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Research Paper

Analyzing Iranian EFL Teachers' Barriers for Professional Development

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Abstract

The present study tried to analyze Iranian EFL teachers' barriers for Professional Development (PD). More specifically, the study analyzed the EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in PD as well as the relationship between EFL teachers' gender, level of education and teaching experience and their barriers in continuous professional development. In doing so, a total number of 41 EFL teachers of different language institute of Kerman were selected. The data were gathered through a related questionnaire which focused on EFL teachers' barriers. The data were inserted into SPSS software and both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Based on the results, teachers' barriers referred to system and schools than personal matters. It might mean that the educational system does not support and encourage PD activities or the teachers believe that PD programs should be organized and take place in schools. Moreover, the findings indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' barriers, restrictions or constraints in their PD. The results also showed no significant difference between teachers' level of education and teaching experience and their barriers and constraints for professional development. The findings might prove fruitful and innovative for the managers of foreign language education centers, teachers, and policy makers.

Keywords: Professional Development, Teacher's Barrier, EFL Context

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing consensus that continuous professional development (CPD) is an essential mechanism for increasing teaching quality (Boyle, While, & Boyle, 2004;

Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Guskey, 2003). Effective ongoing professional development is seen as the key to the success of any education reform initiative that helps teachers improve their

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teaching in the classroom. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) believe that PD should become a process not a one-shot and short-term approach to change teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. Change in these aspects should lead to changes in teachers' classroom practice and behavior which can affect learners' achievement positively. Ur (1996) believes that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two sections: Teachers with twenty years' experience and those with one year's experience repeated twenty times. The main goal of language teaching is to facilitate and optimize students' learning and achievement. In order to fulfill this aim, teachers are highly recommended to have various kinds of knowledge and skills to build and keep effective teaching conditions. Moreover, the worldwide expansion in the use of English language has brought with new requirements and standards of teaching English, so there is a much higher level of professionalism in the field today than previously (Richard, 2008).

Change, uncertainty, complexity, rather than stability, certainty, and simplicity are features of teaching as a profession. That is why the concept of professional development for teachers has been a topic of interest for several years, thus the term "continuous professional development" has been defined by many researchers (Borg, 2015; Day et al., 2006; Richards & Schmitd, 2003). According to Richards and Schmidt (2003, p.542) professional development is "the

professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and knowledge and examining his or her teaching systematically". From a cognitive perspective, Borg (2006) emphasized learning through investigating one's teaching in a systematic manner stating that, "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p. 81).

CPD can be defined as ongoing learning programs and approaches through which teachers advance their teaching skills to ensure them to remain competent (Speck & Knipe, 2005). Richards and Farrell (2005) state that an on-going professional development is not a sign of insufficient training but an answer to the fact that not everything teachers need to know is offered in their pre-service education, as well as the fact that teaching knowledge changes and innovations are introduced to improve teaching strategies. Teacher education is a process that takes place over time rather than an event that starts and ends with formal training or graduate education. This process can be supported both at the institutional level and through teachers' individual efforts. Similarly, Grundy and Robison (2004) describe that teaching is a never-ending enterprise because changes naturally take place not only in the content of what the teachers teach but also in the methods of teaching, in the students and teachers, and many

other aspects of teaching and learning itself. Thus, CPD is conducted supposing that teachers' knowledge should be adjusted to the new developments in the field of education.

Teacher education and professional development are no longer about assisting teachers to master a specific method or a set of practices that were proved effective in particular contexts but rather, about assisting teachers to become active users and producers of knowledge and theory appropriate for their own use in their specific instructional contexts. Simply put, there is an agreement among researchers that 'innovative' PD is much more effective than 'traditional' PD (Borko, 2004; Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004; Desimone et al., 2006). Innovative forms of PD are believed to be more effective to meet teachers' needs because most of these activities are in the form of collaboration that provide greater opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and skills, and to try new ideas about teaching (Butler et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone et al., 2006). On the other hand, traditional forms frequently ignore key principles of adult learning and the content of PD is frequently separated from teachers' daily work (Allen, Osthoff, White, & Swanson, 2005; Sandholtz, 2005).

