

A Case Study of an Interplay of an In-Service Teacher’s Possible Selves in His Professional Development

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Received 07/11/2023	ABSTRACT Professional development is a vital process enhancing in-service teachers’ professional qualities. This case study investigated an in-service teacher’s possible selves and factors influencing his professional development. The participant was a project-based teacher in a constructionism school in Bangkok, Thailand. He was selected as the subject for this study due to the rich data he shared with the researchers in a larger-scale research study. Semi-structured interviews and personal diaries were the main instruments employed to reveal his possible selves, goals, and investment in the professional developmental process. An interplay of possible selves and the factors involved were analyzed and presented using narrative inquiry techniques. The findings revealed that the teacher invested heavily in the professional development process to improve his project-based learning pedagogy and English proficiency. The congruence of his ideal and ought-to selves, his clear goal, and his positive attitudes toward professional development were clearly observed. This clearly influenced his
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	investment in professional development. Implications and suggestions for the teacher's professional development and future research were discussed.
	Keywords: Professional development, Teacher's possible selves, Motivation, In-service teachers

Introduction

Empirical research on 'possible selves', the concept proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986), is very influential, and it has long been prevalent and proliferated in psychology, its fields of origin rather than applied linguistics. Possible selves were introduced to applied linguistics only in the latter half of the 2000s (Hiver, 2013). Hamman et al. (2013), for example, exploited possible-selves theory to understand the identity development of new teachers. Kubanyiova (2009) employed the concept to study language teachers' possible selves. Hiver (2013) also focused on possible language teacher selves. He investigated the roles that possible language teacher selves play in the teachers' development choices. Observing the promising insights gained from this research, Hiver (2013) calls for more studies to investigate the complexity of possible selves and their role in motivating teachers' behaviors for continuous professional development.

This case study, which was part of a larger-scale research project on teachers' professional development, aims to answer his call. It explored the roles of an in-service teacher's possible selves, his motivation, and behaviors in professional development in the unique context of an alternative school that has rarely been researched in previous studies on Thai teachers' professional development. The context of the study was within a constructionism Thai school where project-based learning is employed to promote student learning. The school has strong policies for constructionism and bilingual education using both Thai and English as a medium for instruction. In this study, Napat (pseudonym), a male Thai teacher with 7 years teaching experience at the school, was chosen as the subject of the case study due to the rich information on his possible selves and his continuous investment in his professional development. The main research questions for this case include: 1) How does the participant describe his possible selves? 2) How do his possible selves interact with his goals, plans, and behaviors for professional development? 3) What is his perception about his own professional development?

Literature Review

Possible selves

Possible selves illustrates a type of self-knowledge which helps people learn and understand their future-oriented dimensions. They include the selves that one would like to become, the selves that one thinks they should become and the selves that one is afraid of becoming. Possible selves are personalized and are influenced by their past and present distinctive experiences on social and cultural context (Hamman et al., 2010). Given this, possible selves could serve two main functions: firstly, to serve as a roadmap mapping one's present to their future (Oyserman et al., 2004) and secondly, to serve as a motivational resource shaping one's future conduct in an effort to achieve their desired goals or to prevent undesired outcomes.

The concept of possible selves is widely explored amongst motivational researchers who view motivation as a dynamic and future-oriented construct. A study by Ruan et al.'s (2020), for example, employed a self-discrepancy theory, which focuses on gaps between different aspects of selves, to explore female English teachers' career development in China. Their study revealed that the participants were motivated by the perceived discrepancy between their ambitions (i.e., their ideal selves), their duties (i.e., their ought-to selves), and their reality (i.e., their actual selves). The teachers put efforts on meaningful activities that would enhance their teaching effectiveness. Yuan's (2020) studied novice nontraditional teacher educators' identity in higher education in Hong Kong. He concluded that the novice educators perceived the discrepancy between their actual self as novices and their ideal/ought-to self as effective teacher educators and experienced challenges when teaching their students who had somewhat more school-teaching experiences than them. This signaled to the novices to pursue professional development activities, ranging from self-studying new teaching approaches, to enrolling in a teaching diploma program, in order to narrow the perceived discrepancy and to ensure their attributes as effective educators.

In Thailand, Agbenyega and Klibthong (2021) observed the discrepancy perceived by Thai early childhood teachers in context of inclusive education and how the discrepancy urged these teachers to pursue professional development. They affirmed that the teachers perceived a wide gap between their ideal (i.e., a loving/caring preschool teacher) and reality (i.e., a lost/failed preschool teacher). Since most of the teachers barely understood the philosophy and practice of inclusive education, they faced challenges in dealing with children in an inclusive class. This urged them to seek professional development activities.

