

## **Examining the Roles of Continuing Professional Development Needs and Views of Research in English Language Teachers' Success**

November 2020 – Volume 24, Number 3

### **Ali Derakhshan**

Golestan University, Iran

<a.derakhshan@gu.ac.ir>

### **Christine Coombe**

Dubai Men's College, Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE

<ccoombe@hct.ac.ae>

### **Kiyana Zhaleh**

Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

<k\_zhaleh97@atu.ac.ir>

### **Maryamsadat Tabatabaieian**

Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

<maryam.tabatabaieian@yahoo.com>

### **Abstract**

*The present study investigated the significance of teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs and views of research with regard to their success among a group of 177 Iranian EFL teachers. To fulfill this aim, the participants responded to three questionnaires; the Teacher Professional Development Needs Questionnaire, an English Language Teachers' Views of Research Questionnaire, and a Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire. Pearson multiple correlation coefficients results revealed that teacher success was related significantly and positively to both teachers' views of research and CPD needs as well as all their sub-components. These findings were also confirmed by full Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results; both teachers' views of research and perceived CPD needs were positive significant predictors of Iranian teachers' high perceptions of professional success. Based on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that for EFL teachers to perform successfully, they need to hold positive attitudes toward research and also attend to their CPD needs. Teachers can hold more positive views toward research and become research literate through doing research in graduate and post-graduate programs, receiving research training within their workplace, attending online research courses, reading books on research, searching through research journals in their specific field, and participating in conferences, workshops, and forums on research-relevant areas. Furthermore,*

*teacher educators, including those in the educational system of Iran, are encouraged to re-plan their professional development programs to meet the real needs of the teachers in their specific educational context instead of presenting teachers with theory-based universal programs if they are to prepare successful teachers who can deal effectively with the daily realities of the classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Needs, Views of Research, Teacher Success, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teacher*

## **Is there a relationship between continuing professional development needs, views of research, and teacher success??**

The argument for the indisputable role and heavy burden put on the shoulders of teachers is well manifested in the saying that no nation can be great or rise above the quality of its educational system, and no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Simply put, nourishing teacher quality is the key to properly erecting the cornerstones of the educational system and society at large (Borg, 2018, Pishghadam et al., 2019). Two qualities which may show teachers the right way in this career journey are their inclination toward education-based research practice and attending to their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs.

Research involvement and engagement is considered to be a useful undertaking for teachers' CPD. This is because research embraces simultaneously, the most widely-held beliefs about and also fresh outlooks on selected aspects of education (Gutierrez & Kim, 2017). According to Borg (2009), this prominence of teachers' being research-engaged can prompt teachers to inspect teachers' conceptions of research, how to do research, and the degree of engagement with any research undertaking. Moreover, in line with the claim of Day (1999) regarding the centrality of teachers' CPD for their educational growth, Burns and Lawrie (2015) also put forward that for teachers to be effective, they must undergo a life-long CPD experience as it is necessary for keeping them up-to-date with the daily requirements of their profession as a teacher (Evers et al., 2016).

A thorough review of the literature evinced the noteworthiness of the issues of teachers' Professional Development (PD) and conceptions and practice of research for their success (e.g., Atay, 2006a, 2006b; Gutierrez, 2017; Saunders, 2014), influence of teachers' PD and professional identity on their teaching quality and success (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2020; Gore et al., 2017; Novozhenina & López Pinzón, 2018; Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al., 2018), and the effect of research conceptions and practice on teachers' successful performance (e.g., Kielblock & Gaiser, 2016; Papatotiriou & Hannan, 2006; Trgalová & Jahn, 2013).

However, it should be noted that, in spite of the existence of this large body of research evidence manifesting the inseparable chain between teachers' CPD and the conceptions of and tendency toward doing research on the one hand and their effective professional performance and success on the other hand, to the best of our knowledge, previous research has failed to simultaneously look at the potential contributions of teachers' CPD needs and conceptions toward research as part of their success. Moreover, studies on developing teacher success through teachers' views of research and CPD needs have been sparse in the context of Iran, making it more difficult to reach conclusions regarding the importance of and attention given

to these factors in Iran's educational system. One potential reason for this shortage of research may be the obvious defects in the country's teacher education and preparation programs which primarily focus on boosting the growth of teachers' content knowledge at the expense of other equally important elements of successful teaching, including teachers' CPD needs and views of and engagement in research (Mirhassani & Beh-Afarin, 2004). Such programs fail to prepare active, independent teachers who can go for their own life-long professional growth. Neither are pre- and in-service teachers in this system made aware of the linkage between theory and practice in education and the significant role that teachers' engagement with various types of research such as action research, practitioner research, and collaborative inquiry can play in helping teachers theorize what they have practiced and practice what they have theorized (e.g., Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016; Farhady et al., 2010; Khanjani et al., 2016). Unfortunately, although many Iranian teachers consider doing research and attending to their CPD needs to be worthwhile undertakings (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018; Soodmand Afshar et al., 2017; Tabatabaei & Nazem, 2013), they do not consider them to be among their responsibilities as the system does not expect them to do so. The nature of these one-shot, short-term, and claimed-to-be-effective programs imply to them that having attended the training courses and education programs and been awarded certificates or degrees, they are guaranteed to successfully teach and deal effectively with the daily challenges of the classroom for the rest of their professional lives.

Considering the aforementioned issues, the present study was done with the hope of adding to the existing literature in this area and making strides to advocate for the reform of the teacher education system in Iran. Based on the review of the related literature, which will be explained in more detail in the following section, we hypothesize that both teachers' perceptions of their CPD needs and views of research influence their perceived teaching success (i.e., the dependent variable in this study). Regarding the direction of effect between CPD needs and views of research, which are both our independent variables, the literature clearly reveals that the conceptions that teachers hold toward research and the degree of their tendency to be research-engaged influence their life-long professional growth (e.g., Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Campbell & Jacques, 2003; Elliot, 1996; Evers et al., 2016; Gutiereza & Kim, 2017; Johnson, 2019; Lindberg & Olofsson, 2010; McIntyre, 2005). Accordingly, in this study, it was hypothesized that teachers' views of research predict their CPD needs.

In this regard, the study pursued the following objectives; first, it attempted to examine whether Iranian EFL teachers hold low, moderate, or high perceptions of CPD needs, views of research, and teacher success. Second, it strived to check whether perceptions of CPD needs and views of research are significantly associated with Iranian EFL teachers' success. And third, it sought to investigate if teacher success perceptions could be predicted significantly in terms of Iranian EFL teachers' views of research and CPD needs perceptions. More specifically, the current research endeavored to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there any statistically significant relationships between Iranian EFL teachers' CPD needs and views of research and their success as English teachers?
2. Are Iranian EFL teachers' CPD needs and views of research predictors of their success as English teachers?

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Background

Years of research endeavors triggered by the struggle for finding the most predictive factors of students' achievement and success have mostly converged in the conclusion that "*teachers make a difference*" (Sanders et al., 1997, p. 57, emphasis in original). But what has remained vague was the question of what qualities contribute to teachers' successful practice. Following this issue, many researchers have attempted to conceptualize the notion of teacher success (e.g., Borg, 2006; Brosh, 1996; Campbell et al., 2003; Coombe, 2014, 2020; Demmon-Berger, 1986; Dodge, 1943; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Richards, 2010; Shulman, 1987; Stronge, 2007).

To elaborate on some of those classifications, for instance, to Shulman (1987), successful teaching was realized through teachers' sufficient knowledge of content, pedagogy, curriculum, learners, as well as educational context, objectives, and values. For Stronge (2007), successful teaching rests on qualities such as teachers' personal identity, competent at classroom management and organization, organizing and orienting for instruction, implementing instruction, monitoring student progress and potential, and being a professional. Demmon-Berger (1986) specified being knowledgeable, innovative, in touch with students within and outside the class, being competent at managing classes effectively, and holding high self-efficacy beliefs to be associated with successful teachers' practice. Coombe (2014, 2020) also conceptualized the notion of successful teaching for second/foreign language teachers with characteristics such as with-it-ness, professional knowledge, instructional effectiveness, good communication skills, having street smarts, being willing to go the extra mile, and having a commitment to lifelong learning. For Dodge (1943), successful teaching was identified with being compassionate, willing to take initiative, being sociable, and ready to assume responsibilities.

