Perceptions and Needs of EFL Teachers in Thailand Regarding Continuous Professional Development in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognized as essential for helping English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to adapt to changing educational needs, improve their teaching practices, and support student success. However, in Thailand, little research has focused on the actual perceptions, needs, and challenges of EFL teachers concerning CPD activities. The study explores how teachers engage in CPD, what they perceive as its benefits, the challenges they face, and the institutional support they require. A quantitative descriptive approach was used to collect data from 110 participants through a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings reveal high engagement in CPD activities, such as workshops, seminars, mentoring, and online resources. However, teachers' views on the necessity of CPD and the support they receive vary widely. Many reported challenges, including time constraints, financial limitations, the lack of institutional encouragement, and technological barriers. Participants highlighted a preference for CPD that aligns with their professional goals, promotes flexibility in scheduling, and encourages collaboration. Drawing on Desimone's (2009) framework for effective professional development, this study emphasizes the importance of content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. The results underline the need for CPD programs that are relevant, inclusive, and supported by schools and educational authorities. This study contributes to the growing research on CPD in the Thai context and supports the development of targeted CPD programs that better meet the needs of diverse teaching populations.

English language teaching (ELT) continually evolves to meet the shifting expectations of stakeholders in a globalized world, making Continuous Professional Development (CPD) critical for teachers in this dynamic educational landscape (Derakhshan et al., 2020). In Thailand, the surge in English proficiency needs, driven by economic globalization and educational reforms, emphasizes communicative teaching approaches and positions EFL teachers at the forefront of meeting these demands (Bragg et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2021).

Changing ELT strategies highlight the necessity for teachers to continually enhance their skills to address students' diverse needs, underlining CPD's role in adapting to new linguistic trends, methodologies, and technological advancements (Kasprabowo et al., 2018). The diversity among EFL teachers, including both Thai and non-Thai educators, introduces complexities to CPD, necessitating an approach that acknowledges these varied experiences and perspectives to be effective (Gumbo, 2020).

Understanding CPD within Thailand's unique cultural and educational context is essential, as local norms shape language education. Efforts to align Thai education with international standards, such as proficiency-based assessments and communicative language teaching, require EFL teachers to frequently update their teaching practices and utilize technologies effectively (Phothongsunan, 2018). The increased emphasis on digital learning tools and the shift toward communicative teaching create a context where EFL teachers must not only adapt but be supported through effective CPD structures.

Moreover, while the presence of both local and foreign EFL teachers enriches the Thai educational landscape, it also creates a range of CPD expectations and challenges that are often shaped by cultural and institutional factors. Although precise statistics are limited, there is evidence of a continued presence of non-Thai EFL teachers across various levels of Thai education, underscoring the need for research that considers the diverse experiences of EFL teachers working in Thailand (Derakhshan et al., 2020).

This study aims to address this gap by exploring how CPD is perceived and experienced by EFL teachers working in Thailand, with attention to their needs, benefits, and institutional challenges. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of Thailand's EFL teachers regarding the need for CPD programs. It also analyses the benefits of these programs and the challenges that implementing organizers and participants face. The study identified perceptions of CPD concerning its necessity for current positions, institutional encouragement to participate

in CPD, and opinions of key organizers of CPD activities. The study's findings highlight the need for, and benefits of, participating in CPD in terms of adapting to new technologies, enhancing personal and professional growth, improving classroom management, and overcoming challenges.. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do EFL teachers working in Thailand perceive CPD in the current educational landscape?

RQ2: What are the needs of and benefits for EFL teachers participating in CPD for their professional growth in Thailand?

RQ3: What challenges do EFL teachers face in participating in CPD activities in Thailand, and what support do they need from their institutions?

Literature Review

Introduction to Professional Development for English Language Teaching (ELT)

In Thailand, efforts to align education with international standards through communicative language teaching and proficiency assessments necessitate ongoing teacher training. EFL teachers working in Thailand are required to continuously adapt their practices to meet evolving educational demands, particularly in the areas of assessment, curriculum development, and language pedagogy (Phothongsunan, 2018; Poonpon, 2021). Studies have shown that effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives are essential for teachers to remain current with global teaching trends while responding to localized student needs (Bragg et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). However, few studies have explored how such demands are addressed across different teaching contexts and institutional settings in Thailand. This gap is especially important when considering that existing CPD models are often adapted from Western frameworks, which may not fully account for institutional cultures and educational hierarchies typical of the Thai context or broader ASEAN region.

