographic information is presented in the Appendix.

Data Collection

This study required qualitative instruments that could deeply explore EFL teachers' perspectives of CPD and the CPD activities they engaged in. Hence, semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews with open-ended questions were conducted to collect the study data. Semi-structured interviews helped us understand the phenomenon of CPD from interviewees' own perspectives with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be.

Moreover, open-ended questions helped us develop rapport with participants, explore our research questions deeply, elicit information, and generate answers, which allowed for true assessments of participants' beliefs. Additionally, face-to-face interviewing made it possible to understand participants' verbal responses via their nonverbal cues.

Data Analysis

All interviews were conducted by the first author. To avoid any misunderstandings, all interviews were conducted in English, the teachers' major, and difficult terminology associated with teacher education and CPD was avoided. To elicit teachers' in-depth perceptions, the interviewer allowed the conversations to move smoothly and interactively. The interviews took from 45 min to 1 hr and 5 min, with an average of 50 min. Each interview consisted of two main parts. In the first part, the questions addressed teachers' perceptions of CPD, and in the second part, the questions addressed the participants' main professional development activities.

We employed Radnor's (2001) guide to qualitative data analysis for analyzing the data. The interviews were first transcribed, and multiple copies of the transcripts were printed. The transcripts were then read for topic ordering to draw out and list topics that were linked to the original research questions of the study. A second meticulous reading of the transcripts helped the researchers identify the explicit and implicit categories that emerged within each topic. The categories were color coded. In case of more than one category for each topic, numeric coding was used. A third reading for content helped identify quotes that were aligned with each category within the topics. The quotes were labeled according to the categories they represented.

Research Quality

Qualitative researchers, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), acknowledge that there is no value-free or bias-free design. To make research findings convincing and trustworthy, we acknowledged biases by considering the validity, trustworthiness, transferability (or generalizability), and objectivity of the research methods we employed.

Research Validity

The conversations were recorded for accurate interpretations (Maxwell, 1992), notes were taken during participants' discussions, and member checking was incorporated (Padgett, 1998) by returning transcripts to the participants for their verification. Data were collected at the onset of each term of the academic year to guarantee easy access to the participants (Robson, 2002). Hence, and bearing in mind that a researcher's status can impact on participants' responses, the second researcher tried to establish a trusting professional relationship with the participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or the reliability of methods and research practices in qualitative research, is concerned with dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), or the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to identical categories by different observers or by the same observer under different conditions (Silverman, 2000). The dependability of the research was thus increased in three ways. First, all participants were provided with the same questions, which were carefully worded (Robson, 2002). Second, the interviews were transcribed as accurately as possible and returned to participants for verification. Finally, and following Radnor (2001), all research procedures including transcripts, drafts, and final reviews of data were documented, according to which the study could be replicated or reconstructed.

Objectivity

Trustworthiness in interpretive research is extremely valuable for assessing research quality. Hence, although the subjective nature of this research is acknowledged, the researchers attempted to the best of their capability to present accurate, complete, detailed, and bias-free accounts of the participants' views, perceptions, and feelings as they were revealed

to researchers and as they were experienced by the participants.

Results

In this section, individual interview data are analyzed under each research question. Findings appear thematically under the research questions and are illustrated by quotations from interviewees. To illustrate the number of interviewees who held similar views, we grouped individual interviewees.

What Do Iranian High School EFL Teachers Understand by CPD?

Responses to this question resulted in a variety of views, which were grouped under five themes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' Understanding of CPD

| Understanding of CPD | Number | % |
|---------------------------------------|--------|----|
| Skills development | 18 | 90 |
| Continuous learning | 14 | 60 |
| Keeping up-to-date | 13 | 65 |
| Learning for pleasure | 10 | 50 |
| Teachers' professional revitalization | 8 | 40 |

The commonality between all of these themes is that CPD involves some form of learning. This might include training for new skills, some type of learning or keeping oneself up-to-date. Developing skills is the most frequently argued understanding of CPD.