In the English Language Teaching (ELT) context of Iran, Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) formulated the broad concept of teacher success in terms of 12 factors of teaching accountability, interpersonal relationship, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism in teaching. To elaborate on these qualities, teaching accountability pertains to the teacher's enthusiasm about the subject of teaching, preparation for the class, responding to students' questions, emphasizing important points, interest in helping students, ability to convey the materials effectively with regard to students' ability levels, and openness to criticism. Interpersonal relationship is characterized by the teacher's good-temperedness, intimate relationship with students, patience, respect for students, understanding of students, and respect for dissimilar opinions. Attention to all means the teacher's engagement of all students in learning, provision of opportunity for students' participating and asking questions in class discussions, giving equal opportunity to all students for participating in class, not discriminating among students, and paying attention to each individual learner. The examination aspect of teacher success refers to the teacher's ability to hold sufficient and appropriate tests and exams, return test responses to students timely, and evaluate students fairly.

Commitment describes the teacher's sufficient knowledge about the subject, continuous updating of his/her knowledge, and paying attention to the presence of students in class. Learning boosters relate to the teacher's encouragement of learners, attention to learning

problems and difficulties of learners, allocation of sufficient time to different language skills based on the objectives of the course, enhancement of self-confidence in students, awareness of different, innovative teaching methods and procedures, and appropriate organization of materials for each session and for the whole course. Creating a sense of competence can be described as the teacher's ability to motivate students, understand students well, give sufficient and appropriate assignments to students, and encouraging stronger students to help weaker students. Teaching boosters refer to the teacher's ability to manage the classroom effectively, use appropriate supplementary materials, have enthusiasm about teaching, and have high self-confidence. Physical and emotional acceptance pertains to the teacher's neat appearance and correct pronunciation of words in English. Empathy has to do with the teacher's avoidance of humiliating students and making fun of them as well as avoidance of being too harsh and severe. Class attendance relates to teacher success when the teacher attends and leaves classes in a timely manner. And finally, dynamism in teaching refers to the teacher's being energetic and creative.

From a rather different perspective, Farrell (2015) proposed a reflective practice framework comprised of critical competencies related to successful teaching. For him, for teachers to remain effective, they must undergo a continuing process of PD as such a development is a requirement in the 21st century for dealing with the inevitable challenges that teachers face every day. In line with this claim was Richards's (2015) proposition that developing teacher effectiveness rests largely on a teacher's tendency toward reflection, monitoring, and appraisal of their PD and growth. However, personal or institutionalized PD programs must cater primarily to teachers' various personal and situational needs and must allow teachers to articulate their beliefs and theories (Richards, 2010). If so, they can make a notable change in "the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work" because quality and the nature of in-service PD directly affects teachers' development of their knowledge and expertise (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 1).

Borg (2018) has also maintained that effective CPD can impact a teacher's level of satisfaction, language proficiency, content or subject matter knowledge, instructional skills, attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competence, which in turn have the potential to influence teachers' subsequent success. Another impact of teacher CPD is to help teachers maintain their enthusiasm and energy levels throughout their professional career (Richards, 2015). However, there is a distinction between pre-service and in-service PD and here is where the gap in practice lies. Farrell (2012) highlights this break between pre-service PD which normally occurs within the confines of formal university training and in-service PD held for teachers who are actually engaged in their teaching career by recommending that educational systems must encourage on-going lifelong PD for teachers if they are to keep up with the daily realities of the classroom.

This gap in PD practice may be due to divergent perspectives towards the characterization of the concept. While some researchers and practitioners have identified it with short-term, one-shot workshops and courses, others have associated it with reflective practice and continuing learning (Lindberg & Olofsson, 2010). But what is regarded as effectual PD is, according to Crandall and Finn Miller (2014), for teachers to "learn opportunities over an extended period of time, engage in deepening and extending skills, challenge teachers' assumptions about learning, involve teachers in talking with one another, and have administrative support" (p. 632).

According to Richards (2015), there exist three models of language teacher PD. The first one is the top-down model, also called the expert-driven process, which is usually rendered by an institution or school with almost no input from teachers. This type of PD is aimed at identifying the needs of the institution rather than its teachers. In other words, it is the institution which specifies the needs, presents the PD program, and decides on how the needs are to be fulfilled by the teachers. In sharp contrast to it is the bottom-up model in which PD is totally directed by the individual teachers themselves. The third model, called interactive PD, is informed by both the institutional as well as individual teachers' needs and is run by interactive collaboration between teachers and the institution (Richards, 2015).

Here it is argued that the prevalent deficient practice of PD, recurrently reported in the literature (CEO Forum on Education and Technology, 1999), can be remedied by promulgating the application of this interactive model of PD, which in turn has the potential to affect teachers' successful practice (Soodmand Afshar et al., 2017). As the nature of collaboration in the interactive model requires, PD normally grows over an extensive period of time which may result in the emergence of teacher communities (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Ideally, teacher PD happens through an amalgam of formal pre- as well as in-service teacher training and less formal interactions and associations in professional learning communities, communities of practice, teacher networks, conferences, and teachers' reflections on their teaching experience (Aubrey & Coombe, 2010; Elsheikh et al., 2018; Rimmer & Floyd, 2020; Vangrieken et al., 2015). To put flesh on the bones of this theoretical argument advocating the effectiveness of the interactive model of PD, in the present study, we sought to examine teachers' attitudes toward their interactive and CPD needs and the extent to which their perceptions might affect their successful practice.

Soodmand Afshar et al. (2017) have highlighted that what is necessary for the life-long professional growth of the practicing teachers, which should be focused on in PD courses, workshops, and other PD programs, is attention to teachers' CPD needs. They elaborated that such CPD needs can be grouped into teachers' classroom-related knowledge and skills needs, teachers' personal and interpersonal qualities, and teachers' pedagogical knowledge needs. Accordingly, those teachers aspiring to improve classroom-related knowledge and skills will focus on lesson planning, integrating language skills and subskills, contextualized grammar teaching, focusing on both form and meaning while teaching grammar, teaching pronunciation, dealing effectively with listening activities, designing and implementing activities enhancing students' speaking skills, designing and monitoring pair- and group-work activities, corrective feedback provision to students, creating a more learner-centered classroom environment, recognizing and addressing individual differences in the classroom, formative assessment, vocabulary teaching strategies, and dealing effectively with reading activities (Soodmand Afshar et al., 2017).

Moreover, teachers concerned with personal and interpersonal qualities will focus to improve their English knowledge, qualities as a successful teacher, interpersonal relationships with students, and skills in generating a stress-free and pleasant learning environment. Additionally, attention to pedagogical knowledge needs to assist teachers to better their lesson planning skills and knowledge of reflective teaching with the aim of enhancing their instructional effectiveness (Soodmand Afshar et al., 2017). What is evident in such activities is that attention to CPD needs has the potential to improve teachers' successful teaching practices. Other needs in this

category (i.e., pedagogical knowledge needs) are teachers' desire to promote their knowledge of critical pedagogy, how to enhance students' thinking skills, and assessment skills in general.

Related to these needs are PD activities essential for teachers' CPD. These are grouped by Soodmand Afshar et al. (2017) into individualized PD activities and interactive PD activities. Individual PD activities include activities such as self-monitoring, one-shot workshops, action research, journal writing, and online teacher learning, while the examples of interactive PD activities are teacher support (study) groups, peer observation, peer coaching, interactive workshop, team teaching, and supervised teaching practice. Based on this conceptualization, they devised and validated an EFL teacher CPD needs questionnaire, arguing that teachers' higher scores on the questionnaire manifest their higher perceptions of and attention to their CPD needs.

Besides, it needs to be highlighted that for teachers to persist in their CPD, they must stay current with regard to theory and practice in education (Good & Weaver, 2003). It seems that teachers' keeping their knowledge base up-to-date which is vital for their PD and professional success can be facilitated by teachers' inclination toward and engagement in various forms of research (Elliot, 1996). As maintained by Campbell and Jacques (2003), the prominence of evidence-based practice and the explicit linkage of teachers' research and PD were regarded to be at the center of CPD. However, one of the inherent problems reported in the teaching profession is the huge gap that exists between theory and practice which is well captured in the "two worlds" analogy representing the division between researchers and teachers (Gomm & Hammersley, 2002).