These studies underscored the crucial role of perceived discrepancies in a teacher's possible selves and their motivation for pursuing professional development. When the gap is relatively manageable, teachers are likely to be motivated and pursue their professional development goals.

In order to understand a teacher's professional development, a qualitative study focusing on a specific context is required. This study focuses on the unique context of a Thai alternative school employing possible selves as a theoretical framework for investigating an in-service teacher's professional development as a whole.

Roles of possible selves and teacher professional development

Professional development is seen as a key process in preparing quality teachers. It provides teachers opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values regarding the teaching profession. Among several factors that could contribute to a teachers' professional development, teachers' possible selves are very influential since they guide their future possibilities, showing them aspects of the profession, they should strive for or avoid, and then modifying their behavior in line with those goals (Hamman et al., 2013). Hiver (2013) clarified that teachers' possible selves, either ideal or ought-to, could affect their choice to participate in professional development opportunities; given that they can 'enhance' or 'alter' their professional qualities.

Most recent studies in various contexts found that teachers' possible selves influence their choice of participation to attend professional development activities. Teachers are likely to attend and retain their participation in professional development programs that promote their ideal/ought-to self. Ulla and Winitkun (2018) conducted a study to explore in-service Thai primary teachers' perception on teacher training programs. They found that the primary teachers were likely to attend activity-based training rather than lecture- or discussion-based as they viewed activity-based training as contributing more to their ideal self and teaching context. They were also more likely to attend the training that introduced multidisciplinary teaching strategies as this was beneficial for what they expected to teach (i.e., their ought-to self). A case study by Noonan (2019) also revealed the crucial role of ideal self of Brynn, a math teacher in the United States who aspired to become a knowledgeable math teacher, in deciding and pursuing a series of workshops for her professional development. She prioritized the workshops on math content over the district-led department meetings that focused on pedagogical aspects.

Truong and Murray's study (2019) also found that one of the main factors driving the Vietnamese English teachers' attendance in an online

professional development course was their ideal self as a skillful English teacher with strong language proficiency, and this was key in sustaining their motivation to seek additional professional development opportunities outside the required course. Ovalle Quiroz and González's (2023) recent study with Colombian English teachers also revealed that Colombian English teachers show high interest in professional development opportunities that highlight attributes which are in line with their ideal and ought-to self. The teachers were motivated to attend professional development opportunities that allowed them to strengthen their English proficiency (i.e., their ideal self) since they felt insecure about their proficiency level. Also, they were motivated to attend in opportunities to develop their expertise in ELT and ICT as these were highly promoted in the Colombian's educational policy, or their ought-to self.

From these studies, teachers' possible selves could serve as a future reference to their goals. Teachers' possible selves acted as a map that teachers consult with when it comes to their choice of whether to commit or withdraw from certain professional development opportunities. These become influential factors in their professional development.

Teacher professional development and keys to success

Teaching is a profession that is complex and dynamic in nature. It requires a lifelong learning perspective to adjust to rapid changes and global or societal needs and constraints. To this end, professional development is adopted as a key attribute to prepare quality teachers and foster their learning in the effort to meet global and societal expectations, as well as adjust their professional beliefs and practices as needed (Kennedy, 2016).

Several factors could contribute to the effectiveness of teachers' professional development, for example, the school's context, the students, the teachers themselves, and the national policies (Avalos, 2011). All these can uniquely influence procedures and goals of professional development in each setting. Amongst those contributing factors are forms of teacher professional development. Teacher professional development can be categorized in two primary forms: traditional and non-traditional (Bayar, 2014). The traditional teacher professional development typically occurs in a one-time event and requires teachers to attend a particular pre-defined topic following a set of curricula. This consists of seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. The non-traditional teacher professional development typically occurs over time and is dependent on the teachers' initiative. This consists of mentoring, coaching, peer observation, and so on.

Several scholars have discussed the effectiveness of both forms of teacher professional development arguing that traditional professional

development is not as effective as its counterpart. Birman et al. (2000) pointed out that with its short duration in nature, traditional professional development is not able to offer enough time for teachers to learn and practice new skills effectively. Studies by Powell and Bodur (2019) found traditional professional development to be poor. Traditional professional development was unable to meet teachers' needs and their concerns over the class they taught since it lacked personalization. Taddese and Roa (2022) also regarded traditional professional development as 'foreign' and ineffective when it came to classroom reality. The primary Ethiopian teachers in the study revealed that having a training or workshop on effective classroom practices from well-to-do countries without customization to their reality had little to no impact on their professional skills. They further added that this form of professional development lacked proper support, ignored their needs, and gave them a sense of manipulation which presented itself in the form of mandatory duty. Most studies suggested non-traditional approach for teacher's professional development since it facilitates a longer duration which enables teachers greater time to learn and practice new skills more effectively. With its dependency on teachers' initiative in nature, non-traditional professional development may suit the needs of teachers and their classroom context better.