CPD as Skills Development

First, a majority of the interviewees perceived CPD as acquiring specific skills with emphasis placed on being equipped to effectively teach within their institutions. These were indicated as skills that teachers might not have been acquainted with previously. As an example, one interviewee narrates:

Sometimes we attend in-service training courses and we learn something new related to language teaching methodology, language assessment, and the use of technology in EFL classrooms which are totally new to us [sic]. (T1)¹

This theme consists of six sub-themes: development in teaching methodology, language proficiency, material preparation, classroom management, the use of technology and language testing. Each of these is illustrated as follows.

- **Development in teaching methodology**

The majority of the participants perceived CPD as developing their teaching skills through in-service trainings (formal and informal) such as workshops, classroom observations, and watching teaching videos. The following quotation from a female teacher exemplifies this theme:

Two weeks ago we all got trained teach through task-based method. That was really good because task based instruction is an important area in language teaching methodology which I have basically had no training in [sic]. (T1)

Another participant observed:

Last month, English language teachers in our city were invited to a quarterly meeting. An instructor from university was invited to give a lecture on innovations in language teaching. He addressed some issues about collaborative teaching and how teachers can involve learners in teaching. I really enjoyed his lecture and right now I am trying some of the techniques he taught us and I think they are all useful [sic]. (T5)

- **Development in test preparation**

Most of the participants also regarded CPD as useful for honing their test-preparation skills. The following quotations exemplify this:

A couple of weeks ago, a lecturer from a teacher training center was invited to education department in our city. Almost all

English teachers were present and he reviewed testing theories and test development strategies. I forgot some of the issues which I learned at college 20 years ago. Now I know how to develop good language tests and evaluate the English language tests developed by the other test developers [sic]. (T10)

Another participant observed:

I remember passing a course on language testing but honestly speaking I forgot almost all details. I used to make use of published sample language tests in my own classes without being aware whether they were standard or not. Now, after attending the in-serving training course on language testing, I know that I should not have used some of the items of those tests because they were not well prepared. . . . Prior to attending these classes, I knew little about these issues [sic]. (T10)

- **Development in material preparation and adaptation**

The majority of the interviewees perceived CPD as a means of acquiring specific skills in material development, adaptation, and adoption. The following quotations illustrate the theme:

I remember attending some in-service training courses in which the principles of material development, adaption, and adoption were reviewed. Honestly speaking I learning new things and right now I can provide my students with some instructional supplementary materials [sic]. (T19)

An experienced teacher observed:

Prior to attending in-service training courses, I just followed the content of the English high school textbooks, but after reading the textbooks on material development I learned that some parts of the English textbooks the learners have to learn are not well prepared and need revision. Now I can simplify the textbooks, skip some parts, and add some parts to the textbooks [sic]. (T11)

- **Development in the use of technology**

Such training may also be related to the use of newer technologies that schools invest in and that they require all teachers to use as part of their teaching. As

1 T = Teacher

the following interviewees elaborate, the job roles that they have been assigned for a particular semester may require them to obtain training in certain technical skills that will enable them to perform effectively within their work contexts.

The schools in which I teach required to me make use of computer, power points, video projector, etc., in our classroom. I am also required to type language tests and send it to the administrators through e-mails. . . . I have to familiarize myself with this [sic]. (T2)

In this semester I've been given office and international computer driving as one of my courses. So all my professional development is technological [sic]. (T10)

CPD as Continuous Learning

The second most frequently expressed meaning of CPD is continuous learning during teachers' careers from the first day they are employed to retirement. The following quotations exemplify the theme:

For me PD means continuous learning. I believe one always needs to learn. (T2)

When you stop learning how you do expect to be a teacher? I don't think you ever do. You never stop learning how to be a teacher and you can tell the ones who do [sic]. (T10)

More specifically, CPD was viewed as a type of learning that aims at adding value to a teacher's professionalism in the form of enhanced practice and capabilities. Quotations from the following interviewees illustrate their understanding of CPD:

In my opinion CPD is anything which empowers me to teach better than I could do it in the past and I can do at present. (T18)

I believe that CPD is learning how to teach more effectively by pursuing best practice as shown by successful practitioners. (T19)

Keeping up-to-date

The next frequently expressed perception of CPD is teachers' keeping themselves informed and up-to-date with developments and innovations in the field of ELT, as is evident from the quotations from the interviewees below:

CPD is a chance to keep up to date in current teaching methods and philosophy. (T1)

I see it as opportunities improve my knowledge about teaching, to become more informed, keeping myself updated on current research. (T10).