Continuous Professional Development

CPD can be broadly defined as any type of learning undertaken in order to increase knowledge, understanding, and experience in a subject area or role (Kennedy, 2005). It is essential to tailor CPD programs to the specific needs of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, a point emphasized by Alibakhshi (2019). These needs range from enhancing classroom management skills to mastering new technologies, improving linguistic

proficiency, developing pedagogical techniques, and building cultural competence. As such, Derakhshan et al. (2020) discussed the complexity of addressing such diverse needs and the importance of creating personalized, context-sensitive CPD solutions. Yet, CPD research in Thailand often embraces general models without sufficient attention to context-specific institutional and linguistic conditions (Phothongsunan, 2018; Poonpon, 2021).

Kennedy (2005) proposed nine CPD models, ranging from training to action research and communities of practice, focused on the purpose, agency, and power dynamics in professional learning. These include the training model, award-bearing model, deficit model, cascade model, standards-based model, coaching/mentoring, action research, communities of practice, and the transformative (critical) model. Subsequently, Desimone (2009) offered a framework based on five core features of effective CPD, namely content focus, active learning, coherence with institutional goals, duration, and collective participation. This model is especially suitable for analyzing survey-based data and understanding how CPD functions within structured systems such as school institutions. While Kennedy's typology provides important insights, its application often requires qualitative or reflective data. Therefore, this study adopts Desimone's (2009) framework, which better matches the descriptive, survey-based nature of our research. At the same time, Desimone's (2009) model was developed in a U.S. context, where school cultures may differ significantly from Thailand. For example, Desimone (2009) emphasizes active learning and collective participation, but these elements may be harder to implement in systems where top-down directives or formal hierarchies shape CPD decisions. Such differences suggest that while Desimone's (2009) framework is analytically useful, its cultural adaptability must be considered when interpreting the results in the Thai context.

Participation in CPD and Institutional Influence

High levels of CPD participation by Thai and non-Thai EFL teachers reflect the growing recognition of its importance. Research has shown that most teachers attend informal workshops, access online materials, or explore independent resources, highlighting the shift toward flexible and self-guided learning (Kasprabowo et al., 2018; Lay et al., 2020). However, institutional encouragement remains limited. More than half of the respondents in previous research have reported no formal requirement or encouragement from their workplace, which is a challenge identified in several studies focusing on developing country contexts (Phothongsunan,

2018; Powell & Bodur, 2019). Yet, it remains unclear how institutions across varied Thai settings differ in how they encourage or limit CPD, which warrants closer attention.

The importance of institutional support, particularly through travel allowances, certification, recognition, and internal workshops, is well documented in CPD research (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2022; Pojanapunya et al., 2025). When CPD activities are recognized and supported at the organizational level, teacher engagement and satisfaction levels increase (Zhang et al., 2021).

Challenges and Support Needs in CPD

Flexible scheduling, internal CPD sessions, and better support from school leaders and colleagues are consistently emphasized in the literature as key facilitators of CPD (Bragg et al., 2021; Powell & Bodur, 2019). In addition, collaborative learning formats and mentoring have shown promise for sustainable teacher growth (Gumbo, 2020; Mandasari et al., 2024). This suggests that structural conditions and institutional responsiveness play a central role in either enabling or hindering teachers' access to CPD.

From these studies, a pattern emerges, highlighting the pivotal role of tailored CPD programs in addressing the diverse, context-specific needs of EFL teachers across various educational settings. The emphasis on language proficiency, technological adeptness, and pedagogical improvement underscores the dynamic nature of language teaching and the necessity for continuous, adaptive learning opportunities for teachers. These findings indicate the need for the development of CPD programs that are not only grounded in empirical evidence but are also flexible and responsive to the evolving landscapes of EFL teaching globally. In the Thai context, where institutional practices and teacher backgrounds are varied, CPD practices must be inclusive and designed with an understanding of diverse professional realities, rather than assuming a uniform model. These contextual, institutional, and pedagogical influences interact to shape how CPD is perceived, accessed, and implemented.

CPD Research on EFL Teachers in Regional and Thai Contexts

Research into CPD for EFL teachers across Asia has expanded in recent years, revealing both common challenges and contextual differences. For example, Derakhshan et al. (2020) surveyed 238 EFL teachers across the West Asian country of Iran and determined that personal motivation and perceived professional growth were major drivers for CPD participation, while limited institutional support reduced long-term engagement.

Similarly, Nugroho et al. (2022) conducted a survey of Indonesian EFL teachers and reported that many teachers pursued CPD primarily to improve their English proficiency and teaching effectiveness, but access to quality CPD remained uneven depending on institutional resources.

In Thailand, Noom-ura (2013) interviewed Thai EFL teachers and found that although teachers recognized the importance of CPD for improving classroom teaching, they often faced barriers such as heavy workloads, a lack of funding, and limited access to training in rural areas. Phothongsunan (2018) highlighted that Thai university EFL teachers tended to seek CPD opportunities independently, especially when their institutions offered limited formal support. These findings suggest that while CPD is widely valued by teachers in Southeast Asian contexts, systemic barriers often constrain meaningful participation, particularly in resource-limited or hierarchical educational settings.