Faribi et al. (2019) postulate that this gap emanates from teachers' perspectives toward research as something theory-based, unappealing and outside of teachers' responsibility, giving credence to the idea that how teachers conceive of research affects the degree to which they actually are engaged with it. That is why in spite of the research progress made in the area of education, many teachers are not informed of or do not apply research findings in their practice (Gall et al., 2007). Attempts to ameliorate teachers' research perceptions and practices were made in the form of redefining instruction as a research-supported undertaking. Borg (2009) maintained that by encouraging teachers to do research, they can be better prepared to make wise instructional decisions (Borg, 2009). McIntyre (2005) also accentuated that teaching is an essentially practical undertaking, and through engaging in research and perusing and analyzing research evidence, teachers will find effective ways to improve their propositional knowledge and pedagogy. In the same vein, following Brown and Coombe's (2015) research undertaking to provide guidance to language instructors regarding the development of their research expertise, Coombe and Hiasat (in press) emphasize the significance of research literacy for professionals in the realm of English language teaching. This encouragement was based on the grounds that teacher research is widely regarded as a useful tool for teachers' PD. In fact, by their inclination toward research, teachers are more willing to reflect on their practice, which in turn results in their professional growth.

McNamara (2002) has stated that teachers mainly hold negative conceptions toward research and its statistical calculations, seeming to be too distant from where they stand as teachers. However, there is a growing enthusiasm for various forms of research such as practitioner research, teacher research, action research, and collaborative inquiry, especially in the field of English as a second/foreign language teaching (Stenhouse, 1987), as the notion of *teacher as researcher* well represents (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Johnson (2019) asserted the substantial

role of action research for teacher CPD, both playing important parts in teacher expertise and success. According to him, expert teachers are involved in research, research-based theories, and research-based practices as they pause periodically to check whether what they practice is in accordance with current research and whether research-based theory is applicable in instruction and learning.

Following this trend, Borg (2003) propagated the notion of *research education* signifying the development of perspectives, expertise, and knowledge that teachers demand to go in informally for research throughout their professional lives. One line of research has been the examination of the views that teachers have about research (McNamara, 2002). However, Borg (2009) noted that research empirically investigating teachers' conceptions of research is still sparse. The notion of teachers' conceptions of research was well captured in other prominent studies, such as Borg (e.g., 2007, 2009) who reaches the conclusion that while teachers conceive of research as an objective and rigorous enterprise, their limited conception, knowledge, and expertise regarding research account for their disinclination toward engaging in it. Based on the previous literature on research methodology, Borg (2009) also asserts that research is identified with a number of elements such as "a problem or question, data, analysis, and interpretation" (p. 365), as well as characteristics like rigor and systematicity. Furthermore, for any inquiry to be considered as research, it should be announced publicly or communicated in some way.

In what follows are a number of empirical investigations done on one or more of the three concepts of teacher success, CPD, and conceptions of research delineated theoretically in this part.

### **Empirical Background**

Many studies have succeeded in examining the linkages between the concepts of successful teacher practice, conceptions and practice of research, and CPD. For instance, Trgalová and Jahn (2013) uncovered the effect of engagement with research on the teaching practice of a group of secondary school mathematics teachers in France through analyzing and comparing the resources they had used before and after their involvement in research and the participants' own analysis of their teaching practice. The results manifested in a significant positive change in both their use of educational resources and practice.

In the same vein, Zeichner (2003) systematically reviewed the impact of teacher research on teacher PD as reported in various studies conducted within the school context of the US. The findings revealed that teacher research can bring about special types of student and teacher learning not associated with typical PD experiences. In particular, engagement in research improved teachers' confidence in facilitating students' learning, helped them tackle the teaching challenges at hand more effectively, encouraged their in-depth analysis of their teaching experiences, and resulted in increased enthusiasm about their job.

In another study conducted on 150 Iranian EFL teachers, Rahimi and Weisi (2018) examined the effect of teachers' perceptions of research on their professional teaching practice through employing both questionnaire and interview data collection instruments. Their findings indicated that on the whole, teachers had favorable attitudes toward participating in research which subsequently influenced their professional practice in a positive way. Furthermore, adopting a qualitative research approach, Papatotiriou and Hannan (2006) studied the influence that perceptions of research evidence might have on professional practice of Greek primary



school teachers through evaluating teachers' experiences of enacting research, personal characteristics, reports of their reading habits, and satisfaction with their career. All in all, it was revealed that teachers' readings and experiences acted as mediating variables in their conceptions of research engagement and its effects on their teaching practice.

Likewise, in a study seeking to support teacher empowerment for engaging in classroom-based research in the educational context of the Philippines, Gutierrez and Kim (2017) assessed the reflections of a group of in-service teachers regarding their collaboration with university researchers as part of their research-led collaborative PD. The results gained from interview data uncovered that involvement in collaboration, trust, sustainability, and commitment helped teachers acknowledge the efficacy of classroom-based research for the improvement of their teaching.

In another study criticizing the deficiencies of the current in-service education and training programs in Turkey for their failure to engage teachers actively in the process of their own development and reflective practice, Atay (2006b) proposed a program through which Turkish EFL teachers were both instructed in theoretical knowledge and knowledge for doing reflection, research, and collaboration. It was found that although initially they faced some challenges in doing and reporting their research, on the whole, the program positively affected their PD. Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al. (2018) determined the success of 316 Iranian EFL teachers through the perspectives of 828 students. They also found that there was an association between teachers' CPD strategies and their success as perceived by the teachers themselves. Their results highlighted that CPD strategies such as updating, collaborating, and reflecting positively influenced teachers' success.

Novozhenina and López Pinzón (2018) described a project in which they attempted to enhance EFL teachers' teaching practice and reflection habits in Colombia through proposing a PD program. At the initial stage, the researchers explored the professional needs of the teachers by analyzing documents, administering questionnaires, and conducting class observations. In the implementation stage, the effect of the PD program was evaluated through analyzing surveys, engaging in informal chats, and observation data. Accordingly, the results demonstrated that for the effectiveness of the program to be fully substantiated, it should be enacted through a longer period of training and improvement.

Alternatively, by adopting a cluster randomized controlled approach, Gore et al. (2017) investigated the effectiveness of the collaborative PD model for enhancing teachers' quality of teaching in 24 Australian schools. The participants received quality teaching rounds as intervention, and the data were collected through various means such as interviews, observations, and checklists. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis gave prominence to the claim that collaborative PD had significant effects on teaching quality.

All things considered, it should be once again noted that despite the extensive literature on any of the three factors of teacher success, teacher conceptions of research, and teacher PD on the one hand, and the strong linkage of CPD and views of research with each other and their significant contribution to teachers' successful practice on the other hand, there is a scarcity of empirical studies simultaneously attending to these three factors. To occupy this niche in the literature, the present study sought to examine the potential roles of teachers' conceptions of research and perceptions of their CPD needs in their level of teaching success among a group of Iranian EFL teachers. Therefore, our work is different from previous studies in that we took

account of these three variables in a single study to check whether we can provide empirical support for the theoretical supposition that both factors of CPD needs and views of research can influence teacher success.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Through convenience sampling based on the idea that participants are chosen according to their willingness and accessibility (Cohen et al., 2011), a total of 177 Iranian EFL teachers working in various private language institutes in Iran voluntarily agreed to take part in this study.

It should be explained that, in Iran, learners can receive formal instruction in English in one or both of these ways either in the public schooling system or in the privately-owned English language institutes. Public schools usually fail to develop English language skills sufficiently in students. Therefore, those students aspiring to pass examinations in English or to achieve high English proficiency attend private language institutes. The government mainly funds public schools, and therefore students can receive free education in this system. Due to the educational reforms experienced by private language institutes, there is a focus on communicative needs, language functions, and meaningful learning more than before. In contrast, public schools still stick to the grammar-translation method, encouraging memorization of vocabulary, emphasizing reading and translating texts at the expense of attending to listening, or speaking skills, and practicing rules of grammar. The materials and methodologies to be used in public schools are decided on by Iran's Ministry of Education, and they are imposed on teachers.

Put differently, in this top-down educational system, teachers have no voice and agency over the content and method of their teaching. They are only the implementers of what is prescribed to them. Moreover, teachers are permanently employed in public schools, and are not concerned with losing their jobs. Therefore, they are not under pressure to teach effectively. In public schools, students go through a comprehensive program including diverse subjects; such as; science, history, Persian literature, mathematics, and English. The medium of instruction and communication is Persian (i.e., the country's national language) even in English classes because the majority of the teachers cannot speak English fluently. In these schools, students' attainment and learning are mainly evaluated through standardized and high-stakes tests, the content of which is typically set by the Ministry of Education or the teacher (This is an excellent example of centralized educational policies). Decisions about learners and their degree of learning are usually made based on summative assessment.