Most participants who held this perspective of CPD as keeping updated argued that it was imperative for them to continually seek opportunities to keep themselves current with new methodologies and learning theories in their field or any other fields that directly or indirectly influenced their jobs as teachers. The following quotations exemplify the theme:

I need to be somehow in touch with current best practice. For me, it is really vital because I don't like to look like a fossil...I also know how the methodologies and approaches are changing at this point. (T18)

Through attending CDP programs I can get familiar with the newest advances in teaching. (T20)

CPD as Learning for Pleasure

The fourth expressed understanding of CPD is the perception of CPD as learning for personal interest. Such learning may not necessarily relate to the subjects of ELT. Instead, as some of the interviewees argue, there may be other areas with which teachers would like to engage:

I think that CPD is about opportunities to develop professionally in the areas that I'd like to learn and not necessarily the areas that which are related to ELT. (T10)

If I have a chance to attend an activity which is useful to me and that keeps me interested and helps me to perform better, I'll certainly go along with it. (T13)

CPD as Teachers' Professional Revitalization

The last expressed understanding of CPD addresses teachers' motivation and revitalization through engagement with professional development activities. Some of the participants argued that CPD provides opportunities to discuss new ideas and prevents

teachers from experiencing burnout. One of the participants states:

When we are unenthusiastic in class and unmotivated students realize and this feeling is understood by us. So I think CPD is the best way to keep ourselves enthusiastic and motivated in our jobs. (T16)

Hence, according to the following interviewees, teachers need to find ways to refresh their teaching energies so that they can teach more effectively when they return to their classrooms:

CPD I think keeps us up to speed; therefore, we don't rely on only old information acquired a couple of years ago...CPD can help us grow. (T15)

I am sure that to be able to stay in teaching carrier for a long time, it's necessary to change because you won't enjoy it otherwise, neither will you survive. So yeah, I need CPD to feel sure that I'm in touch with the present best practices and I also need it for revitalization. (T18)

Occasionally leaving the teaching classrooms and attending CPD courses gives the teachers the opportunity to gain respite from teaching and enables them to focus on their own learning. The following interviewee elaborates:

I think it's a pleasure to have a chance to learn rather than teach because you're always transmitting information to students and sometimes you might need to receive information. (T14)

This understanding of CPD seems to entail the key role that it plays in maintaining teachers' enthusiasm for teaching.

To summarize, CPD was mostly understood to be skills-oriented training that focuses on acquiring skills related to teaching effectively within the institutional context. Moreover, CPD was also perceived to be improving current professional skills to continue to perform effectively in the work setting. Second, CPD was viewed as lifelong learning directed by modern developments in ELT and resulting in evident changes

in teaching. The third theme that emerged relates to continual attempts by teachers to keep themselves familiar with the new developments in their field. The other expressed perception of CPD includes professional learning as a way to keep teachers motivated and enthusiastic about their teaching, professional growth and learning as an essential part of their professionalism.

The following part of the study addresses the second research question and discusses findings related to the types of CPD activities Iranian EFL teachers engage in.

What Type of CPD Activities Do Iranian EFL Teachers Perform?

The participants in the present study reported that they engaged in a wide range of CPD activities to develop professionally. These are grouped under five categories and illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' CPD Activities

| CPD Activities | Number | % |
|---|--------|-----|
| Professional development through work | 20 | 100 |
| Formal education | 14 | 70 |
| Attending CPD events and workshops as members | 12 | 60 |
| Informal self-studies | 10 | 50 |
| Presenting at CPD events | 4 | 20 |

Among the CPD activities that interviewees engaged in were development through work, engaging in formal higher education, membership in professional associations, attending CPD activities, participating in CPD events, and also engaging in formal higher education as part of professional development.