Recent studies have further explored innovative CPD formats. Bragg et al. (2021) conducted a systematic global review of online CPD programs, including some in Asia, and found that online formats enhanced accessibility and flexibility, especially for teachers in remote areas. However, they also cautioned that online CPD courses needed careful design in order to foster active learning and collaboration. Kasprabowo et al. (2018) investigated the use of academic publications as a form of CPD for Indonesian English teachers. Their findings showed that while teachers valued publication for professional growth, many lacked institutional encouragement or mentoring support. This highlights the importance of aligning CPD initiatives with both teacher needs and institutional structures.

In the Thai context, Poonpon (2021) surveyed in-service English teachers and identified assessment of literacy, curriculum development, and teaching methodology improvement as major CPD needs. Yet, Poonpon noted that CPD activities often remained ad hoc rather than systematically integrated into teachers' career development plans. Similarly, Pojanapunya et al. (2025) evaluated CPD practices in Thailand after a large-scale training program and found that while teachers appreciated CPD opportunities, they expressed concerns about ongoing institutional support and sustainability.

Collectively, these studies reinforce the need for CPD programs that are not only accessible but also context-sensitive, ongoing, and responsive to the real challenges faced by EFL teachers in Thailand and more widely in Southeast Asia. They also illustrate that adapting CPD models developed in Western contexts, such as Desimone's framework, requires careful attention to local institutional norms, resource realities, and teacher expectations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research methodology. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, aiming to capture patterns and trends rather than test specific hypotheses. While we acknowledge that exploratory research can sometimes benefit from nonparametric inferential techniques to suggest possible associations or guide future research, this study intentionally relied on descriptive statistics due to its design and fixed dataset. No inferential statistics were used, and the findings were not intended to generalize beyond the sample but to inform practical directions and future research in CPD policy and practice. The design did not aim to compare subgroups (e.g., nationality or school level), but rather to provide a general understanding of the CPD experiences of EFL teachers working in Thailand.

Participants

The participants consisted of both Thai and non-Thai EFL teachers currently employed in Thailand. A snowball sampling approach was utilized to ensure diverse representation across variables such as gender, age, nationality, grade level, years of experience, and geographical location. The study targeted a sample size of 110 EFL teachers. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Snowball sampling was chosen because it enabled access to a wide and varied population of teachers across different provinces and school levels, particularly given the limited access to centralized teacher databases and time constraints. While it is possible that municipal education departments may hold teacher data, such access typically requires formal approval procedures, which were not feasible within the study's timeline and scope. Participants were invited through social media groups, email contacts, and referrals from existing participants. This method allowed the researchers to reach both Thai and non-Thai EFL teachers from multiple institutions, ensuring diversity in location, school type, and teaching experience, even if national representativeness was not the aim. While this method may limit statistical generalizability, it was considered suitable for exploring diverse CPD experiences across varied EFL teaching contexts in Thailand.

Table 1

Demographic Data

Descriptors	Items	Frequency (*n*=110)
Gender	Male	41 (37.3%)
	Female	69 (62.7%)
Age	Below or equal to 30	9 (8.2%)
	31–40	53 (48.2%)
	41–50	43 (39.1%)
	Above 50	5 (4.5%)
Nationality	Thai	30 (27.3%)
	Non-Thai	80 (72.7%)
Grade Level	Primary	40 (36.4%)
	Secondary	34 (30.9%)
	Vocational college	8 (7.3%)
	University	28 (25.5%)
Location	Bangkok	61 (55.5%)
	Outside Bangkok	49 (44.5%)
Years of teaching experience	Less than 5	44 (44%)
	5–10 years	50 (45.5%)
	More than 10	16 (14.5%)

Most of the respondents were female (69 participants or 62.7%), with males accounting for 41 participants (37.3%). The largest age group was 31-40 years, with 53 participants (48.2%), followed by 41-50 years, with 43 participants (39.1%). Smaller proportions were aged 30 or below (9 participants or 8.2%) and over 50 (5 participants or 4.5%).

In terms of nationality, the majority were non-Thai (80 participants or 72.7%), including Filipinos (31.8%), Australians (5.5%), British (5.5%), Bangladeshi (5.5%), and others (24.5%), with Thais numbering 30 participants (27.3%). Regarding educational responsibilities, 40 participants (36.4%) worked in primary education, 34 (30.9%) in secondary education, 8 (7.3%) in vocational colleges, and 28 (25.5%) in universities.

