

Bridging the Gap: A Model for Enhancing Teacher Professional Development in Blended Learning

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores professional development (PD) experiences and expectations of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers in blended learning (BL) settings of a Vietnamese university. Employing a collaborative autoethnographic approach, the study examines lecturers' challenges with institutional support that falls short of expectations, a lack of specialized training tailored to their particular needs, and policy-practice mismatches. Focus groups and self-reflections were used to gather data, which enabled participants to evaluate their PD experiences critically. The results point to the necessity of a more organized and long-lasting PD model that incorporates mentorship, technical competence, pedagogical training, and ongoing assistance. Considering this, this study suggests an integrated PD framework that prioritizes individualization, teamwork, institutional support, and an evaluation feedback loop. In the end, the framework seeks to improve lecturers' preparedness to support successful BL by reducing the gap between accessible PD provision and changing lecturer demands. The study's findings provide practical implications for educators, institutional leaders, and policymakers seeking to optimize PD initiatives for blended learning in higher education.

Introduction

In response to global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in the use of blended learning (BL) in education in recent years (Lockee, 2021). A greater emphasis on excellent teacher professional development (PD) programs has resulted from institutions' increasing adoption of BL frameworks. In order to equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical and technological skills to handle the complexity of BL environments, effective PD has become essential (Portillo & de la Serna, 2021). However, traditional PD approaches often fail to address the dynamic and context-specific challenges that teachers face when implementing BL in their classrooms (Philipsen et al., 2022). Research undersigns the importance of institutional support in facilitating teachers' engagement in BL training (Pölzl-Stefanec et al., 2024), as well as that of motivational factors in influencing their adoption of BL

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for PD (Dahri et al., 2024).

Despite growing recognition of the potential of BL in education, existing PD initiatives are often ineffective in providing for teachers' specific needs. Initiatives tend to rely upon a generic formula with minimal differentiation in terms of teachers' levels of experience, capacity for technology utilization, and subject matter demand (Garone et al., 2022). There may also be minimal link between formal institutional policy and ground-level realization of BL implementation (An, 2021). Studies highlight that PD frameworks need to move from generic training to offering sustained support, mentoring, and peer collaboration opportunities (Kartiwi et al., 2024). Lacking these innovations, teachers have trouble successfully integrating BL methodologies into their teaching and so fail to achieve maximum learning outcomes with their students (Ginestié & Impedovo, 2020).

In Vietnam, the adoption of BL in higher education has increased significantly, yet many EFL lecturers continue to face challenges due to inadequate PD and institutional support. Research findings indicate that Vietnamese educators have little exposure to in-depth PD programs in a structured combination for that learning setting, leaving them struggling with pedagogical adaptation and technology integration (Nguyen & Sit, 2025). Other challenges of institutional constraint, lack of technology support structures, and opposition to change also become barriers to effective BL application for lecturers (Le, 2024). Fears about policy-practice misalignment have also been expressed with lecturers requesting extra hands-on training, mentoring support, and frequent professional learning activities (Kieu et al., 2024a). Inadequate systemic and enduring PD model for BL remains of major concern, holding back complete potential for blend implementation in EFL education (Kieu et al., 2024b). These challenges indicate the need for an elevated PD framework that takes account of teachers' evolving needs, aligns with organizational policy, and enacts frequent support for BL implementation.

Despite the increasing adoption of BL in higher education, particularly in Vietnam, few studies have examined PD experiences of lecturers in their own words and from their own perspective. Previous studies have overwhelmingly aimed to evaluate PD effectiveness or identify generic institutional barriers but have not gone far enough to investigate how lecturers critically approach PD programs' adequacy, relevance, and program structure in relation to their own evolving needs. Moreover, little research has emerged with PD frameworks that are actionable and developed in settings with educators themselves. Filling this void, this study adopts a collaborative autoethnography to closely examine Vietnamese university EFL lecturers' lived experiences and expectations in a setting that has a policy of blending a minimum of 10% of all courses with a learning management system (LMS) implementation.