Numerous researchers have been widely confirmed that there is a direct relationship between teachers' teaching quality and students' learning outcomes (e.g., Gaertner & Brunner 2018).

Therefore, professional learning activities either organized by the school or implemented by teachers themselves might be an appropriate way to improve and develop teaching quality and consequently students' learning outcomes. Although teachers' motivation to learn is a basic condition for teacher learning and successful professional development (Shulman & Shulman 2009) many constraints have been known to influence this process. Employing a quantitative approach, this study is based on data from a questionnaire. The purpose of this investigation is to elucidate a sample of Iranian EFL teachers' constraints and barriers about their continuous professional development. In other words, attempts were made to shed light on (1) EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development, (2) the relationship between EFL teachers' gender and their barriers, (3) the relationship between EFL teachers' level of education and their barriers, and (4) the relationship between EFL teachers' teaching experience and their barriers in continuous professional development. In order to meet the research objectives, the following questions have been formed.

1. What are EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development?
2. Is there a significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development?

3. Is there a significant difference among EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development concerning their level of education?
4. Is there a significant difference among EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development concerning their teaching experiences?

Literature Review

A recent study on barriers to Iranian teachers' professional development in an EFL Context was conducted by Soodmand Afshar and Ghasemi (2020). The results of the interview content analysis and the findings of the descriptive statistics revealed the barriers were attributed to three major factors including teachers themselves (e.g., lack of motivation, lack of teamwork spirit, etc.), managers of the language institutes (e.g., institutes not having organized plans for PD, low payments, etc.), and educational policy-makers (e.g., curriculum developers top-to-down managerial behavior, etc.). Moreover, Yuliani et al. (2019) studied professional development of senior high school EFL teachers. This research aims to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions on programs EFL teachers join to support their professional development and challenges faced by EFL teachers in contribution to their professional development. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview, additionally, document analysis as validate the

data. The result revealed that TPD was perceived positively by all the teachers. It can be inferred that the efforts of all participants have made similar efforts to improve their professionalism. However, they also had problem improving their professional skills, because the challenges they faced are not only from external one, but also from internal factor.

Anjomshoa and Haddad Narafshan (2018) conducted a comparative study of internal and external assets and teachers' professional performance: insights from English language teachers in the context of Iran. The research aimed to explore teachers' reflections on teaching profession and the challenges they experience during their professional performance in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context of Iran. The study findings indicate that we need more research and reflections on assets that underlie English teachers' performance. In effect, a complete awareness of performance could provide teachers with a more effective form of professionalism. Results point to the need to a clear understanding of challenges experienced by English language teachers in Iran as they contribute to this stressful profession. Given the fundamental role(s) played by teachers, it is promising that the current research contributes to a better understanding of how language teachers can develop in their profession.

Buckner, Chedda, and Kindreich (2016) examined perceptions of professional development among public school teachers in the United Arab

Emirates (UAE). They explored what types of professional development teachers have access to, the barriers to professional development they face, and teachers' stated needs for additional professional development. They find that teachers in the UAE have high rates of participation in professional development. They benefit from both week-long professional development workshops and in-school teacher networks that cover subject matter material and pedagogical skills. However, concerns about existing professional development offerings include that they can be repetitive or irrelevant and that there are few incentives associated with attending training courses.