Professional Development Through Work

All participants revealed that their main professional development was through teaching. They viewed teaching and daily engagement with their students in class as a significant source of learning through which they were able to gain knowledge from practical experiences in the classroom. The following quotations from the participants illustrate this theme:

The administrator required me to make use of computer in EFL classrooms. So my students and I are using computer and while working with the computer I learn something new about the implication of computer and the way it works. (T10)

I'm an active participant in the association of EFL teachers in my city in terms of planning and delivering CPD for EFL teachers. We believe in cooperative learning and developing communities of practice for sustainability of professional learning via follow up. (T9)

I also attend the other teachers' classrooms sometimes as teacher of in-service courses. I find it quite interesting that I'm able to work with both students at schools and the colleagues who attend my classes. Sometimes I learn a lot from them. (T1)

Hence, it is clear that in addition to their day jobs that involve teaching foundational English, a number of teachers were involved in other professional roles that were either voluntary (such as working with institutional CPD centers or teaching in external programs) or assigned by the institution (such as training for the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, CELTA) based on their individual professional competence.

Formal Higher Education

Engaging in formal higher education emerged as the second most preferred type of CPD activity among the study participants. A number of interviewees revealed that they were either studying for a higher degree such as a master's or PhD or considering preparing for higher education degrees. Some had

also already completed their BA or higher degrees. The following quotations illustrate the theme:

I completed my master's in TEFL, and right now I am getting prepared for PhD. (T1)

Ten years ago I was a BA holder of English language literature, but now I have the master's in TEFL. (T3)

I registered for the PhD entrance exam, and I am studying hard to get prepared. (T6)

Attending CPD Events

Sixty percent of the participants reported that the third most preferred CPD activity was participation in CPD events as participants. Generally, it was shown that teachers participated in in-house events that were organized by education departments in their cities or provinces. Some participants also reported attending off-site CPD events that were held by other organizations such as universities and the teaching English and language society of Iran (TELLSI).

Among the in-house CPD events that interviewees participated in were workshops and theoretical courses that were perceived to be immediately applicable to their teaching. The following quotations exemplify the theme:

In the monthly PD sessions we have the chance to learn different sorts of computer related things. (T2)

Recently we had an assessment workshop where teachers were trained to do sessions and last month we had a one-day workshop where we were trained up to re-think our testing skills. (T13)

Additionally, some interviewees also reported having participated in conferences that were organized by off-site institutions. The following quotations exemplify the theme:

I attended TELLSI annual conferences and workshops. I found some of the presentations really useful and quite related to my job. (T13)

We have a teaching forum where EFL teachers particularly university lecturers present research. For example, recently someone did some research on the implication of translation tasks in EFL classrooms. (T10)

Presenting at CPD Events

The least preferred CPD activity by the participants was making presentations at CPD events. Presenting at these events was revealed as occurring at two levels: (1) off-site at local professional development events organized by the teaching English language and literature society of Iran (TELLSI) and (2) in-house where teachers worked.

For instance, one interviewee revealed how he assisted colleagues in searching e-materials in Google and Yahoo search engines:

After the workshop was over some people came to and asked how they can search for e-materials, I taught them and I think they all learned. (T2)

Among the off-site events at which most interviewees presented were the TELLSI annual conferences. One of the participants noted:

I presented a lecture on the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of technology in their English language classes. The teachers came to me and commented on my presentation. (T11)

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was an attempt to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of CPD and the CPD activities they engaged in. The perceptions of CPD that emerged from the present study are in line with those found in related studies (e.g., Hoban, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Malderez & Wedell, 2007; Mann, 2005; Stuart, Akyeampong, & Croft, 2009). CPD is therefore understood in two ways: as improving skills in related contexts and as lifelong development or growth because context-related CPD is perceived to be developing skills that are applicable to the teaching context and that help teachers perform effectively within the working environment (Bolam, 2000).