At this university, while policy demands LMS use, implementation is loosely defined with minimal centralized resources or training that are directed to BL pedagogy. PD in blended learning has tended to include generic training sessions in LMS usage and short seminars in digital tools. These have typically been conducted in a one-size-fits-all approach with minimal attention to pedagogic integration or in-context support. Consequently, lecturers have to deal with problems in blended instruction with minimal continuing support, minimal mentoring opportunities, and no formal review process. Against this setting, this work attempts to ask teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers about their expectations and

experienced professional development (PD) for blended learning (BL) and propose an upgraded PD model that better suits their desires. Specifically, it attempts to make teachers' key expectations of PD in BL clear, question their experienced lives and challenges, uncover mismatches in institutional PD provision and actual-life necessity, and propose a structured and tenable PD model that aids teachers' competencies.

Literature review

Teacher professional development for blended learning

Blended learning (BL) has typically been defined as an instructional methodology that combines face-to-face classroom instruction with digital learning elements to offer learners increased flexibility, self-directed learning, and access to resources (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). According to Albiladi and Alshareef (2019), BL in EFL contexts usually refers to a combination of synchronous and asynchronous modes, using digital tools and learning management systems (LMS) for language input, interaction, and assessment. Beyond technical expertise, effective BL implementation necessitates pedagogical adaptation, classroom dynamics revision, and synchronization of digital tools with language learning objectives (Porter et al., 2016). These factors support a successful and long-lasting professional development model that equips educators with both technical know-how and blended learning-appropriate teaching techniques.

BL has emerged as a significant teaching approach in higher education institutions that mix face-to-face and digital teaching to facilitate flexibility and interaction. However, implementation of BL heavily depends on teachers' abilities to integrate pedagogy and digital aspects in an effective manner. Teacher professional development (PD) can also enable effective BL implementation in place of conventional pedagogy. However, existing PD programs fail to have sufficient thoroughness, support, and tailoring to meet teachers' evolving needs (Portillo & de la Serna, 2021). Lockee (2021) highlights the evolution of PD modalities that are necessitated in post-pandemic education environments and advocates against over-reliance on in-person training that has become passé. There exists a growing necessity for PD programs that consist of digital materials, ongoing support, and that align with teachers' professional learning cycles.

Several studies highlight key components of effective PD in BL that contribute to its success. With an emphasis on pedagogically and technologically relevant professional development, Philipsen et al. (2019) offer a meta-aggregative framework that enables educators to test out BL tools in real-world teaching scenarios. According to Ranieri et al. (2019), professional learning ecologies make the case that professional development for BL should be integrated into teachers' daily work through reflective practice, peer support, and mentoring rather than being limited to discrete individual workshops. Similar to this, Bruggeman et al. (2021) outline important teacher traits for BL implementation, including adaptability, technological self-efficacy, and a commitment to lifelong learning. According to these dispositions, professional development should not only concentrate on developing new skills but also on encouraging teachers' agency and growth mindset when navigating BL situations.

Institutional considerations also have a major role in shaping teachers' PD experience. Porter et al. (2016) and Evans et al. (2020) add that institutions with mature policy investments in faculty engagement in BL have robust PD programs. On the other hand, institutions that fail to integrate BL into their overall strategic plans have short-term and patchy PD programs. González et al. (2023) argue that post-pandemic PD must create capacity in the longer term and should not engage in short-term training. By doing this, institutions will have to reconsider faculty allocation of work time, incentives, and continuing support arrangements to facilitate extensive engagement with BL.

Moreover, PD for BL must embrace self-directed and personalized learning patterns. Alamri et al. (2021) opine that learning technology designs developed for PD must accommodate personalization to enable teachers to engage in PD at their own time and address their immediate teaching needs. This is when BL requires teachers to work with complex digital tools while adjusting their teaching skills. Geng et al. (2019) further suggest that teachers who have higher skills in self-directed learning are likely to embrace BL successfully and suggest that PD programs become competency-based to include instruction in self-regulation skills to enable teachers to facilitate their professional development.

Challenges in existing PD for BL

Despite increasing initiatives to develop BL-specific PD, most programs still embrace a blanket approach that does not cater to differences in teachers' levels of preparation in technology and their pedagogical backgrounds (Garone et al., 2022). Research states that PD programs typically make an assumption of equivalent levels of readiness for technology despite varying needs of teachers in disciplines, levels of experience, and institutional environments (Philipsen et al., 2022). In a study done with Vietnamese EFL lecturers by Kieu et al. (2024a), it has been discovered that many teachers become frustrated with the rapidity with which each faculty has embraced BL due to PD programs aiming to mainly cover technical skills while omitting pedagogical integration methods. Non-differentiation in this regard causes disengagement among teachers and little uptake of BL methods in the long term.