Desti, Chalchisa, and Lemma (2013) studied school-based continuous teacher professional development: an investigation of practices, opportunities and challenges. Development (CPD) program was pilot tested and administered to 300 randomly selected primary school teachers. Male tend to use self-reflection techniques more than female to improve their career development. The mean score for teachers teaching at the second cycle was found to be statistically higher than the mean score of teachers working in the first cycle of primary education. In fact, teachers in the second cycle tend to use peer discussions, self-assessment of one's own daily routines, and use of portfolio more often than their counterparts teaching in the first cycle. Lack of knowledge and experience on the theoretical underpinnings,

implementation inconsistencies, lack of budget to run the program at school level, lack of incentive to recognize teachers who make utmost efforts to change themselves and their colleagues were major problems identified from the qualitative data. Despite these problems, the new CPD has entailed a number of opportunities and useful experiences in terms of empowering school teachers and ameliorating school-based problems related to the teaching learning process.

Methodology

The study employed quantitative research design that focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). A descriptive study establishes only associations between variables; an experimental study establishes causality. Quantitative research deals in numbers, logic, and an objective stance. Quantitative research focuses on numeric and unchanging data and detailed, convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning. Therefore, through a quantitative method (e.g., questionnaire) in this study, the researcher can statistically identify teachers' hindering factors to engage in CPD.

Forty-one EFL teachers of some language institutes of Kerman with an average teaching experience from one to fifteen participated in this study. Convenience sampling, a simple random sample is a subset of a statistical population in which each member of the subset has an

equal probability of being chosen. A simple random sample is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group taking a small, random portion of the entire population to represent the entire data set. To conduct this study, the researcher focused on teachers' background variables as gender, level of education and teaching experience. Also, gender is considered as an interdependent dichotomous variable in this study which means it can take on two different values, either male or female. The sample is non-native English speaker teachers who are adult teachers. Demographic information about the participants that are involved in the current study is well focused since some of these factors may cause statistical difference on EFL teachers' continuous professional development.

After reviewing recent investigation and models on teachers' inhibiting factors for continuous professional development, a related questionnaire, Barriers for Continuous Professional Development (CPDBQ), was designed (Behzadi et al, 2019; Soodmand Afshar & Ghasemi, 2019; Celik, Mačianskienė & Aytin, 2013; El-Fiki, 2012; Richards, 2011). This instrument attempted to investigate factors which hinder teachers from participating in professional development activities and composed of 28 statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). Therefore, teachers were requested to indicate their feelings of the inhibiting factors to a 28-item

questionnaire on a five-point scale varying from SG to SA. McMillan, McConnell, and O'Sullivan (2016) model was primarily taken into consideration as well as other recent available ones focusing on teachers' obstacles regarding continuous professional development. After the questionnaire translation into Persian and the back translation, controversies were dealt and revised and the piloting phase was done with 30 EFL teachers from language institutes in Kerman. Two very important qualities which are reliability and validity were also calculated to make this instrument more acceptable. To measure the consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's α was reported to be 0.78 which is acceptable. The questionnaire was also validated under the supervision of several experts in the field of ELT.

To design the study questionnaires, a comprehensive review of similar articles and models in the literature was conducted. Later, a pilot study was carried out on both questionnaires to evaluate their reliability and wording which indicated that the instruments' internal consistency value was satisfactory. Concerning the validity of the motivation and barrier questionnaires, they were validated under the supervision of several experts in the field of ELT. Although the participants had a good command of English and were teachers, translation and back translation was performed to prevent any possible ambiguity. In the translation and retranslation stage, reconciliation was done during which the original

questionnaire to the back translated questionnaire following by highlighting any discrepancies, categorizing them as either minor or significant and doing the necessary modifications. Finally, the researcher sent message in WhatsApp to the sample EFL teachers explaining the purpose of the study and the survey link and kindly asked the teachers to send back the completed questionnaires.

To answer research questions 1 “EFL teachers’ constraints and barriers in continuous professional development”, descriptive statistics and bar charts are used while independent sample t-test was conducted in order to answer research questions 2 “the difference between male and female EFL teachers’ constraints and barriers in continuous professional development, 4 “the difference among EFL teachers’ constraints and barriers in continuous professional development concerning their level of education. Moreover, to answer research questions 4 “the difference among EFL teachers’ constraints and barriers in

continuous professional development concerning their teaching experiences” One-Way ANOVA was performed.