On the other hand, private language institutes have a decentralized educational system, not funded by the government. Hence, receiving instruction is not free of charge for students. Furthermore, the focus of their programs is narrow (i.e., they are only concerned with language education, not other subjects). Due to their flexibility, they adjust methodologies, syllabi, and assessment systems based on their students' objectives and needs. These institutes, however, do not permanently employ language teachers, and language teachers are under pressure to enhance their teaching capacities; otherwise, they are replaced by more competent teachers. Moreover, as teachers are required to avoid using Persian in class and to have good proficiency in English, all instructions and communications in class are in English. Students' assessment of learning is based on the employment of diverse tests, designed by the institutes, as well as tasks, activities, and projects (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Pishghadam et al., 2013).

Based on this context, the rationale for choosing the private language English teachers as the focus of this study was that first, due to the decentralized nature of educational policies in this system, teachers have more agency, freedom, and enthusiasm to and would put more effort to improve their instructional effectiveness in order to facilitate students' learning. Second, due to the pressure on private language instructors because of employment insecurity, these teachers would do their best to develop their instructional capacities to become successful. To do so, they may resort to various strategies such as engaging in research in order to keep their knowledge base up-to-date as well as regularly attending to their CPD needs. Therefore, it is hypothesized that private language institute teachers hold higher perceptions of attending to their CPD needs and being engaged in research in comparison to their public-school English teacher counterparts in order to reach their potential, which in turn can lead to their more successful teaching practice.

As explained earlier in the introduction section, the teacher education system in Iran is defective and is unsuccessful at involving teachers in research and realizing their CPD needs. In this study, it is predicted that despite the system's deficiency, Iranian private language institute teachers will hold moderate to high views of research and CPD needs which are necessary for their success. This prediction is based on the logic that these teachers know that Iran's teacher education program cannot push them far in their growth. Hence, to develop their expertise, they must stand on their own feet and resort to various procedures such as doing research or attending to CPD needs to stay current in the field. Such a supposition may not hold true for the public-school teachers who, are less motivated to prove their effectiveness. Although the comparison of Iranian public school and private language institute teachers' perceptions may render noteworthy results, due to space limitation and other considerations, in this study, only private language institute teachers were attended to. Future studies following this line of research are recommended to uncover the results of such a comparison with the hope of revealing the deficiencies of the current educational system and advocating for its reformation.

More particularly, the sample included 130 (73.4%) female and 47 (26.6) male instructors who were all Persian/Farsi native speakers, and their age range was between 16 and 55 ( $M=31.7$ ,  $SD=7.7$ ). They studied different majors, including both English majors (e.g., Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Applied Linguistics, English Language and Literature, Linguistics, and English Translation) and non-English majors (e.g., Management, Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering). It should be noted that, in Iran, individuals from various majors can apply as teachers in private language institutes. In such institutes, it is not mandatory for teachers to have a degree in English-related majors. Instead, one of the most important criteria is to have a good level of English proficiency. When the prerequisite of good proficiency is met by the applicants, they normally pass a short-period Teacher Training Course (TTC) held by the institutes themselves in order to acquaint them with the necessary elements of successful teaching and the institutional policies. Moreover, the participants were also at different levels of their education. Some were high school graduates ( $N= 4$ ), Associate's ( $N= 5$ ), Bachelor's ( $N= 44$ ), Master's degrees ( $N= 92$ ), or PhDs ( $N= 20$ ). Three others were studying for Master's or PhDs ( $N= 2$ ), and nine instructors only mentioned that they had English-related certificates. They also differed with regard to their years of teaching experience: 0-4 years ( $N= 61$ ), 5-9 years ( $N= 48$ ), 10-14 years ( $N= 36$ ), 15-19 years ( $N= 20$ ), 20-24 years ( $N= 9$ ), and 25 years or more ( $N= 3$ ).

## **Instruments**

Three questionnaires were employed to gather data in the present study. The questionnaires included the Iranian EFL Teacher Professional Development Needs Questionnaire (IETPDNQ), the English Language Teachers' Views of Research Questionnaire, and the Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire.

Soodmand Afshar et al. (2017) developed the IETPDNQ in four sections. Sections One and Two deal with learners' demographic information and their attendance history in different PD activities. Section Three investigates teachers' needs for participating in PD activities, describing these needs in terms of three types; *teachers' classroom related knowledge and skills* (14 items; Total score of each participant on this factor can range from 14 to 56), *teachers' pedagogical knowledge* (5 items; Total score of each participant on this factor can range from 5 to 20), and *teachers' personal and interpersonal qualities* (4 items; Total score of each participant on this factor can range from 4 to 16). To ensure the validity of the third section of the questionnaire, Soodmand Afshar et al. (2017) employed factor analysis. This section in total consisted of 23 items and was reported to enjoy high reliability as estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient procedure ( $\alpha=.96$ ). Section Four, encompassing 11 items, measures teachers' perspectives toward activities that can help them grow professionally. Here there are items on two factors of *individual PD activities* (5 items; Total score of each participant on this factor can range from 5 to 20) and *interactive PD activities* (6 items; Total score of each participant on this factor can range from 6 to 24). The reliability estimate reported for this section was .88. The items in sections three and four are Likert-scale items, and the answers can range from *Not at all=1* to *Perfectly well=4*. In the current study, the reliability of .95 was reported for the total scale. Total scores for section three can range from 23 to 92, and the total scores for section four can range from 11 to 44. On the whole, each respondent's total score on this questionnaire can range from 34 to 136.

The English Language Teachers' Views of Research Questionnaire (Borg, 2009) was used in this study. Borg's (2009) scale consisted of six sections of; Scenarios, characteristics of good quality research, research culture, reading research, doing research, and about yourself. In other words, the scale assessed the teachers' conceptions toward research, the degree to which they perceive themselves to be engaged in research, and the variables they think facilitate/prevent their being research-engaged. As the main focus of the present study was to examine the conceptions that Iranian EFL teachers hold about research, the fourth and fifth sections of the scale were not included in this study. The first section, involving *Scenarios*, includes 10 Likert-scale type items, the answers to which can range from *Definitely not Research=1* to *Definitely Research=4*. This section includes different scenarios, all relating to some form of inquiry, and teachers are expected to express their opinions regarding the types of activities that can be considered research. By answering these scenarios, the respondents show the degree of their familiarity with different forms of investigation which can be considered research. Examples of scenarios in this section are:

**Scenario 2:** *“A teacher read about a new approach to teaching writing and decided to try it out in his class over a period of two weeks. He video recorded some of his lessons and collected samples of learners' written work. He analyzed this information then presented the results to his colleagues at a staff meeting“.*

**Scenario 4:** *“A university lecturer gave a questionnaire about the use of computers in language teaching to 500 teachers. Statistics were used to analyze the questionnaires. The lecturer wrote an article about the work in an academic journal“.*

**Scenario 6:** “To find out which of two methods for teaching vocabulary was more effective, a teacher first tested two classes. Then for four weeks she taught vocabulary to each class using a different method. After that she tested both groups again and compared the results to the first test. She decided to use the method which worked best in her own teaching“.

**Scenario 9:** “A teacher trainer asked his trainees to write an essay about ways of motivating teenage learners of English. After reading the assignments the trainer decided to write an article on the trainees’ ideas about motivation. He submitted his article to a professional journal“.

**Scenario 10:** “The Head of the English department wanted to know what teachers thought of the new course book. She gave all teachers a questionnaire to complete, studied their responses, then presented the results at a staff Meeting“.

Total scores for this section can range from 10 to 40.

Section Two asks about teachers’ views about *Characteristics of Good Quality Research*, including a number of characteristics that research may have. The scale consists of 11 Likert-scale type items the answers to which can range from *Unimportant=1* to *Very Important=5*. By answering these items, the teachers demonstrate the degree of their familiarity with the characteristics of research. Examples of items in this section are:

- **Item 3:** “Experiments are used,”
- **Item 7:** “The researcher is objective,”
- **Item 9:** “The results are made public,” and
- **Item 10:** “The results give teachers ideas they can use.“

Total scores for this section can range from 11 to 55.

Section Three, dealing with *Research Culture*, includes 9 Likert-scale type items (*Disagree Strongly=1* to *Agree Strongly=5*). This section asks the participants their opinions regarding research in the language institute in which they work. Examples of items in this section are:

- **Item 1:** “Teachers do research themselves,”
- **Item 3:** “Teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job,”
- **Item 7:** “Teachers are given support to attend ELT conferences,” and
- **Item 9:** “Teachers read published research.“

Each respondent’s total score for this scale can range from 9 to 45.