Another factor that influences the success of professional development is the elements of the programme. According to Desimone (2011), there are five key elements: content focus, coherence, active learning, collective participation, and duration. Firstly, the content of teacher professional development activity should be relevant, consistent and well-aligned with their beliefs about teaching and the teaching context. Furthermore, teachers should be actively engaged in the programme through, for example, peer observation and peer feedback. To build up their collective participation, teachers from the same grade, subject, or school should participate in the activities together so that they can exchange knowledge and feedback with each other. Desimone (2011) suggested that an extended period of more than 20 hours will better ensure a sustained, intensive learning process and effectiveness of a teacher development programme. Similar findings were revealed from Bayar's (2014) qualitative study with teachers in Turkey. He concluded that a continuous teacher professional development program is vital for teachers' growth and an effective professional development programme should be relevant to the teachers' needs. He highlighted a context-dependent design instead of a 'one-size-fit-all' model of teacher development programme. Bayar suggested that teachers should be allowed to decide what and how to learn in the programme.

Teachers' perception is another contributing factor to success of professional development. According to Steyn (2010), teachers' positive

perception encourages their active participation in professional development and so enhances its effectiveness. Teachers with a positive perception are more likely to see it as an opportunity to learn, set goals, and put their efforts on necessary actions to reach the goals. A study by Alpsoy and Türkdoğan (2017) with Turkish EFL teachers revealed that when teachers viewed it as ‘a-must’ to professionally improve their knowledge regarding content, pedagogy, and technology used in EFL classrooms, they would seriously set goals to improve those aspects and be highly engaged in several professional development opportunities. In their study, the participants were very active in academic seminars and created plans for their career paths and professional growths. To this end, teachers’ perception appears to be one of the key factors motivating teachers’ participation and efforts in professional development.

Noticeably these previous studies suggested several factors that contribute to the effectiveness of teacher professional development: the school’s context, the teachers and students themselves, forms of professional development, elements of the programme, and importantly teacher’s perception on professional development. Moreover, mostly these studies focused on the effectiveness of a training program or workshops. This leads to the demand for qualitative studies that target the whole process of professional development and insights into specific contexts. This study, therefore, aims to fill in this research gap by delving into teacher professional development as a whole using possible selves as a key theoretical framework to explore its role on an in-service teacher’s motivation and his behavior for professional development in very unique context of an alternative school in Thailand.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopted a narrative inquiry approach to reveal a teacher’s professional development experience since the approach is promising in revealing a story from an emic perspective. According to Clandinin and Caine (2008), narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding individual’s experience over time and in context. To this, it is a way of making sense of an in-service teacher’s experience in his professional development (Clarke, 2023).

Research context

The study took place at a constructionism school in Bangkok, Thailand where project-based learning is adopted as a key teaching approach. To promote this learning pedagogy, teachers are encouraged to pursue knowledge and skills relevant to project-based learning, as well as knowledge

outside their subject matter, for their professional development in order to best offer project-based lessons that fit well with the school's philosophy. To do so, both formal (i.e., workshop and training) and informal learning (reflection session and self-study) professional development have been promoted. In addition to project-based learning, English is another key aspect of teacher professional development since it is a useful tool in supporting students' learning and in intra-school communication. Given this, developing knowledge and skills relevant to project-based learning and English is regarded as a core policy of the school.

Research participant

This case study is part of a larger-scale qualitative study conducted to gain insights into the school's teacher professional development. Due to his rich data, Napat (pseudonym), a 30-years-old male Thai teacher of math with 7 years teaching experiences was chosen as a case study in this study. Napat was serious about his professional development. He loved sharing experience which made his data rich and he expected that his stories would contribute to our understanding of professional development.

Napat received a BA in engineering and an MA in physics education from a university in Bangkok. He was responsible for teaching math classes for grades 10-12. It is worth noting that the study was officially granted by the KMUTT Ethics Committees and strictly followed ethical regulations. Before the whole process had started, Napat was clearly informed of the study in detail. He was also informed about his right to leave the study at all times if he wished to and was guaranteed his privacy and non-backlash in relation to the data submitted.