Geographically, 61 participants (55.5%) lived in Bangkok, with the remaining 49 participants (44.5%) living outside the city, including Chonburi (10%), Mae Hong Son (6.4%), Chiang Mai (5.6%), Pithsanulok (4.5%), Rayong (2.7%), and others (15.3%). In terms of teaching experience, the distribution shows that 50 participants (45.5%) had 5-10 years of experience, 44 participants (40.0%) had less than 5 years, and 16 participants (14.5%) had more than 10 years.

Overall, the sample represented mostly female, non-Thai individuals aged 31 to 50 years, employed mainly in Bangkok, with a notable concentration of professionals in the primary and secondary education

sectors. This diverse sample provides a comprehensive understanding of the CPD needs and perceptions of EFL teachers in various educational contexts across Thailand.

Research Instruments

A semi-structured quantitative questionnaire was presented using Google Forms. The questionnaire covered demographics, perceptions of CPD, challenges, and needs. It employed a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree,' 2 representing 'Disagree,' 3 representing 'Agree,' and 4 representing 'Strongly Agree.' Demographic questions were designed to obtain insights into EFL teachers' differing views on CPD, the obstacles they encounter, and the support they require. The questionnaire comprised 18 questions: 6 on demographics, 8 related to perceptions of CPD, and 4 addressing challenges and needs.

The questionnaire was adapted from the instrument developed by Pojanapunya et al. (2021) in their British Council-funded evaluation of the Regional English Training Centre (RETC) CPD project in Thailand. This adaptation ensured contextual relevance and alignment with the common CPD concerns of EFL teachers in the Thai educational system.

To ensure clarity and content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in English language education and one expert in educational measurement. Based on their feedback, several items were revised for better alignment with the research objectives. A small-scale pilot with three teachers was also conducted to confirm the usability and timing of the survey before full distribution. The questionnaire, while exploratory in scope, may offer a useful reference for similar CPD research involving EFL teachers in diverse institutional contexts.

Although the questionnaire was designed before selecting a specific analytical framework, its structure aligns well with Desimone's (2009) five core features of effective professional development. The items reflect the important aspects of Desimone's (2009) framework, namely content focus (e.g., curriculum and teaching methods), collective participation (e.g., collaborative environments), coherence (e.g., alignment with professional goals), duration (e.g., frequency of participation), and active learning (e.g., engagement in workshops and mentoring). This alignment supports the use of Desimone's (2009) framework in analyzing the findings.

Data Collection Procedure

The semi-structured questionnaire was distributed electronically on February 16, 2024, with the data collection period spanning from February

18, 2024, to March 23, 2024. Detailed instructions for completion were provided, and outreach was conducted via email and social media platforms. Participation was voluntary, and follow-up communications were sent to encourage a high response rate. Completing the questionnaire required approximately 10 minutes. Participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and be used solely for academic research. Consent was implied through submission of the form.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods, mainly frequencies, percentages, and means, were employed to analyse the collected data using Microsoft Excel.

To deepen interpretation, Desimone's (2009) five-feature framework was applied to highlight key dimensions of effective CPD reflected in the survey data. This analytical integration is further discussed in the Discussion section.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of the authors' university (reference no. XXXXX-IRB-2024/0208/090). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence, and all data was stored securely with restricted access to the research team only.

Findings

Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions regarding CPD participation. It includes whether CPD is required for their position, whether they receive encouragement, the types and frequency of CPD activities, who organizes them, and the forms of support they receive.

Table 2
Perceptions and Participation of EFL Teachers in CPD

Descriptors	Items	Frequency ($n=110$)
Is CPD required for the current position?	No	71 (64.5%)
	Yes	36 (32.7%)
	Not Sure	3 (2.7%)
Encouragement from institution to attend CPD?	No	61 (55.5%)
	Yes	48 (43.6%)
	Not Sure	1 (0.9%)

Table 2

Perceptions and Participation of EFL Teachers in CPD (Cont.)

Descriptors	Items	Frequency (*n*=110)
Experience in attending CPD activities?	Yes	107 (97.3%)
	No	3 (2.7%)
Types of CPD activities attended (2023-present)	Attending trainings/ workshops	66 (60.0%)
	Watching/ listening to online resources (e.g., British Council)	63 (57.3%)
	Exploring educational books, podcasts, YouTube videos, articles independently	62 (56.4%)
	Attending seminars	60 (54.5%)
	Attending academic conferences	40 (36.4%)
	Enrolling in/accredited courses (e.g., Thailand TESOL, CELTA, TEFL)	37 (33.6%)
	Engaging in mentoring/coaching activities	37 (33.6%)
	Pursuing a master's/doctoral degree	25 (22.7%)
	Presenting at academic conferences	25 (22.7%)
	Being a member of a professional association (e.g., Thai TESOL, TAAL)	25 (22.7%)
Frequency of CPD participation (2023-present)	More than 9 times	20 (18.2%)
	7-9 times	17 (15.5%)
	4-6 times	37 (33.6%)
	1-3 times	36 (32.7%)
Key organizers of CPD activities	Professional associations/organizations (e.g., British Council, TAAL, Thailand TESOL)	74 (67.3%)
	Other educational institutions	61 (55.5%)
	Your institution	43 (39.1%)
	Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC)	37 (33.6%)
Institutional support for CPD	Travel allowance	47 (42.7%)
	Registration cost	43 (39.1%)
	Recognition via institutional media platforms	42 (38.2%)
	Paid leave of absence	33 (30.0%)
	Certificates	32 (29.1%)
	Unpaid leave of absence	30 (27.3%)
	Accommodation	29 (26.4%)