Research Findings

In order to answer the research questions, the results of each test are presented as follows.

1. What are EFL teachers’ barriers in continuous professional development?

Knowing the obstacles, barriers or the factors that would hinder EFL teachers from pursuing professional development is as significant if not more important than knowing the ones that would encourage or motivate them. Thus, the first research question is “What are EFL teachers’ barriers in continuous professional development?” and TCPDBQ questionnaire was constructed to elicit the reasons that would hinder EFL teachers from pursuing their professional development.

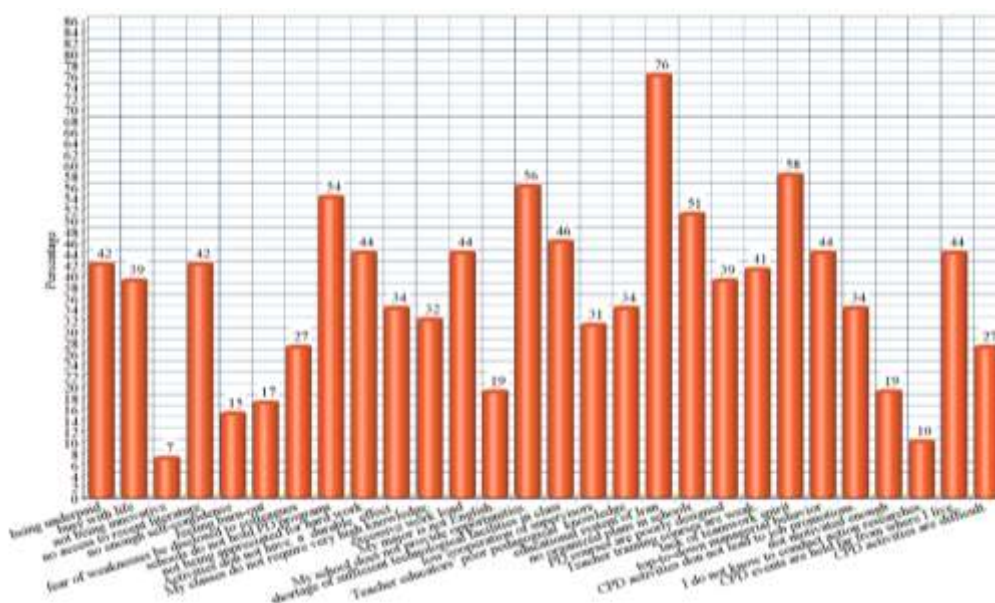


Figure 1- EFL Teachers' agreement responses about CPD barrier factors

In order to answer the first research question, all 28 items of the TPDBQ (teacher professional development Barrier questionnaire) are analyzed separately. Furthermore, a presentation of most prominent responses is discussed. As illustrated in Figure 1, the distribution of answers, 28 different factors which EFL teachers might consider as barriers or constraints to peruse continuous professional development. As can be seen, the educational system of Iran was the most prevalent answer as it was chosen by 76% of the teachers. Second to the educational system of Iran came lack of teamwork spirit and it was chosen by 58% of the teachers. Similarly, 56%, 54% and 51% of the participants selected few or no opportunities offered by schools, lack of CPD programs organized by schools, and no organized PD plans in schools respectively. The results in this part suggest that most prevalent constraints teacher face to peruse PD activities can be associated to the language schools or institutes which might either mean that their schools do not support and encourage PD activities or the teachers believe that professional development programs should be organized and take place in schools. In other words, the fact that 51 to 56% of teachers said that there is an unavailability or few availabilities of professional development programs in schools may suggest that school administrators are not providing teachers with adequate

training and professional development activities.