Research instruments

The study used semi-structured interviews and a teacher's personal diary as the main instruments. Semi-structured interviews permit interviews to be focused while still allowing the researchers the autonomy to explore pertinent ideas that may come up during the course of the interview, which can further enhance understanding of the issues. Personal diaries can also provide the rich insight into qualitative phenomenological research. They allow for a contemporaneous insight into the lived experience of the person from the emic perspective. They help report perceptions, opinions, thoughts, feelings, motivation and behaviours of the participants (Alamri, 2019; Willig, 2013).

The first semi-structured interview was conducted to explore Napat's self-concepts, his goals and plan for professional development, and his

perception of his professional development. Further interviews were used to follow up on his diary for further clarification once a month. Throughout the study, four semi-structured interviews were held. Each interview lasted about 30-45 minutes in Thai, and it was audio-recorded and manually transcribed by the researcher for further analysis.

Napat had been routinely writing the diary, mainly to reflect his teaching performance. The diary, therefore, was not an extra part of his work. The researchers asked him to include what he did for professional development apart from the teaching reflection as well as asked for Napat's permission to access his personal diary. Napat kept the diary at least three entries a week and he shared the part of the diary which was related to his professional development with one of the researchers every week. In total he shared 36 entries with the researchers.

Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews and the diaries were analyzed based on the research questions. From the first interview, expressions and words that related to Napat's possible selves, his goals and plans, and his perception on professional development were identified and used to structure the narrative. Data from his diaries was also used as guidelines for the follow-up interviews which aimed to clarify his possible selves, goals, plans, and behaviors for professional development.

Regarding data validation, the researchers' interpretation of the data was regularly doublechecked with Napat. His narratives and how the extracts from the interviews and the diaries were used in the study were shown to him to check the accuracy of the interpretation. It is worth noting that the data from the interviews and Napat's diaries was analyzed in Thai. After Napat validated and confirmed the researchers' interpretation, it was translated into English. The researchers, then, allowed Napat to recheck the interpretation of the English version.

Findings

Napat viewed himself as a learning teacher who was eager to learn new knowledge and skills despite his several years of teaching experience. He believed that self-development was important; he therefore highly valued professional development as a path to learn and grow professionally. From the interviews and the diary, there were two aspects that Napat aimed to develop professionally: teaching and English.

“I want to know more about teaching and project-based learning. I want to teach math in a non-traditional way and

discover more new teaching ideas that I could make use of in my class...[for English] I want to fully understand English when I talk to my foreign peers...I want to speak English more fluently like that of my Thai”.

Napat’s aim to develop teaching and English became a motivational factor that shaped his career path. Napat’s ideal and ought-to self are described as follows.

Napat’s ideal and ought-to self for teaching

Napat put teaching as one of his goals for professional development. He thought that there were still a lot of things to learn about math teaching and he was enthusiastic to do so.

“I don’t think I perfectly know everything about math. So, I think it’s important to keep exploring new knowledge... I’m also willing to improve my teaching to facilitate students’ learning”.

Napat would like to be a skillful project-based teacher who could design interesting project-based math lessons which are related to real-world problems to challenge his students. He wanted to teach math in a non-traditional way focusing more on knowledge application. Napat thought that he lacked creative ideas in designing lessons and this obstructed his lesson planning. He, therefore, would like to learn more about math teaching concepts to pave ways to his ideal self.

“I am not creative. I usually run out of ideas about what to teach in my class. I sometimes think that my class is not interesting enough... I want to be a teacher who can teach math concepts creatively, instead of doing rote teaching or chalk-and-talk method...I want to be a teacher who is skillful in designing math lessons that encourage knowledge application. I don’t want my students to just open their math book, recite formulas, and solve equations. I rather prefer to show them how math is applied in their life.”

His ideal self for teaching was aligned well with the school's policy. The school expects every teacher to apply project-based learning as their teaching principles. Both his personal interest and the ought-to self from school expectation drove his direction towards his professional goal.

“Project-based learning is very new to me when I first started working here. I barely knew about it at first, but I think it is worth learning because it would help me work well in this

school. I try to learn about it and I understand it better after years went by... I teach math concepts that are useful to students' projects. They [his students] have to use math in their projects”.

To achieve his goals, he planned to do many things. He regularly wrote a post-teaching reflection after every class. He planned to study them to improve his future teaching. He also planned to conduct classroom-based research, join an international Ph.D. program in education, and undertake an independent study about teaching ideas and current trends in an effort to create project-based math lessons related to real-world problems. By doing so, he believed that it would benefit his knowledge about teaching and would allow him to create future lessons more creatively and teach those lessons more skillfully.