The last section gathers data regarding the participants’ demographic information. The questionnaire enjoyed a high reliability in the present study ( $\alpha=.87$ ). On the whole, each teacher’s total score on this questionnaire can range from 30 to 140.

Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) designed and validated the *Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire* in the EFL context of Iran. The scale consists of 47 Likert-scale items the answers to which range from *Disagree Completely=1* to *Agree Completely=5*. Furthermore, the scale includes 12 subscales of Teaching Accountability (7 items), Interpersonal Relationship (7 items), Attention to All (5 items), Examination (3 items),

Commitment (3 items), Learning Boosters (6 items), Creating a Sense of Competence (4 items), Teaching Boosters (4 items), Physical and Emotional Acceptance (4 items), Empathy (4 items), Class Attendance (2 items), and Dynamism in Teaching (2 items). The scale enjoyed a very high reliability index in Moafian and Pishghadam's (2009) ( $\alpha=.94$ ) and the present study ( $\alpha=.97$ ). Total score of each respondent on this scale can range from 47 to 235.

## Procedures

As questionnaires are a popular means of data collection which yield large amounts of data rapidly (Dörnyei, 2007), the researchers used this instrument for data collection; in other words, the data were gathered through the participants' answers to the three questionnaires described above. For ease of questionnaire administration and data collection, the questionnaires were prepared in an online format (i.e., Google Forms). To respond to the questionnaires, the participants received the questionnaires link through email. Ethical measures were also taken as the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the participants before the data collection began. They also assured the participants that the data they provided would be kept confidential, be used only for research purposes and that the data would be published anonymously. They did not ask for the provision of any sensitive information and informed the participants of the voluntary nature of their cooperation. It took the respondents between 20 to 30 minutes to complete the three questionnaires. The total time period between the first email sent until the last questionnaires responses were received by the researcher was around six months (i.e., from 28 August, 2019 to 7 February, 2020). Furthermore, as was noted earlier, the participants were chosen based on convenience sampling. By convenience sampling here it is meant that the authors of the study distributed the questionnaires' links among their colleagues who were working in private language institutes.

In this study, teachers' conceptions of research and CPD needs were independent variables, while teacher success was the dependent variable. To see if there exists any relationship between the variables, Pearson multiple correlation coefficients were run using SPSS, Version 24. Finally, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was run through Amos, Version 24 to see whether teacher success can be predicted through the two independent variables.

## Findings

First of all, to check the assumption of data normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run on the data (See Table 1).

**Table 1. The results of K-S test.**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Teacher Success	.06	177	.17
CPD Needs	.03	177	.19
View of Research	.07	177	.09

Normality assumption is approved when the  $P$  value is larger than .05. Hence, as evident in Table 1, data related to teacher success ( $P = .17$ ), CPD needs ( $P = .19$ ), and views of research ( $P = .09$ ) are all normally distributed.

Table 2 evinces the descriptive statistics of the data related to the teacher success, CPD needs, and views of research variables, showing the perceptions that the teachers had toward the three concepts.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics for teacher success, CPD needs, and views of research and their sub-scales.**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Teacher Success</b>	177	143.00	235.00	218.51	18.96
<b>CPD Needs</b>	177	50.00	132.00	103.15	17.49
Classroom Related knowledge and skills	177	16.00	56.00	44.71	9.01
Pedagogical knowledge	177	6.00	20.00	15.93	3.29
Personal and interpersonal qualities	177	3.00	12.00	9.77	2.06
Individual PD activities	177	7.00	20.00	14.36	2.97
Interactive PD activities	177	6.00	24.00	18.34	3.93
<b>View of Research</b>	177	39.00	140.00	105.10	13.85
Conceptions of research based on SCENARIOS	177	12.00	40.00	29.03	4.97
Characteristics of good quality research	177	11.00	55.00	43.46	6.62
Research culture	177	10.00	45.00	32.59	7.46

Considering that the total score of each participant on the teacher success scale can range from 47 to 235, as can be observed in Table 2, Iranian EFL teachers held relatively high perceptions of teacher success. Regarding the CPD needs variable, each respondent's total score can range from 34 to 136. Accordingly, Iranian EFL teachers held rather high perceptions of their CPD needs. Similarly, the teachers held relatively high conceptions of research as the total score of each respondent on this questionnaire can range from 30 to 140.

To answer the first research question of the study concerning any significant relationships between teachers' CPD needs and views of research on the one hand and teachers' success on the other hand, Pearson multiple correlation coefficients were employed. The results of correlations between teachers' views of research sub-constructs and overall teacher success are represented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Results of Pearson correlation between total teacher success and sub-constructs of teachers' views of research.**

	Conceptions of Research based on SCENARIOS	Characteristics of Good Quality Research	Research Culture	Views of Research	Teacher Success
Conceptions of Research Based on SCENARIOS	1				
Characteristics of Good Quality Research	.28**	1			
Research Culture	.27**	.28**	1		
Views of Research	.64**	.73**	.77**	1	
Teacher Success	.16*	.27**	.26**	.33**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in Table 3, there is a positive significant association between overall teachers' views of research and overall teacher success ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ). Concerning the relationship between teacher success and teachers' views of research sub-constructs, teacher success has the highest correlation with characteristics of good quality research ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ) and the lowest correlation with conceptions of research based on SCENARIOS ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ).

Furthermore, Table 4 demonstrates the results of correlations between teachers' CPD needs sub-constructs and overall teacher success.

**Table 4. Results of Pearson correlation between overall teacher success and sub-constructs of teachers' CPD needs.**

	Classroom Related Knowledge and Skills	Personal and Pedagogical Interpersonal Knowledge and Qualities	Individual PD Activities	Interactive PD Activities	CPD Needs	Teacher Success
Classroom Related Knowledge and Skills	1					
Pedagogical Knowledge	.87**	1				
Personal and Interpersonal Qualities	.78**	.69**	1			
Individual PD Activities	.53**	.51**	.33**	1		
Interactive PD Activities	.33**	.32**	.20**	.63**	1	
CPD Needs	.94**	.88**	.75**	.72**	.59**	1
Teacher Success	.26**	.19*	.19*	.29**	.30**	.31**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Based on Table 4, there is a positive significant relation between teachers' overall CPD needs and their success ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ). Regarding the relationship between the teacher success variable and teachers' CPD needs sub-constructs, teacher success has the highest correlation with interactive PD activities ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ) and the lowest correlation with pedagogical knowledge ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ).

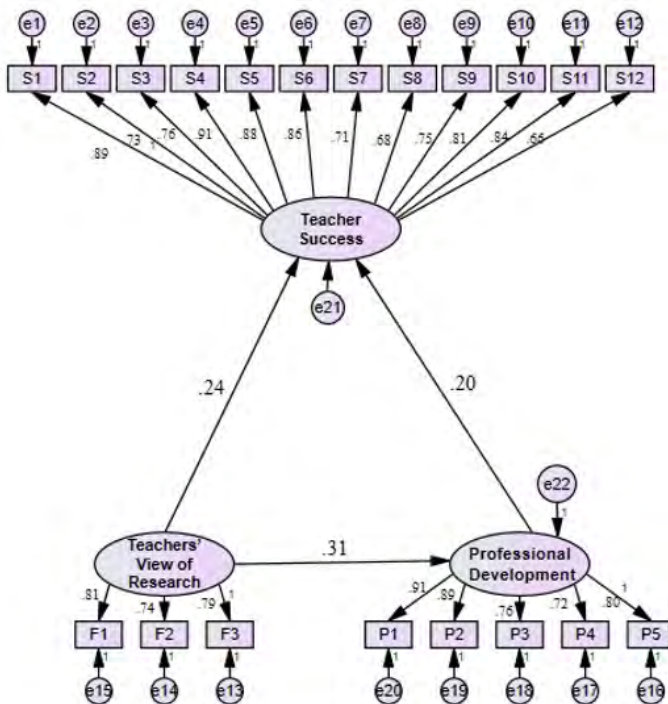
Furthermore, based on the correlation results and the existing literature in this area, we proposed a model of the inter-relationships among our three variables. To do so, full SEM analysis was run through Amos (Version 24). In order to check if it fit the study data, various fit indices were assessed (See Table 5).