As shown in the figure above, 41% to 46% of respondents stated that being underpaid, no or little access to recent relevant literature, not being appreciated for hard work, excessive workload, lack of sufficient technological facilities in class, poor teacher training courses, top to down managerial behavior, and the far location or remoteness of PD programs are also among reasons that would make continuing professional development difficult for teachers. Moreover, the factors namely being busy with life, temporariness effects of PD programs, no requirement of high knowledge in my classes, low cooperation of supervisors and teachers, teacher educators' poor pedagogical knowledge, poor design of PD courses, and not leading to job promotion are constraints suggested by 39% to 31% of EFL teachers. The next 5 constraints proposed by 27% to 17% of participants include feeling burn-out, fear of weakness to be disclosed to colleagues and supervisors, not majoring in English language teaching, lack of motivation, and hardness of PD activities. As a final point about the Figure 4.25, as far as the 3 least prevalent answers are concerned, not having enough self-confidence was selected by 15% of the teachers while not knowing how to conduct action research and not being innovative are stated by 10% and 7% of the respondents respectively.

The results generally agree with those obtained in previous study by Soodmand Afshar and Ghasemi's (2020) large-scale study which revealed that EFL teachers' barriers were attributed to three major factors including "teachers themselves" (e.g., lack of motivation, lack of teamwork spirit, etc.), "managers of the language institutes" (e.g., institutes not having organized plans for PD, low payments, etc.), and "educational policy-makers" (e.g., curriculum developers, top-

to-down managerial behavior, etc.).

2. *Is there a significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development?*

As mentioned earlier, forty-one participants were employed in this investigation among which 11 (24.4%) and 30 (75.6%) were male and female EFL teachers respectively.

Table 1- Barriers and gender group statistics

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Limitations3	1	11	87.27	30.848	9.301
	2	30	84.23	15.960	2.914

To provide an answer to the second research question and determine if there is a significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' barriers in their CPD a t-test was conducted (see table 2). In other words, as can be seen, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare male and female EFL teachers' barriers for continuous professional development. The findings reveal that there was no significant difference in the scores for male EFL teachers ($M= 87.27$, $SD= 30.848$) and female EFL teachers ($M= 84.23$, $SD= 15.960$); $t(39) = .414$, $p = .681$. Therefore, it can be indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female EFL teachers' barriers, restrictions or constraints

in their continuous professional development.

The findings are in line with a study conducted by Abd Rahman et al., (2019) to examine the relationship between efficiency and level of satisfaction on CPD among teachers which shows no relation between gender and level of satisfaction on CPD. On the other hand, the results pertaining to gender did not accord with those in previous research (e.g., De Vries et al. 3013; De Brabander et al., 2011; Runhaar et al., 2010) which showed that female teachers are more motivated and participated significantly more in CPD in general, as well as in each CPD activity, compared with male teachers. In the high CPD profile, twice as many female teachers

appeared as male teachers, whereas the low CPD profile showed the opposite pattern. The explanation for this finding could reflect differences in the goals of female teachers (teaching) and

male teachers (careers), which may influence their participation in CPD, focused primarily on improving teaching skills and teacher quality (Scott, 2002).

Table 2- Difference between male and female EFL teachers concerning CPD barriers

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
Limitations3	Equal variances assumed	7.510	.009	.414	39	.341	.681	3.039	7.338	-11.804 17.882
	Equal variances not assumed		.312	12.01		.380	.761	3.039	9.747	-18.193 24.272

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Limitations3	Cohen's d	20.819	.146	-.547	.837
	Hedges' correction	21.230	.143	-.536	.820
	Glass's delta	15.960	.190	-.504	.881

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.

Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.

Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

3. Is there a significant difference between EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development

concerning their level of education?

The third research question investigates if EFL teachers who have bachelor's degree and master's degree have different

barriers and constraints in their professional development process. The participants' levels of education which ranges from bachelor degree to PhD were displayed in table 3. Out of 41 participants in this study 16 (39%) and 22 (53%) have bachelor and master degrees respectively. On

the other hand, only 3 (7.3%) EFL teachers are PhD graduates and they were included in master's group. Therefore, the EFL teachers in this study were classified as bachelor (16%) and master (25%) graduates.