“I was required by the school to write a post-teaching reflection and I have been writing it since I first started teaching. I use the reflection as a source to analyze what I've done well or what's need further improvement in each class so that I could learn from my past teaching experiences... after I learn a new teaching technique, I also conduct classroom research to analyze its effectiveness on my students' achievement whether it fits my class or not. I have some background knowledge about research so I can simply do it on my own... I also study global trends, like cryptocurrency, I think my lesson would be more interesting if I could relate math concepts to those trends... this year, I will join a Ph.D. program in education. This would benefit my teaching knowledge for sure”.

Napat's performance on his teaching development

To develop his teaching, Napat did most of the things that he had planned. He wrote the reflection after every class since he had started teaching. In his reflection, he reflected on his good and need-improvement practice, as well as his students' performance. Napat revealed that the reflection was the helpful source to improve his teaching and lesson planning.

“The reflection helps me understand my teaching and record the techniques that worked and did not work. I am neither good at writing nor expressing thoughts and feelings well, so it takes me some time to write but that's fine”.

Napat also started his Ph.D. in education in August 2022. He got a partial scholarship which covered 70 percent of the registration fee and paid the rest on his own. He was satisfied with this investment and revealed that

he learned many things from his Ph.D. classes, including learning theories and technological tools for classroom.

“Working and doing a Ph.D. at the same time is challenging, but I think it’s worthwhile since I learn a lot from it and can use a variety of classroom technological tools to engage my students in a pre-teaching stage”.

Napat also undertook an informal independent study to develop his knowledge about teaching and project-based learning. When he came across topics that he thought were useful for his project-based lessons, he would study them to prepare ideas for his future lessons. Napat believed that this would help him to create a meaningful lesson that better encouraged his students’ knowledge application to real-world problems.

“I follow several math and science scholars’ Facebook pages that suggest interesting knowledge and teaching ideas. I brought some of those ideas into my class. There are several teaching ideas that I never thought about them until I read their posts... I also update myself with the knowledge in different fields, such as investment trends, so that I can apply it in my class. I want to create the lesson that encourages students’ knowledge application as well”.

He also conducted classroom research as a means to improve his teaching. Napat revealed that he regularly conducted 1-2 classroom research studies to explore the effectiveness of his teaching approach and his students’ achievement. Napat thought that this would help improve his teaching and find a new teaching technique that fitted well with a project-based class. However, after starting his Ph.D. classes, Napat did not have time to conduct any classroom research.

“When I learn a new teaching approach, I usually try it in my class... conducting the classroom research suggests findings that ensure me the effectiveness of the chosen teaching approach. I could make use of the findings to improve my teaching”.

It could be seen that his ideal self and ought-to self were in the same line, and this guided his professional development activities. He intensively dedicated his time and energy to develop his teaching. During the follow-up interviews, Napat revealed that he believed that his teaching knowledge and skills were developed. He seemed to be highly satisfied with his improvement.

“I believe that I am improving in terms of the teaching skills that I could apply in my class to develop a more innovative math lesson...A Ph.D. will be very helpful for my teaching development. I learn new learning theories, like a blended learning theory, and other useful tools that I could use to make my math classes more innovative. There is one of the Ph.D. classes that requires me to read academic papers and have a discussion about them. I remember that I worked really hard in reading those papers in order to make sure that I could discuss with my classmates. This intensively help improving my knowledge and understanding about teaching”.

He gave an example of how he professionally developed by applying the ideas from the world’s current trends in designing a real-world project-based lesson for this class.

“In one of my math classes, I taught my students about statistics and assigned them to buy fictitious stocks every week throughout the semester. The students had to keep their investment profile and calculate their loss and profit. At the end of the semester, I invited a professional investor to come and give advice on my students’ investment performance. The idea about investment came from my independent study about the world’s current trends. I read about investment, and I thought this could make my math lesson sounds more creative. I think this kind of lesson is meaningful and better encourages my students’ knowledge application”.

Napat’s ideal and ought-to self for English

English was Napat’s another professional development goal. He is well-aware of the importance of English regarding it as a communication tool to connect him with his foreign peers and a learning tool to support his students’ learning.

“I have to use English when I work with my foreign peers. There is a class that we have to discuss and plan together. If I don’t use English, we might not be able to work with each other... I also have to use English in my class, especially when I design the worksheet. Most of the content I teach is from IGCSE so it would be fruitful for my students if I use English in the worksheet”.

Napat had a positive attitude towards English and strongly desired to be good at it. He described his ideal self as a person who could speak English fluently and confidently. He regarded English as part of his professional development goals.

“I want to improve my speaking and listening. I want to fully understand English when I talk to my foreign peers and speak English more fluently so we could work smoothly altogether”.

He noticed a big gap between his ideal self and actual self. He was aware that he was not good at English especially for speaking and listening skills. He usually felt nervous when he had to use English and did not fully understand his foreign peers.