**Table 5. Goodness of fit indices.**

	X2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
<b>Acceptable fit</b>	<3	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08
<b>Model</b>	2.27	.92	.93	.91	.06

A model fits the data and therefore is acceptable if its Chi-square (X2)/df ratio is less than 3, the Good Fit Index (GFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Normed Fit Index are higher than .90, and its Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is smaller than .08 (Schreiber et al., 2006). Based on the results displayed in Table 5, the proposed model of the study can be considered as acceptable as it met all of the fit indices criteria stated above (i.e., X2/df = 2.27, GFI = .92, CFI = .93, NFI = .91, RMSEA = .06).

The finalized model of this study is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The full SEM model of teacher success predictability in terms of teachers' views of research and CPD needs.**

In Figure 1, in order to reduce the complexity of the visual representation of the relationship between our three variables, a combination of numbers and letters were used as symbols standing for the sub-components of CPD needs, teacher success, and views of research. As shown in the figure, here we see inter-relationship between 22 components in total as represented in e1, e2, e3, e4 → e22 symbols. Furthermore, as explained earlier in the instrument section, the teacher success scale includes 12 sub-components. Accordingly, S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, and S12 stand respectively for teaching accountability, interpersonal relationships, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism in teaching. In regard to teachers' views of research, this construct has three sub-components of conceptions of research based on SCENARIOS, characteristics of good quality research, and research culture, respectively replace by F1, F2, and F3 symbols in the figure. Finally, the CPD needs construct includes five sub-components of classroom related knowledge and skills, pedagogical knowledge, personal and interpersonal qualities, individual PD activities, and interactive PD activities.

As indicated in Figure 1, both teachers' views of research ( $\beta = .24, p < .05$ ) and CPD Needs ( $\beta = .20, p < .05$ ) are positive significant predictors of teachers' success. Moreover, CPD needs were positively and significantly predicted by teachers' views of research ( $\beta = .31, p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

The aim of the current research was twofold; first, to examine if any associative relationships existed between teachers' CPD needs and views of research on the one hand and their success as English teachers on the other hand, and second, to investigate whether the two factors of CPD needs and views of research can predict teachers' success. However, first of all, descriptive statistics were checked to see if Iranian private language institute teachers have low, moderate, or high perceptions of research, CPD needs, and teacher success. Results revealed that, in line with our expectations, the teachers held relatively high perceptions of all three variables in this study. As noted earlier, these private language institutes' teachers are not permanently employed and are required to prove their capabilities in dealing with the daily challenges of teaching if they are to survive professionally. Second, in comparison to the centralized system of public schools, the decentralized nature of educational policies in private language institutes in Iran empowers teachers and gives them more agency and freedom regarding their choice of content and methodology. In some institutes, the voices of teachers are heard and reflected in curriculum and syllabus design. Thirdly, two generations of teachers emerge as the by-product of the flawed and ineffective one-shot, short-term teacher education and preparation programs in Iran; teachers in the first group are those who assume that their teaching needs are completely satisfied with the education program they passed and make no further effort to update themselves. Due to the nature of educational policies of the public schools explained earlier, usually public-school teachers belong to this category. In contrast, teachers in the second group are those who know that the system is incapable of providing them with efficient, continuing, life-long professional growth that is necessary for their daily instructional effectiveness and consequently take charge of their life-long development as teachers. Taken together, these three reasons may justify the private institute teachers' high regard for research, CPD needs, and success in this study.

Furthermore, the results of the Pearson multiple correlation coefficients indicated that teacher success correlated significantly and positively with teachers' overall views of the research

variable and all of its sub-components. More specifically, teacher success had the highest correlation with characteristics of good quality research, the lowest association with conceptions of research based on SCENARIOS, and a moderate relationship with research culture. These findings were also confirmed in the SEM results, showing that teachers' views of research are a positive significant predictor of perceived teacher success. It seems that teachers' familiarity with characteristics of good quality research, their opinions regarding research in the language institute in which they work, and their ability to identify different research scenarios influence their perceptions of successful teaching. It is argued that views of research can influence teacher success as teachers involved in research may have a clearer view of possible instructional techniques and teaching methodologies and also maintain a broader knowledge repertoire enabling them to provide learners with more learning opportunities. This finding is in line with results of Trgalová and Jahn's (2013) study, showing that engagement in research brings about significant changes in teachers' use of effective educational resources and practices. In addition, doing classroom research can nourish teacher trust, commitment, and collaboration (Gutierrez & Kim, 2017), all considered to be qualities playing roles in teachers' successful practice. According to Coombe (2020), commitment to lifelong learning is a requirement for highly effective English language teachers which can be attended to through subscribing to professional journals, doing action research, attending PD conferences, seeking membership in professional organizations such as TESOL, and getting their professional and teaching materials published. As it is obvious, realization of all these practices demands research literacy and positive views toward being research-engaged on the part of teachers.

The significance of research engagement for teachers' instructional effectiveness was also approved by Rahim and Weisi (2018). In fact, by doing research, teachers can become aware of the latest theoretical developments in their field and hence, implement those theories in their practice (Elliot, 1996). When teachers have a more informed understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of teaching and learning, their knowledge can aid them to make wiser instructional decisions in the classroom (Good & Weaver, 2003). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that teachers' positive perspectives toward being research-engaged can bridge the gap identified between educational theories and teachers' practice, and in turn, aid the development of empowered teachers who can take the initiative to solve their own daily teaching problems. Teachers' engaging in solving their classroom-specific problems themselves is the main logic behind doing action research, which according to Johnson (2019), is one of the main characteristics of expert teachers. When teachers are agents of change in their classrooms, they are in the right position to become effective teachers. This claim can be supported by Coombe's (2014) identification of with-it-ness as an essential quality of successful English teachers. According to her, when teachers are on top of things and are in control of various aspects of classroom life and their profession, they possess one prerequisite of becoming a highly effective practitioner.

Further correlation results disclosed positive significant relationships between the teacher success variable and overall teachers' CPD needs and its five sub-constructs of interactive PD activities, individual PD activities, classroom related knowledge and skills, pedagogical knowledge, and personal and interpersonal qualities. These associative outcomes were buttressed by SEM results, indicating the predictive role of teachers' CPD needs for their teaching effectiveness. In other words, Iranian EFL teachers view attention to CPD needs for knowledge of classroom management, lesson planning, teaching of different skills and sub-

skills, integration of skills, designing activities, monitoring, feedback, learner-centered classrooms, interpersonal relationships with students, assessment, individual differences, qualities as a successful teacher, creating a stress-free and pleasant learning environment, enhancing students' thinking skills, critical pedagogy, and reflective teaching (Soodmand Afshar et al., 2017) to be important for becoming more successful teachers. As results showed, besides these CPD needs, teachers' degree of engaging in interactive PD activities and individual PD activities, such as self-monitoring, one-shot workshops, action research, journal writing, online teacher learning, support (study) groups, peer observation, peer coaching, interactive workshops, team teaching, and supervised teaching practice, also determined their perceptions of teacher success.

Obtaining such findings was expected in this study as the foundation of teachers' CPD for their successful practice is strongly supported by previous research findings and theories of successful teaching. In this regard, in line with teachers' need for pedagogical knowledge in the present study, Coombe (2020) specified up-to-date professional knowledge as one of the indispensable requirements of highly effective English language teachers. Such a knowledge base, according to her, can be obtained through engaging in teachers' lifelong learning and CPD. This notion was also earlier argued for by Day (1999) who maintained that teachers' CPD is at the heart of their effective teaching practice and professional growth. This is because CPD prepares teachers for rising to new challenges (Farrell, 2015) and enables them to deal with new situations and unexpected problems helping them to be more resilient (Evers et al., 2016). Moreover, effective CPD helps teachers increase their eagerness for teaching and energizes them in their profession (Richards, 2015) which leads to their enhanced practice.

In addition, teachers' CPD needs for personal and interpersonal qualities give credence to the value of personal qualities such as teachers' command of the language, interpersonal relationships with their students, creation of stress-free environments, and necessary personal qualities for being an effective teacher, all being counted by Borg (2018) as factors that enhance teachers' success. Similarly, Dodge (1943) highlighted the significance of personal factors affecting teaching practice and named being compassionate, responsible, and sociable as teachers' personality characteristics paving the way for their enhanced effectiveness. Furthermore, teachers' individual and interactive PD needs can be catered for through practices like team-teaching, peer-coaching, interactive workshop attendance, support, journal writing, self-monitoring, and action research. Other useful activities in this regard were also recommended by Crandall and Finn Miller (2014) who stated that providing opportunities for exchange of ideas, administrative support, spending time improving skills and sub-skills, and engagement in CPD are all activities that can aid teachers' instructional betterness. When such teacher CPD needs are attended to in teacher preparation/development programs and workshops, teachers may feel more satisfied (Borg, 2018) and therefore perform more effectively. Attention to teachers' CPD needs can also boost their knowledge of teaching, which in turn increases teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Demmon-Berger, 1986).