Another major obstacle to BL PD is support from institutions. Philipsen et al. (2022) point out that support for BL PD in institutions remains patchy and incoherent with teachers reporting an inadequate amount of time for expert mentoring, repeated coaching, and formalized training. Similarly, Pölzl-Stefanec et al. (2024) have reported that interactive community-centered learning activities in PD yield higher levels of engagement among teachers but that in most circumstances institutions do not provide them. Without formal support of this sort, teachers cannot easily translate their PD into classroom application.

Barriers of motivation contribute to the difficulty of adopting BL PD. Dahri et al. (2024) note that teachers' readiness to engage in PD depends upon several motivating factors namely perceived relevance, institutional incentives, and professional development opportunities. Teachers lose their interest in engaging if PD programs appear out of date, too theoretical, or distant from their classroom situation. Batac et al. (2021) found that teachers who received hands-on training with direct application to their classrooms tended to adopt BL strategies to a larger extent than teachers who enrolled in lecture-type theory-rich PD courses.

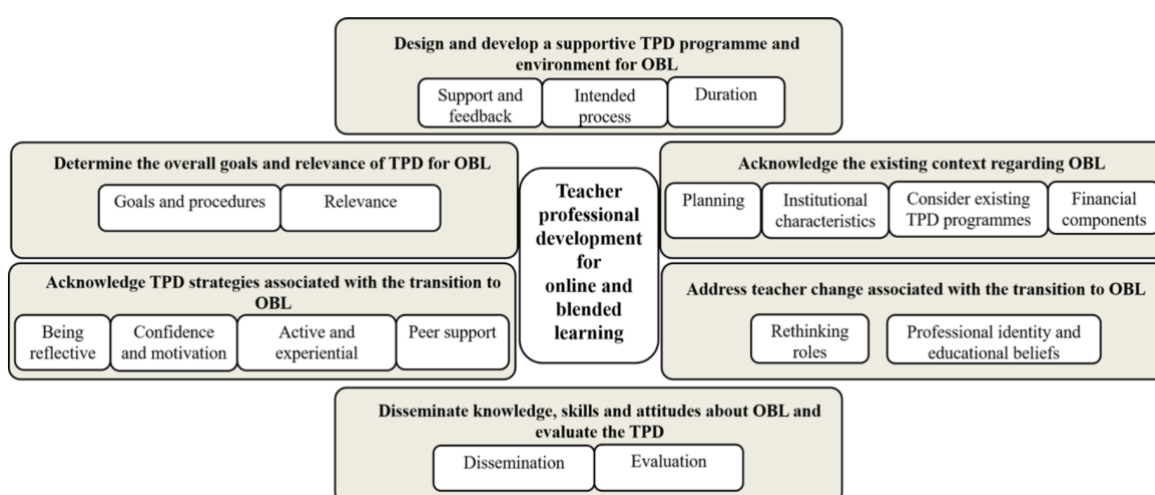
Another principal issue is policy-practice disconnect in BL PD. Policy that requires BL adoption at an institutional level typically cannot promise teachers adequate related PD opportunities (An, 2021). Porter et al. (2016) and Garone et al. (2022) in tandem remark that policy instructions from the top to adopt BL are typically not followed through with supportive PD structures for teachers to feel competent and resourced. In Vietnamese settings, Kieu et al. (2024b) record that lecturers are institutionally obliged to adopt BL even when specialised training in it is absent, instructions blurred, and pedagogic support minimal. Policy-practice disconnect therefore takes the form of patchy adoption of BL and less-than-ideal learning experiences for learners.

Finally, technological obstacles still exist. Le (2024) views infrastructural issues as a major discouragement in Vietnamese universities, with inconsistent internet connection, outdated learning management systems, and inaccessibility of digital tools for effective BL PD. Even among high-performing universities in terms of technology support structures, faculty training in their use remains poor, leading to underutilization of BL's complete potential (Geng et al., 2019).