Table 3- Barriers and levels of education group statistics

Group Statistics					
	Degree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Limitations2	1	16	84.50	14.980	3.745
	2	25	85.40	23.808	4.762

To provide an answer to the third research question and determine if there is a significant difference between the barriers and constraints of EFL teachers who have bachelor's degree and those with master' degree in professional development a t-test was conducted (see tables 3 & 4). In other words, an independent-sample t-test was performed to see if there is a significant difference between EFL teachers' university degrees concerning their barriers and constraints for CPD. The

findings suggest that there was not significant difference in the scores for EFL teachers who have bachelor's degree (M= 84.50, SD=14.980) and those with master's degree (M= 85.40, SD= 23.808); $t(39) = .135, p = 0.893$. Therefore, it is indicated that there is not significant difference between the constraints of EFL teachers who have bachelor's and master's degrees in their continuous professional development.

Table 4- Difference between teachers' levels of education concerning CPD barriers

Independent Samples Test									
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper

Limitations 2	Equal variances assumed	1.445	.237	-.135	39	.447	.893	-.900	6.678	14.408	12.608
	Equal variances not assumed			-.149	38.99	.441	.883	-.900	6.058	13.153	11.353
Independent Samples Effect Sizes											
						Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval			
								Lower	Upper		
Limitations 2	Cohen's d					20.860	-.043	-.670	.585		
	Hedges' correction					21.272	-.042	-.657	.573		
	Glass's delta					23.808	-.038	-.665	.590		

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.

Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.

Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

4. Is there a significant difference among EFL teachers' constraints and barriers in continuous professional development concerning their teaching experiences?

To answer research question four, the 41 EFL teachers were categorized into 3 groups based on their work experience namely

(1) 1-3 years of experience, (2) 4-7 years of experience, and (3) 7-10 years of teaching experience (see table 5). Therefore, 19 (M=91.47, SD=20.595), 11 (M=75.27, SD=14.093), 11 (M=83.73, SD=23.457) EFL teachers (46.4%), (26.8), and (26.8) were classified into these 3 groups respectively.

Table 5-Barrier and teaching experience statistics

Descriptives								
Limitations								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	19	91.47	20.595	4.725	81.55	101.40	61	150
2	11	75.27	14.093	4.249	65.80	84.74	56	98
3	11	83.73	23.457	7.072	67.97	99.49	36	126

Total	41	85.05	20.602	3.218	78.55	91.55	36	150
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Table 6- The difference between EFL teachers' experience concerning CPD barriers

ANOVA					
Limitations					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1854.802	2	927.401	2.330	.111
Within Groups	15123.100	38	397.976		
Total	16977.902	40			

ANOVA Effect Sizes^{a,b}

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Limitations	Eta-squared	.109	.000	.280
	Epsilon-squared	.062	-.053	.242
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.061	-.051	.238
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.031	-.025	.135

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Consequently, to find out if there are statistically significant differences in scores among the EFL teachers in three different work experience groups (i.e., Group 1: 1-3 years of experience, Group 2: 4-7 years of experience, and Group 3: 7-10 years of experience) a One-way ANOVA was conducted (See Table 6). The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean exam score among the groups ($F= 2.330$, $p=.111$). Therefore, the results indicate that there is no significant

difference between work experience of EFL teachers' and their barriers and constraints for continuous professional development.

There are some studies supporting that experience are significant in the teachers' beliefs about teaching and CPD as well as the choice of CPD activities (e.g., Davidson et al., 2012; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Lyons, 1981). The current study, however, did not find any statistically significant

differences regarding teachers' experiences in participants' choice of CPDs.