“Due to my limited knowledge about English, I don’t know what to speak when I have to use English and I also don’t understand what my foreign peers say as well. I feel nervous when they speak fast and when I hear some words that I don’t know. The conversation usually ends up with ‘never mind’ and I feel like I am quitted. This badly affects my confidence”.

Napat was also well aware of the school policy to develop teachers' English. The school expects Thai and non-Thai teachers to work collaboratively to promote international working environment. The school also encouraged Thai teachers to use both Thai and English in class.

“As a head teacher of engineering house, I have to use English when I communicate with my foreign peers so that we can plan our teaching and lesson together... I have to teach IGCSE math. Most of the content I teach are in English. When I teach, I have to use English as much as I can, so the students get familiar with English too”.

Napat had a clear plan to develop his English. Firstly, he planned to expand his vocabulary knowledge; he spent years studying English on his own by reading English books and English-teaching applications. He also planned to take a private English course and the school’s English training workshop. He believed that his English could be improved by engaging in an English-speaking environment.

“I have been studying English by reading extensive books and language-teaching applications for years. I didn’t take it seriously at first, but I promise to myself that I would take it more serious from now... I plan to attend an upcoming school’s training. This time I will try harder to speak and listen to English in the class... I also plan to sign up for a private online English course as well... I think my speaking and listening could be improved effectively if I am able to use it [English] in context. I am certain that this would help improve my English for sure”.

Napat's performance on his English development

Napat usually wrote about his English development activities in his diary. He followed his plan well, for example, he studied vocabulary from a mobile application. He also read books in English in his free time.

“I learned four vocabularies this morning in an application on my phone called ‘Bright’. I usually study the vocabulary and its meaning by myself. Today I guessed some vocabulary wrong because I was confused by two similar meanings”.

“Studying English vocabulary from books and application seem not to help improving my English much because I am not good at memorizing words and meanings, but I will continue my study because I want to know more vocabulary”.

He spent time listening to conversations from a mobile application and complete a post-listening quiz. He also practiced speaking by roleplaying the conversation. Napat recorded the audio while he was speaking and listened to the audio to review his pronunciation and fluency.

This week, I came up with a new technique to improve my listening. I found a new, useful application called ‘English conversation’. There are conversation audios and quizzes available to check users’ listening comprehension. I listened to the conversation given and answered all the questions on the quiz, mostly correctly. Sometimes I failed the quiz because I wasn’t paying close attention. After that, I roleplayed the conversation and recorded an audio so that I could later listen to it again and see what aspects of speaking needed to be improved. (*Napat’s diary – Week 6*)

Sometimes due to his workload, Napat was unable to self-study English every day as he had planned. However, he never missed the private course that he registered at the time.

Napat invested heavily in his English development. Apart from his self-study, he also attended a private English course. He received a partial sponsorship (8,000 Bath) from the school for the private course and was willing to pay most of the course fee (35,000 Bath) himself. The course required him to attend 20 sessions a month (25 minutes per session) within two years at his convenience. He could choose the topic and the instructor for the course. As he wrote in the diary, Napat planned to attend two to five sessions a week, but due to his workload, he could only attend two to three sessions per week on average, which was still in line with his aim.

In the course, Napat encountered some difficulties. For example, he could not speak English well and did not understand what his instructor said. However, he was not easily discouraged and was determined to improve. He always kept notes about what he learned and reviewed his notes after the session.

At the time he attended his private course, Napat also attended the school's English training. The training took place every four months, 10 days each during the semester break; all Thai teachers in the school were required to attend and were tested after the training. At the time of this study, Napat attended the training in April and August 2022. He was tested and was classified in the A2 CEFR level. He revealed that the training mostly focused on speaking and grammar. Most of the class activities were practicing a conversation about, for example, inviting friends to dinner, giving compliments, etc.

“I was assigned to talk about several topics in class. The topics were simply related to a routine life such as foods and places etc. Some basic grammar rules were introduced in class as well... the instructor prepared several activities for the class. He encouraged us to speak English through trivia games and roleplaying”.

He attended every session throughout the training. Napat thought that the training was useful for improving his speaking. However, he felt that his listening was not much improved since the class was conducted in Thai most of the time. He also thought that there were too many games that perhaps unsuitable for adult learners and did not well encourage the attendees to use English.

“The training is fine. I think my speaking were slightly improved from the class conversation that we frequently had... my listening skills were not much improved since the class was instructed in Thai most of the time, so I didn't get a chance to practice listening as I expected... there too many games in the class. To me, it seemed like a class for middle school students rather than for adult learners... I think it would be better if the class put more emphasis on activities that encourage learners to speak and listen to English, such as discussion”.