However, as lifelong learning, CPD is believed to last through a teacher's career from the beginning to retirement (Gravani & John, 2005). It involves keeping

abreast of new developments in TEFL, updating oneself through formal qualifications, and specializing. The underlying notion in different perceptions of CPD addresses changes that are realized through improved teaching methodologies, learning theories, and testing approaches, specializing in specific skills such as the use of technology. In line with the findings of the present study, it could be argued that while engaging with CPD is perceived to be a way of revitalizing teachers (Evans, 2002; Jafri, 2009), it is also understood to be a part of a teacher's professionalism. It could also be argued that teachers perceive CPD to be an important tool for learning for interest, keeping updated, and profession revitalization. In line with the findings of the present study and the related studies, the following conclusions could be made.

1. CPD is context dependent, and teachers from different working contexts have different perceptions of CPD. Primarily, findings from this study show that teacher development is situated socially and contextually.
2. CPD is non-static and rather complicated. It also depends on the views of teacher education that teachers, institutions, and professional development organizations have. CPD depends on who the teachers are, where they are currently (geographically), where they are coming from and what is available in terms of CPD in their current contexts.
3. Teachers' learning never ends. That is, teachers' teaching lives consist of two poles: teaching and learning, and they are always moving from one pole to the other. In addition to external motivation, teachers learn for their own interests.
4. Through CPD events, EFL teachers can revitalize their profession and avoid becoming burnt out.
5. In addition to language knowledge, teachers need to develop other skills such as the use of technology, teaching methodology, and so forth. This can be achieved only through CPD.

6. Because of the rapid changes in learning theories and teaching methodologies, CPD is a need for all teachers who want to have great teaching achievements.
7. The most important source for teacher development is work. As such, the workloads of novice versus experienced teachers will certainly differ.
8. Continuing higher education is the second most important activity for CPD. Therefore, all teachers should be supported in having the chance for continuing higher education.
9. Attending CPD events is another mentioned CPD activity. Therefore, administrators should try to establish professional associations through which teachers can attend conferences, workshops, etc.
10. Workshops were highlighted by the teachers. Therefore, it is concluded that useful workshops in line with teachers' needs are of much significance and that the teachers who are qualified should be encouraged to present at the conferences and share their experiences with the other association members.
11. Conducting research is another activity that was reported by a few respondents. Therefore, teachers' research skills should be developed either through workshops or through self-studies. Teachers sometimes study language books. Therefore, institutes and association should always provide the members with the newest publication.

Considering the nature and scope of the present study to explore teachers' understanding and experiences of CPD, the following areas could be explored by other researchers. First of all, this study was carried out in high schools; similar studies could be carried out in higher education centers such as state and open universities to see how EFL teachers in these institutes view CPD. Additionally, we also think it would be interesting to investigate the role of all CPD activities on teachers' professional development. Finally, because informal CPD is deemed considerably significant

in shaping teacher development and informal communities are perceived to be a need, it would be worth exploring the role of informal communities of practice in teacher development as well as the interplay between formal and informal communities of practice.

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Appendix: Teachers' Demographic Information

| Interviewed Code | Gender/Degree | Teaching Experience | School Code | City |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| T1 | F/BA | 10 years | 1 | Saravan |
| T2 | M/MA | 11 years | 2 | Saravan |
| T3 | F/BA | 12 years | 3 | Saravan |
| T4 | M/BA | 17 years | 4 | Zahedan |
| T5 | F/MA | 15 years | 5 | Saravan |
| T6 | M/BA | 20 years | 6 | Saravan |
| T7 | M/BA | 14 years | 7 | Saravan |
| T8 | M/MA | 18 years | 8 | Saravan |
| T9 | F/BA | 22 years | 9 | Zahedan |
| T10 | M/MA | 10 years | 10 | Zahedan |
| T11 | M/MA | 14 years | 11 | Saravan |
| T12 | M/MA | 16 years | 12 | Zahedan |
| T13 | M/BA | 15 years | 13 | Zahedan |
| T14 | F/MA | 19 years | 14 | Zahedan |
| T15 | F/BA | 23 years | 15 | Zahedan |
| T16 | F/BA | 20 years | 16 | Zahedan |
| T17 | F/MA | 22 years | 17 | Zahedan |
| T18 | M/BA | 12 years | 18 | Zahedan |
| T19 | M/BA | 10 years | 19 | Saravan |
| T20 | M/BA | 11 years | 20 | Saravan |