The data show that many teachers reported engaging in CPD activities, but fewer reported receiving institutional encouragement. About one-third (32.7%) said CPD is required for their job, while 64.5% said it is not.

Likewise, 43.6% received encouragement from their institution, but 55.5% did not. This shows that CPD is not yet consistently supported at the institutional level.

Even though encouragement was limited, 97.3% of the teachers reported participating in at least one CPD activity during the past year. This may suggest that personal motivation plays a strong role, but we recognize that this is only one possible explanation. CPD may also offer professional connections or social engagement opportunities.

In terms of activity types, the most common were workshops (60.0%), using online resources (57.3%), and independent study with books or videos (56.4%). Many also attended seminars (54.5%). More formal CPD, such as pursuing advanced degrees or presenting at conferences, was reported by 22.7%. This may reflect a preference for activities that are easier to access or manage with a full-time workload.

The frequency of participation also varied. About one-third attended 4–6 activities (33.6%), another third attended 1–3 (32.7%), and 18.2% attended more than 9 activities. This shows a range of engagement levels among teachers.

The most common CPD providers were external professional associations (67.3%) and other institutions (55.5%). Only 39.1% said their own institution organized CPD. This means many teachers depend on external sources for professional learning.

Support from schools included travel allowances (42.7%), registration fees (39.1%), and recognition (38.2%). Paid leave was reported by 30.0% and unpaid leave by 27.3%. Accommodation support was least common (26.4%). Overall, no single support type was received by a majority of respondents, showing that different types of institutional support are not yet widespread.

While this study collected data across different teacher backgrounds and levels, no between subgroup analysis was conducted due to the study's descriptive aim. The findings aim to show general trends among EFL teachers in Thailand. Differences by nationality or school type are not explored in this paper.

Perceived Benefits of CPD

As shown in Table 3, the data reflect teachers' views on the benefits of CPD. Teachers rated professional growth ($\bar{x} = 3.57$), adapting to new technologies ($\bar{x} = 3.55$), and personal growth ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) as the most important benefits. These suggest that CPD is seen as helpful for staying current and for developing personally and professionally.

Table 3

Perceived Benefits of Participating in CPD Activities

Descriptors	Mean
Enhancing professional growth	3.57
Adapting to new technologies	3.55
Enhancing personal growth	3.53
Enhancing classroom management	3.51
Fostering lifelong learning	3.49
Having professional networks	3.48
Increasing job opportunities	3.48
Improving teaching skills	3.39
Staying updated on language trends	3.38
Gaining professional recognition	3.37
Increasing confidence	3.32
Increasing motivation	3.30
Better understanding of student needs	3.29
Improving English language proficiency	3.07

Classroom management (3.51) and lifelong learning (3.49) were also highly rated. Building networks and job opportunities (both 3.48) were next. These benefits may reflect how CPD connects teachers to broader communities.

Skill-focused areas like teaching improvement (3.39), language trends (3.38), and recognition (3.37) were mid-level priorities. Motivation (3.30), confidence (3.32), and understanding students (3.29) followed. The lowest-rated benefit was improving English proficiency (3.07). This might be because many participants were already confident in their language skills.

Again, no analysis by teacher background was conducted. The findings show the overall patterns of the group of EFL teachers in Thailand.

Support Needed for CPD Participation and Preferred CPD Topics

Table 4 shows the support needed for participation in CPD, various aspects of CPD, and expectations of current institutions.