Since his ideal and ought-to self for English were in the same line, this seemed to guide his investment for English and his commitment in several professional development activities. During the final follow-up interview, Napat clarified that he was able to use English more fluently as he would like to be and firmly thought that his efforts were paid off. He further revealed

that his vocabulary knowledge was expanded from his self-study; this in turned improved his understanding of English. His speaking and listening were also improved a lot, particularly from the private course, since it encouraged him to use English more than the school's training.

“I think my English is gradually improved. I learn new vocabulary from ‘Bright’ and this helps me to understand English better because I have a larger vocabulary bank... my English is improved from my private learning rather than the school's training. For my private learning, I was able to choose a topic that I want to learn or skills that I want to improve so that I could carefully and intensively focus on them. I also have to speak English to my instructor at all times during the session”.

After 25 sessions, I believe I can now see my speaking improved. I think I could speak so fluently in class today because I have a larger vocabulary and I also frequently practice speaking. (*Napat's diary – Week 5*)

He also gave an example of how his English was improved when he had an opportunity to use English with non-Thais.

“At the first day of my Ph.D. class, I was really happy with myself because everything I had dedicated for English development was paid off. I felt that I could speak and respond to English more fluently when I had a discussion with my foreign classmates. I could also understand English better when I had a conversation with them as well. The conversation went naturally, I could prepare my thoughts in English and speak it right away”.

Discussion

The findings of the study imply an interplay between Napat's possible selves, his goals, and plans for professional development. It can be seen that Napat positively perceived the discrepancy between his actual and ideal self in teaching and English. To him, the discrepancy was not overly great, and this motivated him to set goals and plans for professional development. This finding is consistent with Ruan and Toom's (2022) recent study which revealed Chinese female teachers perceived the discrepancies between their actual and ideal selves in their teaching, research, and teacher learning; the discrepancies served motivational effect on their efforts to seek for meaningful professional development activities in an attempt to narrow the existing gaps. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the discrepancy between one's actual and ideal self is important in developing motivation

especially when it is not too large. In other words, if the discrepancy is perceived as attainable, it could serve as a motivator and encourage necessary actions in the effort to narrow it. On the other hand, it may serve as a demotivator if it is perceived as unattainable (Kumazawa, 2013).

Napat's ideal self and ought-to self for teaching and English also aligned well. This serves as strong motivation and clear goals for professional development. In terms of teaching, his ideal self as a skillful project-based math teacher fitted the school's expectation. This reinforced his plan and his investment to develop his career path. The same to English development, his ideal and ought-to self was in the same line. This becomes a strong motivation for him to invest heavily on English language learning. This finding is congruent with a study by Ribas (2013), who pointed out that the alignment between teachers' ideal and ought-to selves greatly reinforce their motivation to invest in professional development. In her study teachers' ideal selves were aligned to their ought-to selves. They realized that they should possess a sense of duty, obligations, and responsibilities imposed by a sociocultural context. She also concluded that it was crucial for teachers to observe the gap between their actual and either ideal or ought-to selves in order to develop their motivation.

Napat's strong motivation for professional development, his goals and investment in professional were also well aligned. It can be seen that Napat was committed to invest in several activities to develop his teaching and English. He clearly devoted himself to develop his teaching skills by formally taking a higher degree in education, spending his time informally studying about project-based learning, doing action research as well as regularly writing a personal reflection. The same to his English, Napat clearly devoted himself to develop his English by formally attending the school's training and signing himself for the private course. He also informally had been studying English by himself from the mobile applications and books for years. His commitment to perform several activities could imply his perception on benefits of chosen professional development activities to his ideal self. Napat invested in several professional development activities believing those would help him to reach his ideal self for teaching and English. This is congruent with Ovalle Quiroz and Gonzalez (2023) who found that EFL teachers appeared to join professional development programs that directly support their ideal attributes (e.g., proficient English speakers and ELT experts) and tend to be uninterested in the professional development programs that did not directly do so. Moreover, the findings of this study further support Truong and Murray (2019), who pointed out that teachers' ideal self is a powerful motivational influence in guiding their participation as well as sustaining their investment in professional development.

Importantly, the findings of this study also imply the importance of teacher's attitude and its positive effect on his investment. Teacher's attitude plays a crucial role in guiding their investment in professional development. Napat had a positive attitude towards professional development as he viewed it as a pathway to learn and grow professionally. He also had a positive attitude towards project-based learning and English as he would like to keep learning them and become more skillful in both facets. These positive attitudes towards professional development, project-based learning, and English encouraged him to invest in several professional development activities, either formally or informally, as well as in activities outside of those that are required by the school. Alzahrani and Nor (2021) also observed that teachers regard professional development as an opportunity to enhance their professional qualities. This positive attitude also encourages them to intensively engage in several professional development activities, including those that are not formally required.