**Table 7- Multiple comparisons between EFL teachers' experience concerning CPD barriers
Post Hoc Tests**

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Limitations						
Scheffe						
(I) Experience	(J) Experience	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	16.201	7.558	.114	-3.05	35.46
	3	7.746	7.558	.596	-11.51	27.00
2	1	-16.201	7.558	.114	-35.46	3.05
	3	-8.455	8.506	.614	-30.12	13.22
3	1	-7.746	7.558	.596	-27.00	11.51
	2	8.455	8.506	.614	-13.22	30.12

**Table 8- Homogeneous subsets / EFL teachers' experience concerning CPD barriers
Homogeneous Subsets**

Limitations		
Scheffe ^{a,b}		
Experience	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1
2	11	75.27
3	11	83.73
1	19	91.47
Sig.		.135

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 12.796.
 - b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
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Conclusion and Implications

Concerning the EFL teachers' barriers to engage in PD, participants stated their degree of agreement with 28 barriers they might face to engage in professional development activities. According to Zhang et al., (2021), teachers' barriers and demotivating factors to participate in PD can be related to different levels such as system, school and personal. The most agreed barriers by EFL teachers are the education system of Iran which is considered a system related constraint. Moreover, school related barriers such as lack of PD programs in schools, lack of proper PD opportunities in schools, lack of teamwork spirit, schools' shortage of sufficient technological facilities, top down managerial behavior, excessive workload, and being underpaid are stated by a great number of participants as significant barriers which might impede them to engage in PD. Furthermore, when it comes to EFL teachers' constraints at personal level to participate in PD, items such as being busy with life, not being motivated enough, majoring in a non-English teaching subject, feeling burnout and not being innovative can be observed which are chosen by a small number of participants. Therefore, taking findings into consideration, it can be concluded

that this study's sample's barriers are more system and school related than at personal level.

The findings about EFL teachers' barriers to participate in PD revealed that there was no significant difference in the scores for male and female EFL teachers. Similarly, the findings concerning the teachers' barriers suggested that there was not significant difference in the scores for EFL teachers who have bachelor's degree and those with master's degree. Therefore, it can be concluded that EFL teachers' barriers to engage in PD are not influenced by their university degrees. Also, to address the question if there are statistically significant differences in scores among the EFL teachers' barriers in three different work experience groups, a One-way ANOVA was carried out. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean exam score among the groups. The results indicate no significant difference between work experience of EFL teachers' and their barriers and constraints for continuous professional development. Therefore, concerning EFL teachers' teaching experience and their constraints to engage in CP, it is concluded that teaching experience does not affect teachers' incentives and barriers. The fact that the participants in this current study did not yield

any difference regarding their experience and barriers to engage in CPD could be explained through the existence of other possible factors as stated in the literature (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Lyons, 1981). These factors could be individual, organizational, or social factors. For instance, a teacher's life experiences could be highly influential in their career. Similarly, the structure of the institution a teacher works could foster development or lead to frustration or burnout. From a cultural perspective, the high or low expectations of the society may change the way teachers think and behave.

The findings of the study denote pedagogical implications for practice and further research. In order to develop and sustain devotion to CPD, language schools and institutes should provide the teachers with several CPD activities in accordance to their needs and support them in their endeavors and in their pursuit of CPD. EFL teachers should be encouraged by the administration and institutes to develop themselves in their respective fields so that they become more active participants in their community. The findings may indicate that such endeavors would be helpful in motivating other teachers who are in their later stages of their career cycles. In order for a self-sustaining CPD program, teachers working together could help each other be more involved and teamwork spirit will increase. Teachers' striving towards a higher degree automatically translates to diverse and a great amount of CPD

engagement while this study does not show a difference between graduates and undergraduates. The last implication is that CPD activities in further education, specifically M. A. and Ph.D. degrees should be encouraged and supported. In the current study having a graduate degree seems to be a catalyst in helping teachers engage in more CPD activities while it is not concluded.

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