Table 4

Support Needed for CPD Participation and Preferred CPD Topics

Descriptors	Items	Frequency (*n*=110)
What support do you need before deciding to participate in a CPD activity?	Having a collaborative environment for sharing ideas	89
	Having an experienced and skilled CPD host	78
	Ensuring easy access to resources and materials	66
	Aligning with professional goals	62
	Offering flexible scheduling or participation modes	50
	Providing paid leave of absence	50
	Having adequate support from mentors or facilitators	49
	Offering recognized certification or accreditation	38
	Providing financial support or allowances	35
What topics or areas of CPD activities do you wish to attend?	CPD on curriculum development	85
	CPD on teaching strategies and methodologies	80
	CPD on technology integration	75
	CPD on testing and Assessment	62
	CPD on classroom management	54
	CPD on understanding students' psychology	48
	CPD on education research	39
	CPD on teachers' leadership	38
	CPD on English language teaching and learning	36

Table 4 highlights the types of support EFL teachers in Thailand need before participating in CPD, as well as the areas they are most interested in.

Before attending CPD, many participants (81%, n = 89) said they value having a collaborative environment for sharing ideas. This suggests that teachers view interaction and peer exchange as important to their learning. A skilled and experienced CPD host (71%, n = 78) and access to useful resources (60%, n = 66) were also widely preferred.

More than half indicated the importance of CPD aligning with their professional goals (56%), while 46% preferred flexible scheduling. Paid leave and mentor support were noted by about 45% each. Fewer participants selected certification (35%) and financial support (32%) as key factors.

These results may reflect that logistical flexibility and content relevance are valued more than formal incentives.

In terms of preferred CPD topics, most teachers were interested in curriculum development (77%, n = 85), teaching strategies (73%, n = 80), and technology integration (68%, n = 75). Other areas included assessment (56%), classroom management (49%), and psychology (44%). Educational research (36%), teacher leadership (35%), and English language learning (33%) were less common, though still meaningful for some.

When asked how institutions could support CPD, regular internal workshops (86.4%, n = 95) were the most requested. This suggests that accessible, on-site CPD opportunities are highly valued. Creating a supportive culture (72.7%) and offering recognition or incentives (66.4%) were also important. Flexible scheduling (44%) and financial support (30%) were less frequently mentioned, but still relevant for participation.

In summary, these results show that teachers seek CPD that is practical, collaborative, and aligned with their goals, with institutions playing a key role in making CPD more accessible and relevant.

Challenges and Institutional Support

As seen in Table 5, the data addresses RQ3 by highlighting the challenges EFL teachers in Thailand faced over the past year in participating in CPD, along with the types of institutional support they expected.

The results are organized by how frequently each challenge was reported, based on the number of teachers who experienced any problem, whether major or minor. This approach allows for a clearer understanding of which barriers were most widespread.

Table 5

Challenges Faced and Institutional Support Needed for Participating in CPD Activities

Did you face any difficulties while participating in CPD activities in the last year, and if yes, how serious were they?	No problem	Problem (Minor & Major)
Time constraints	20	90
Geographical constraints	29	81
Lack of support from colleagues	30	80
Financial constraints	38	72
Lack of support from the head	41	69
Inadequate institutional support	42	68
Technological limitations	43	67

Table 5

Challenges Faced and Institutional Support Needed for Participating in CPD Activities (Cont.)

Did you face any difficulties while participating in CPD activities in the last year, and if yes, how serious were they?	No problem	Problem (Minor & Major)
Language barrier (cannot understand Thai)	44	66
Limited networking opportunities	78	32
Issues with recognition and certification	86	24
Lack of interest	97	13
Language barrier (content delivered only in English)	100	10
How do you want your institution to help you participate in CPD?		Frequency
Offering regular internal workshops and training		95
Creating a supportive culture for professional development		80
Providing recognition and incentives for CPD participation.		73
Offering a flexible schedule to avoid conflicts with duties		48
Providing financial support for CPD costs		33

The most commonly reported challenge was time constraints, with 90 participants (81.8%) indicating this as a problem. This suggests that many teachers find it difficult to balance their teaching responsibilities with opportunities for professional development. Geographical issues were the second most reported challenge, mentioned by 81 participants (73.6%), followed closely by lack of support from colleagues (72.7%). These results suggest that access to CPD can be affected by both location and the professional environment in which teachers work.

Financial constraints were reported by 72 participants (65.5%), indicating that registration fees, travel costs, or materials may still pose a barrier for many. At the same time, lack of support from school heads (62.7%) and inadequate institutional support more broadly (61.8%) were also noted. This shows that without leadership, encouragement and school-wide commitment, many teachers feel unsupported in their CPD efforts.

Technological issues were also mentioned by 67 teachers (60.9%), reflecting problems with digital access or tools. Similarly, 66 participants (60.0%) reported language barriers—especially when CPD content was delivered in Thai, which may not be accessible to all. This may reflect the presence of non-Thai EFL teachers or multilingual environments where language inclusivity remains a concern.

On the other hand, some challenges were less frequently reported. Only 32 participants (29.1%) cited limited networking opportunities as a problem. Concerns about recognition or certification were even lower, at

21.8%, and lack of interest in CPD was reported by just 11.8% ($n = 13$). The least common issue was difficulty understanding English-language content (9.1%), which aligns with the background of many non-Thai teachers in the sample.