Furthermore, the findings of this study support the hypothesized effectiveness of the interactive model of PD described by Richards (2015) as it was found that teachers' attendance to their CPD needs can pave the way for their teaching effectiveness. As explained earlier, this interactive model is informed by both the institutional as well as individual teachers' needs and is run by interactive collaboration of teachers and the institution (Richards, 2015). This finding of the present study was in congruence with those of Soodmand Afshar et al. (2017) who

concluded that promulgating the application of an interactive model of PD in educational programs can promote teachers' successful practice.

Finally, the inseparable chain between how teachers conceive of and engage in research and their CPD identified in the literature was also confirmed in our SEM results as it was revealed that teachers' views of research can significantly predict their CPD needs. Therefore, this study finding was in agreement with Good and Weaver's (2003) finding that for teachers to keep with their CPD, they must stay current with regard to educational theory and practice. In this regard, Atay (2006b) also emphasized that the provision of teachers with the knowledge necessary for doing research can positively affect their PD. As similarly expressed by Gutierrez and Kim (2017), because teachers' engagement with research can open their eyes toward new teaching perspectives, by putting research as one item in their professional journey repertoire, teachers can more confidently be lifelong learners. This is what Campbell and Jacques (2003) refer to as evidence-based practice at the center of teachers' CPD.

Based on the outcomes of the present study, in the forthcoming section, possible conclusions are made, followed by some pedagogical implications of the study results and recommendations for future research.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, it can be concluded that the results of the present study have provided further support for the following research-based claims, put forward and tested by previous researchers; first, teachers' views of research predict their success, second, teachers' attendance to their CPD needs predicts their instructional effectiveness, and finally, teachers' views of research predict their CPD needs conceptions.

Accordingly, the outcomes of the present study can be of significance to various stakeholders in the context of education, including pre- and in-service teachers, teacher educators, materials developers, institution principals, those in charge of recruiting teachers, and those holding teacher preparation and PD programs. In this regard, teachers can hold more positive views toward research and become research literate through doing research in graduate and post-graduate programs, receiving research training within their workplace, attending online research courses, reading books on research, searching through research journals in their specific field, participating in conferences, workshops, and forums on research-relevant areas and specialized research, and joining research organizations and associations (Coombe & Hiasat, in press). Teachers can also take a more active role in research conducted either in their classrooms or at a larger scale to gain enough theoretical and practical knowledge to tackle the needs of their classrooms.

Research literacy can also play a gatekeeping role by being considered as one of the requirements for recruiting effective language teachers. When teachers with a taste for research have entered into institutional programs, principals can enhance teachers' engagement by emphasizing research as one of the responsibilities of teachers, providing teachers with incentives and rewards for doing research, promoting teachers' involvement in research. Teachers can also be prompted to do research when instruction is redefined as a research-supported undertaking (Borg, 2009), undermining teachers' tendency to use textbooks as the sole source for teaching and getting insights. A promising reward of teacher research-engagement is that when teachers are empowered by having knowledge of the latest developments in their field, they can be involved in making various educational decisions.

Equally important as teachers' engagement in research is teachers' CPD. Teacher educators are encouraged to re-plan their PD programs to meet the real needs of teachers in a specific educational context instead of presenting teachers with theory-based universal programs. Dissimilar to top-down and bottom-up models of PD, both focusing on the extremes of the PD continuum, an interactive PD model can aid teachers to play more active roles in their own PD (Richards, 2015). Furthermore, in contrast to traditional one-shot PD programs, interactive PD programs involve teachers in continuing learning and reflective practice (Lindberg & Olofsson, 2010). Teachers can develop their continuing professional knowledge by seeking membership in teacher communities (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003), participating in teachers' online forums where they can share their teaching experiences, concerns, needs, ideas, and gains with each other, building teacher networks, reflecting on their own practice (Farrell, 2015), and attending PD conferences, workshops, and programs (Aubrey & Coombe, 2010; Elsheikh et al., 2018; Rimmer & Floyd, 2020). Institution managers and principals are also suggested to support teachers' CPD through providing teachers' access to new instructional resources, holding regular PD sessions, attending to teachers' CPD needs, and stimulating teachers to articulate their beliefs and theories (Richards, 2010). In a nutshell, it can be recapitulated that to deal with the complexities, dynamics, and diversities of teacher education in terms of learners, contexts, pedagogy, content, curriculum designs, and professional learning, pre-service and in-service teachers as well as teacher educators need to put a premium upon CPD needs and professionalism by reconciling theory and practice through conducting research.

In the end, it should be noted that similar to any research undertaking, the present study had some limitations; first, the study was conducted on a sample of Iranian private language institute teachers. Therefore, generalizations to EFL teachers in general based on the results of this study should be done with caution. As mentioned earlier, the prediction is that attitudes toward research, CPD needs, and success will differ between teachers in public-school and private language institutes due to the underlying differences in public school and private language institute policies in Iran. Therefore, future researchers are urged to examine and compare these two teacher groups for potential convergence and divergence. The results of such studies can reveal the pitfalls and flaws of the educational system publicly, helping to reform it.

Furthermore, the study adopted a purely quantitative approach. So, in this research, we measured the teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of successful EFL teachers, meaning that we investigated the degree to which the teachers considered the mentioned characteristics in the employed questionnaire to be important for success of an EFL teacher. Future inquiry can employ a performance-based measurement of teacher success through procedures such as observation in order to obtain data regarding actual success of the teachers rather than their perceived effectiveness. The same action can be taken in regard to the CPD needs and research variables as future researchers, through employing more direct instruments such as observation scheme and journal writing, can investigate the degree to which these teachers actually reflect their perceptions in their practice. Besides, future studies can provide more in-depth analysis regarding the association of the variables of this study by employing qualitative or mixed methods research designs. Finally, in the present study, the roles of teachers' CPD needs and views of research in teacher success were investigated. Future studies can attend to other important but less-explored teacher variables affecting their instructional effectiveness.

## **About the Authors**

**Ali Derakhshan**, the corresponding author, is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language and Literature Department, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran. He has published in both accredited international journals and various local journals. His research interests are interlanguage pragmatics, teacher education, learner individual differences, and educational psychology in higher education.

**Christine Coombe** is an Associate Professor of General Studies at Dubai Men's College. She is Past President of the TESOL International Association (2011-2012). Her most recent honor was being named to TESOL's 50@50 which "recognizes professionals who have made significant contributions to the TESOL profession within the past 50 years." Dr Coombe is the 2018 recipient of the James E. Alatis Award which recognizes exemplary service to TESOL.

**Kiyana Zhaleh** is a PhD student of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran. She is a Member of Iran's National Elites Foundation and is interested in doing research mainly in the areas of teacher education, educational psychology, communication studies, and applied linguistics.

**Maryamsadat Tabatabaeian** holds a PhD in TEFL from Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran. She is a lecturer at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. Her research interests include psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, teacher education, and testing.

## References

- Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the language learner*. Cambridge University Press.
- Atay, D. (2006a). Teacher research for professional development. *ELT Journal*, 62(2), 139-147.
- Atay, D. (2006b). Teachers' professional development: Partnerships in research. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language (TESL-EJ)*, 10(2). <http://www.tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej38/a8.pdf>
- Aubrey, J., & Coombe, C. (2010). The TESOL Arabia conference and its role in the professional development of teachers at institutions of higher education in the United Arab Emirates. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 8(3), Article 53. <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol8/iss3/53>
- Baniasad-Azad, S., Tavakoli, M., & Ketabi, S. (2016). EFL teacher education programs in Iran: The absence of teachers' involvement. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19(2), 61-86.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teachers' involvement in TESOL research. *TESOL Matters*, 13(2), 1-8.
- Borg, S. (2006). The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(1), 3-32.
- Borg, S. (2007). Research engagement in English language teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(5), 731-747.
- Borg, S. (2009). English language teachers' conceptions of research. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(3), 358-388.