Implications

In this section, implications of the findings will be discussed regarding teaching development, English language development, teacher's possible selves, and future research.

Teaching development

Teaching is one crucial aspect in teacher professional development. At the school where a specific teaching approach, like project-based learning in this study, is adopted, teachers should be given an opportunity to learn about the school's teaching approach as their professional development so that they become more skillful in utilizing principles of the approach in their teaching. It is crucial for teachers to understand the approach well so that they can develop lessons as well as teaching strategies that are in line with the approach. In case of Napat, his interest in project-based learning approach and goal to get better at it had been well supported by the school in the form of formal training (e.g., post-teaching reflection) as well as the grant for his professional development. Napat's motivation to learn was, therefore, reinforced. He invested in both traditional and non-traditional professional development activities in an effort to improve his teaching. He also sought for additional opportunities outside the school. The alignment between the top-down institutional policy and the teacher's perception and personal interest is an important factor for success in professional development. Having an explicit policy on teacher professional development could also serve to remind teachers of their professional qualities, or the criteria that

they must meet, as well as helps navigating the direction of teachers' investments in professional development so that they are certain of what aspects they are going to develop and why they are doing so, and that their efforts are meaningful; this would help reinforce teachers' motivation for professional development. The school should support teachers with professional development activities and/or budget and time to reinforce their motivation and encourage their long-term engagement in continuous professional development.

English language development

English is now a fundamental skill required in every profession including teaching. Therefore, English may be included as part of teacher professional development in order to cultivate lifelong learning skills among Thai teachers and to improve their ability to incorporate English into their teaching practice. This could help improve their teaching qualities and subsequently their students' achievement. The findings of this study revealed that English development could be done in several ways, through either formal or informal learning. Napat's success in English language development seemed to be the results of an interplay between his ideal self, the ought-to expectation of the school, his clear motivation to learn, and his investment in the development process. He was very determined to learn and he also received well support from the school. It is important for the school to see the importance of English and encourage teachers to improve their English as part of their professional development. Teacher's English development could also be done more effectively with the school's formal support, for example, the school's English proficiency training or budget provided for teacher's English development. In addition to formal support, the school could also promote informal study of English to encourage teacher's initiative in English development outside the school. Teachers should be allowed to seek outside opportunities or methods that are in line with their goals for English language development to reinforce and sustain their motivation for professional development.

Teacher's possible selves

The findings of this study shed light on how an interplay between teacher's possible selves impact his investment in professional development. It is important for teachers to aware of their ideal and ought-to selves; knowing those would help them recognize of their goals and the discrepancy between their possible selves, as well as make them aware of their situation whether their ideal and ought-to selves are in the same line. Having both

selves in the same line could reinforce teachers' motivation and their investment in professional development. In contrary, if both selves are in conflict, this may discourage teachers' motivation for professional development. Teachers who have a conflict in their possible selves may need to consider either to adjust their ideal selves so that both selves are in balance or to change their career. Teacher professional development is, therefore, a complex process that requires teachers to look amongst themselves and aware of their possible selves, who they would like to be and who they think they should be, as well as aware of the difference between those facets. It also requires the school and policymakers to recognize an interplay between teachers' possible selves, the school's policy, and other surrounding contextual factors as well as how these impact teachers' investment in professional development.

Future research

To provide a more insightful view of how teacher's possible selves influence their professional development, future research might be conducted in the form of a longitudinal study, using ethnographic methods to explore teacher's possible selves more insightfully. The future research may recruit more teacher participants with diverse backgrounds, subjects of responsibility, years of teaching experience, or even employment contexts could also supply more intriguing facets in relation to teacher's possible selves as well. Finally, as teacher's self-concepts are dynamic in nature (Kumazawa, 2013), future research might look at how teacher's self-concepts change over time and how this influences their professional development. It may also focus on teacher's past self since teacher's past self may have informed their actual and future states.

Conclusion

This study investigated an interplay between factors related to teacher's possible selves in his professional development. It employed qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews and diary to narrate a teacher's professional development stories. The findings revealed the participant's strong motivation to develop teaching and English skills. His ideal self and ought-to self were aligned serving as a clear goal to help him plan several development activities and engaged him in these activities. He was also very positive about his investment and professional development. The study holistically offered an understanding of a complex process of teacher professional development. It highlighted how teacher's possible selves play role and guides teachers to pursue their professional development.

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