These patterns suggest that structural and logistical barriers, including time, location, financial cost, and institutional support, are far more common than personal or motivational ones. Teachers are willing to participate in CPD, but their ability to do so depends heavily on external factors.

The second part of Table 5 shows how teachers would like their institutions to help. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was offering regular internal CPD workshops or training sessions (86.4%, n = 95). This preference suggests that teachers would like CPD to be more accessible, arranged within their own institutions, and not require extensive travel or outside coordination.

Creating a supportive professional culture was also a common request, cited by 72.7% ($n = 80$). In addition, 66.4% ($n = 73$) of respondents hoped for recognition and incentives, such as certificates, professional acknowledgements, or media recognition.

Flexible scheduling to reduce conflicts with teaching duties was suggested by 43.6% ($n = 48$), while 30.0% ($n = 33$) requested financial support for CPD-related costs. Although not the top priorities, these still represent key areas where institutional policy can help reduce barriers to participation.

In summary, the findings reveal that while motivation for participating in CPD is generally strong among EFL teachers in Thailand, their participation is often limited by practical obstacles. Addressing these structural barriers, such as time limitations, institutional support, and accessibility, could significantly improve the reach and impact of CPD programs. Institutions play a key role not only in organizing CPD but also in removing the barriers that prevent their teachers from fully benefiting from such opportunities.

Discussion

To recap, this study's findings reveal several key insights into EFL teachers' engagement with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in Thailand. Most teachers participated in CPD activities regardless of whether their institutions required or supported it. Their motivations were associated with improving teaching skills, professional and personal growth, adapting to new technologies, and expanding networks. These findings point to a proactive stance among EFL teachers in Thailand.

Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for effective professional development helps interpret the findings more deeply. Her five core features, namely content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation, allow us to understand not only what teachers need, but why some CPD practices are more impactful than others.

The findings show strong interest in CPD topics such as curriculum development, teaching strategies, and technology integration. These preferences suggest that teachers seek CPD content that is directly related to their daily teaching tasks and challenges. This aligns with Desimone's (2009) emphasis on the importance of subject-specific content in improving instructional quality. It also echoes studies like those of Derakhshan et al. (2020) and Alibakhshi (2019), who noted that content relevance is a key factor in teacher motivation and learning outcomes.

Teachers also preferred CPD activities that are interactive, such as workshops, mentoring, and peer observations. These findings reflect Desimone's (2009) second feature (i.e., active learning), which involves engagement beyond passive listening. Bragg et al. (2021) emphasize that the success of online CPD programs improves when teachers are given opportunities to collaborate, experiment, and reflect. In our study, the need for a collaborative environment was the most requested support (81%), confirming that EFL teachers value shared learning spaces.

Alignment with professional goals was also emphasized by over half of the participants. This directly corresponds with the notion of coherence in Desimone's (2009) model, which focuses on whether CPD fits with teachers' existing beliefs, school policies, and curricula. Powell and Bodur (2019) also point out that when CPD connects with teachers' real teaching challenges and institutional expectations, it has a stronger impact. Our findings show that support from supervisors and institutions was often felt to be lacking. This mismatch between teacher motivation and institutional systems can reduce the perceived coherence and value of CPD activities.

Our findings also showed that most teachers participated in CPD from one up to six times per year. Although participation was frequent, the data did not confirm whether these experiences were spread over time or concentrated in single sessions. Desimone (2009) stresses that duration, both span and contact hours, is essential for knowledge retention and behavior change. Lay et al. (2020) also argue that long-term engagement yields deeper professional impact. Thus, CPD providers in Thailand may need to shift from short, one-off seminars toward sustained development programs.

Finally, the findings point to a preference for shared learning and group-based CPD activities. Teachers identified peer collaboration, internal workshops, and mentoring as important supports. This is in line with Desimone's (2009) final core feature, collective participation, where learning among colleagues increases social support and relevance. Nguyen et al. (2024) similarly reported that lesson study and group reflection improved both teaching quality and teacher satisfaction. Encouraging team-based CPD could address both learning needs and the emotional challenges reported by EFL teachers.

The three most preferred CPD areas in this study were curriculum development, teaching strategies and technology integration, a result similar to the findings of Noom-ura (2013) and Mandasari et al. (2024), who emphasized the relevance of classroom-focused, practice-based training. The perceived benefits, namely enhanced professional growth, improved classroom management, and personal motivation, echo the findings presented in wider CPD literature from both Thai and other Southeast Asian contexts (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Nugroho et al., 2022).