- Borg, S. (2018). Evaluating the impact of professional development. *RELC Journal*, 49(2), 195-216.
- Brosh, H. (1996). Perceived characteristics of the effective language teacher. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29(2), 125-136.
- Brown, J. D., & Coombe, C. (Eds.) (2015). *The Cambridge guide to research in language teaching and learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, M., & Lawrie, J. (2015). Where it matters most: Quality professional development for all teachers. *Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergences*.
- Campbell, A., & Jacques, K. (2003). Best practice researched: teachers' perceptions of the impact of doing research in their classrooms and schools. *Teacher Development*, 7(1), 75-90.
- Campbell, R. J., Kyriakides, L., Muijs, R. D., & Robinson, W. (2003). Differential teacher effectiveness: Towards a model for research and teacher appraisal. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(3), 347-362.
- CEO Forum on Education and Technology. (1999). *Professional development: A link to better learning*. CEO Forum.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Coombe, C. (2014). 10 characteristics of highly effective EF/SL teachers. *Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers: Quarterly Journal*, 28(4), 2-11.
- Coombe, C. (2020). Quality education begins with teachers What are the qualities that make a TESOL teacher great? In J. D. M. Agudo (Ed.), *Quality in TESOL and teacher education: From a results culture towards a quality culture* (pp. 171-184). Routledge.
- Coombe, C. & Hiasat, L. (in press). Research literacy resources for English language teaching professionals. In Z. Sinc (Ed.). *TESOL in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Challenges and opportunities*. Peter Lang.
- Crandall, J., & Finn Miller, S. (2014). Effective professional development for language teachers. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4th ed., pp. 630-648). National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1-44.
- Davari, H., & Aghagolzadeh, F. (2015). To teach or not to teach? Still an open question for the Iranian education system. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English Language Teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Innovations Trends and Challenges*, (pp. 13-19). British Council.
- Day, C. (1999). Professional development and reflective practice: purposes, processes and partnerships. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 7(2), 221-233.
- Demmon-Berger, D. (1986). *Effective teaching: Observations from research*. American Association of School Administrators. (ERIC Eric Document Reproduction Service No. 274 087)



- Derakhshan, A., Coombe, C., Arabmofrad, A., & Taghizadeh, M. (2020). Investigating the effects of English language teachers' professional identity and autonomy in their success. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 9(1), 1-28.
- Dodge, A. F. (1943). What are the personality traits of the successful teacher? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 27, 325-337.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, G. (1996). Educational management and the crisis of reform in further education. *Journal of Education and Training*, 48(1), 5-23.
- Elsheikh, A., Coombe, C., & Effiong, O. (Eds.) (2018). *The role of language teacher associations in professional development*. Springer
- Evers, A., Van der Heijden, B., & Kreijns, K. (2016). Organizational and task factors influencing teachers' professional development at work. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 40, 36-55.
- Farhady, H., Sajadi, F. H., & Hedayati, H. (2010). Reflections on foreign language education in Iran. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language (TESL-EJ)*, 13(4). <http://www.tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej52/a1.pdf>
- Faribi, M., Derakhshan, A., & Robati, M. (2019). Iranian English language teachers' conceptions toward research. *Iranian Journal of Educational Sociology*, 2(2), 1-11.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2012). Novice-service language teacher development: Bridging the gap between pre-service and in-service education and development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 435-449.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. Routledge.
- Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Gomm, R., & Hammersley, M. (2002). Research and practice: Two worlds forever at odds? In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *Educational Research: policy making and practice* (pp. 59-82). Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Good, J. M., & Weaver, A. (2003). Creating learning communities to meet teachers' needs in professional development. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 29(3), 439-450.
- Gore, J., Lloyd, A., Smith, M., Bowe, J., Ellis, H., & Lubans, D. (2017). Effects of professional development on the quality of teaching: Results from a randomised controlled trial of quality teaching rounds. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 68, 99-113.
- Gutierrez, B. S., & Kim, B. H. (2017). Breaking barriers: research based collaborative professional development in-service teachers and university researchers. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 261-269.
- Gutierrez, S. (2017). Breaking barriers: Research-based collaborative professional development between in-service teachers and university researchers. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 261-269.

- Johnson, A. (2019). Action research for teacher professional development: Being and becoming an expert teacher. In C. A. Mertler (Ed.), *The Wiley handbook of action research in education* (pp. 253-272). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Khanjani, A., Vahdany, F., & Jafarigohar, M. (2016). The EFL pre-service teacher training in Iran: Is it adequate or not? *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(1), 1-22.
- Kielblock, S., & Gaiser, J. M. (2016). The impact of using research on teaching practices of non-teacher practitioners within German all-day schools. *International Journal for Research on Extended Education*, 4(2), 56-69.
- Lindberg, J. O., & Olofsson, A. D. (Eds.) (2010). *Online learning communities and teacher professional development: Methods for improved education delivery*. IGI Global.
- Loucks-Horsley, S., Love, N., Stiles, K. E., Mundry, S. E., & Hewson, P. (2003). *Designing professional development for teachers of science and mathematics* (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.
- McIntyre, D. (2005). Bridging the gap between research and practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(3), 357-82.
- McNamara, O. (Ed.) (2002). *Becoming an evidence-based practitioner: A framework for teacher-researchers*. Routledge Falmer.
- Mirhassani, S. A., & Beh-Afarin, S.R. (2004). EFL teacher training evaluation: Assessment of needs, pedagogical constraints and objective setting in EFL teacher training programs (TEPs). *Roshd FLT Quarterly*, 69(18), 45-57.
- Moafian, F., & Pishghadam, R. (2009). Construct validation of a questionnaire on characteristics of successful Iranian EFL teachers. *Pazhuhesh-e Zabanhaye Khareji Journal*, 54, 127-142.
- Novozhenina, A., & López Pinzón, M. M. (2018). Impact of a professional development program on EFL teachers' performance. *HOW*, 25(2), 113-128.
- Papasotiriou, C., & Hannan, A. (2006). The impact of education research on teaching: the perceptions of Greek primary school teachers. *Teacher Development*, 10(3), 361-377.
- Pishghadam, R., Adamson, B., Sadafian, S. S., & Kan, F. L. F. (2013). Conceptions of assessment and teacher burnout. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 21(1), 34-51.
- Pishghadam, R., Derakhshan, A., & Zhaleh, K. (2019). The interplay of teacher success, credibility, and stroke with respect to students' willingness to attend classes. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 50(4), 284-292.
- Porter, A., & Brophy, J. (1988). Synthesis of research on good teaching: Insights from the work of the Institute of Research on Teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 45(8), 74-85.
- Rahimi, M., & Weisi, H. (2018). The impact of research practice on professional teaching practice: Exploring EFL teachers' perception. *Cogent Education*, 5, 1-15.
- Richards, J. C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. *RELC Journal*, 41(2), 101-122.
- Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

- Rimmer, W., & Floyd, A. (2020). The contribution of conferences to teachers' professionalism. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language (TESL-EJ)*, 24(1). <http://www.tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej93/a3.pdf>
- Sanders, W. L., Wright, S. P., & Horn, S. P. (1997). Teacher and classroom context effects on student achievement: Implications for teacher evaluation. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 11(1), 57-67.
- Saunders, R. (2014). Effectiveness of research-based teacher professional development: *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(4), 165-184.
- Schreiber, J. B., Nora, A., Stage, F. K., Barlow, E. A., & King, J. (2006). Reporting structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis results: A review. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(6), 323-338.
- Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Soodmand Afshar, H., Fazelimanie, A., & Doosti, M. (2017). Developing an inventory to investigate current professional development needs of Iranian EFL teachers. *Teaching English Language*, 11(2), 161-194.
- Stenhouse, L. (1987). *Research as a basis for teaching*. Heineman Educational Books Ltd.
- Stronge, J. H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers*. ASCD.
- Tabatabaee-Yazdi, M., Motallebzadeh, K., Ashraf, H., & Baghaei, P. (2018). Continuing professional development strategies: A model for the Iranian EFL teachers' success. *SAGE Open*, 8(1). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244018764234>.
- Tabatabaee, O., & Nazem, Y. (2013). English language teachers' conceptions of research. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(3), 521-532.
- Trgalová, J., & Jahn, A. P. (2013). Quality issue in the design and use of resources by mathematics teachers. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, 45(7), 973-986.
- Vangrieken, K., Dochy, F., Raes, E., & Kyndt, E. (2015). Teacher collaboration: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 15, 17-40.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2003). Teacher research as professional development for P-12 educators in the USA. *Educational Action Research*, 11(2), 301-326.

Copyright rests with authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.