Multiple studies confirm that when CPD addresses meaningful content areas, aligns with teachers' professional goals, and can be implemented in practice, it leads to stronger outcomes (Alibakhshi, 2019; Desimone, 2009). The emphasis on lifelong learning, motivation, and networking in our findings mirrors the psychological and pedagogical value of CPD highlighted in the literature (Ulla, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). However, relatively few studies have addressed how these benefits manifest across different institutional environments, particularly in multilingual or multicultural teaching contexts, such as Thailand.

The teachers in this study face barriers such as time constraints, financial limitations, language issues, and a lack of recognition. These problems are replicated across Southeast Asia (Setiawan & Kuswandono, 2020; Ulla, 2018). Suwannatrai et al. (2022) and Pojanapunya et al. (2025) note that many Thai EFL teachers struggle to balance heavy teaching loads with professional development opportunities, especially when CPD activities are centralized or conducted in inaccessible formats, such as inconvenient locations, rigid scheduling, or limited online options.

In sum, the results support Desimone's (2009) model as a useful framework for understanding CPD in the Thai EFL context. Our findings suggest that teachers are willing and active participants, but institutional policies, time constraints, and financial barriers reduce effectiveness. The emphasis on content relevance, collaboration, and alignment with goals

highlights the need for locally relevant and teacher-informed CPD programs that respond to diverse classroom contexts and teaching realities.

Implications for Professional Development

Firstly, teachers should seek varied CPD opportunities, like peer mentoring, online modules, and reflective practice, to strengthen both teaching and confidence. Working with colleagues to build a collaborative environment may also reduce isolation and increase motivation.

Secondly, schools should offer internal CPD opportunities that are relevant, cost-effective, and aligned with real classroom challenges. Providing financial aid, time allowances, and public recognition would further promote participation.

Thirdly, policymakers should design CPD policies that reflect actual classroom needs and Desimone's (2009) five principles. Longer, ongoing programs, rather than one-day training, should be prioritized. They must also fund CPD in rural or underserved areas in order to ensure access and equity.

In addition, institutions should recognize the unique CPD experiences of both local and international teachers working in Thailand. Programs should provide inclusive spaces for knowledge sharing across teacher backgrounds and consider multilingual materials or bilingual support (where helpful).

Limitations

This study employed a structured quantitative questionnaire, which may limit the depth of personal experience it could explore. Interviews or open-ended items might have added richer, qualitative insights. Additionally, the sample only comprised teachers in Thailand, which limits broader generalization. Snowball sampling was used, which helped reach a wide range of participants across different regions. However, this method may introduce sampling bias because it relies on participant networks rather than random selection. Furthermore, the study used only descriptive statistics. While this allowed for identifying patterns, it limited the ability to test relationships or make broader inferences. As with most survey-based studies, we acknowledge the limitation of self-report bias, where participants' responses may reflect perceptions more than actual practice. While this does not invalidate the findings, it should be considered when interpreting the results.

The study also did not aim to compare subgroups such as Thai and non-Thai teachers or school and university instructors. Although demographic diversity was captured, no inferential comparisons were conducted. This choice reflects the study's practical scope as part of an MA thesis. Future studies can extend this work by exploring subgroup differences more systematically using larger datasets.

Conclusion

This study investigated the perceptions, benefits, needs, and challenges associated with the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Thai and non-Thai EFL teachers in Thailand. The findings reveal strong engagement in CPD activities despite limited institutional support. Teachers reported that professional development helped enhance their teaching skills, classroom management, technological adaptation, and personal and professional growth. However, they also identified significant barriers, such as time constraints, lack of institutional backing, financial burdens, and geographical limitations.

Applying Desimone's (2009) five-feature model, comprising content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation, this study sought to understand the CPD experiences of EFL teachers. The data show that teachers are motivated to join CPD that is relevant, collaborative, and sustained over time. Institutional and policy support, however, often falls short of enabling long-term engagement.

This study contributes to the current literature by offering evidence from EFL teachers within a single national context. Although subgroup differences were not examined, the diversity of the teacher backgrounds captured in the sample tends to reflect real conditions in Thailand. These findings may also be useful for other EFL contexts in Southeast Asia, where teachers may face similar constraints in terms of institutional support, access to resources, and personal backgrounds.

To make CPD more effective in the Thai context, stakeholders should focus on improving access to CPD through internal workshops, flexible schedules, and financial support. Institutions and policymakers should also align CPD content with teacher goals and emerging classroom demands. More responsive, teacher-informed CPD programs could greatly enhance professional satisfaction and teaching quality.

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of CPD programs and examine the role of digital platforms in reaching under-resourced areas. It is also recommended that qualitative methods supplement future studies to capture deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences with CPD. Doing so will contribute to designing more effective and supportive professional development frameworks.

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