To address these issues, a growing body of literature advocates that effective PD for BL should entail holistic training, peer learning, and extended institutional support (Kartiwi et al., 2024). Philipsen et al. (2019) recommend a multi-dimensional PD framework that covers pedagogic strategies, hands-on technical training, and ongoing mentoring (Figure 1). Pölzl-Stefanec et al. (2024) also recommend interactive and engagement-based training frameworks, in which teachers participate in peer learning communities, workshops, and implementation of BL in real contexts. Moreover, Ranieri et al. (2019) recommend individualised PD pathways, in which training remains relevant and practice-oriented to teachers' individual needs.

Figure 1.

Synthesized findings of effective teacher professional development for online and blended learning (Adapted from Philipsen et al., 2019, p.1165)



Whereas various studies have emphasized the value of institutional support, mentoring, and experience-based training for effective BL implementation (Philipsen et al., 2019; Pölzl-Stefanec et al., 2024), few have explored how these elements work or fail to work in PD

programs through teachers' reflective prism. Most of what has been published to date relies upon external evaluation or surveys that lack richness of teacher narrative and site-specific insight. Additionally, while PD frameworks such as Bruggeman et al. (2021) and Porter et al. (2016) suggest formalized institutional frameworks, these tend to overlook the value of teacher agency and self-reflective learning in specifying PD effectiveness. By testing this assumption that institutional architecture can exist in isolation, this study proposes an experiential reflective model in concert with the reality of the daily classroom. Through this mode of engagement, it contributes to larger debates over top-down in contradistinction to teacher-centered methods of PD and adds to broadly generalized international models a site-specific reflective counter-narrative.

Professional development for blended learning in Vietnam and Southeast Asia

BL in Vietnamese tertiary education has only recently begun to be implemented and PD programs have yet to comprehensively address challenges that face EFL lecturers. Nguyen and Sit (2025) note that Vietnamese educators have minimal exposure to formalized PD and that numerous teachers receive minimal training in how to appropriately combine BL. Institutional challenges in the form of inadequate IT support and administrative support also hamper effective BL implementation (Le, 2024). Vietnamese lecturers have also lamented about a lack of specialized training programs that address pedagogical and technical aspects of BL (Kieu et al., 2024a). Policy-practice incoherence has been asserted by Kieu et al. (2024b) to be a key issue in that universities promote BL implementation while not providing assurance that lecturers possess sufficient PD to facilitate them through this process.

These challenges are not unique to Vietnam. In a larger Southeast Asian space, there have been similar hurdles for EFL teachers in implementing BL. In the Philippines, for instance, Batac et al. (2021) reported that while there was broad implementation of BL in tertiary and high schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic situation, teachers struggled with it due to pedagogy-shy digital literacy and non-directional PD. In Indonesia, Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021) reported that there was confusion and exasperation encountered among EFL teachers in transforming traditional pedagogy into blended settings due to universal PD programs that did not cater to contexts. Similar findings in Malaysia and in Thailand have emphasized teachers' need for locally informative training, ongoing support, and closer policy-teacher reality congruence (Esengulova et al., 2024; Kartiwi et al., 2024).

Collectively, these investigations imply a disconnect between top-down policy directives and bottom-up teacher preparation that pervades widely in SEA. Far fewer in the region have explored BL PD in reflective, insider style or proposed teacher-informed sustainability models. In this investigation, that disconnect is closed through an autoethnography collaborative that examines Vietnamese lecturer experiential knowledge and expectations. In so doing, it contributes to regional scholarship through a conceptual and practice-oriented PD framework that can inform later policy and program development in similar Southeast Asian EFL contexts.

Theoretical framework

This study draws on Reflective Practice Theory (Schön, 2017) as its guiding conceptual framework. Reflective practice entails how professionals scrutinize their activities and

experiences in a critical manner for improvement of later practice. There are two major processes at the core of this theory: first, reflection-on-action, through which previous experiences are reflected upon in assisting prospective decision-making; and second, reflection-in-action, in that practitioners make adjustments in real time while in the act of teaching. These reflections are not only reflective but fluid in nature to enable educators to experience continuous learning and adaptive decision-making (Loughran, 2002).

Reflective Practice Theory has classically been applied in teacher education to describe how teachers construct professional knowledge through critical examination of their own practice and self-questioning. In pedagogy for languages, reflective processes have been applied to enhance pedagogic competence, to inform curriculum planning, and to support professional learning, particularly in response to problematic or shifting teaching contexts (Farrell, 2022). The theory informs methodologies such as autoethnography and collaborative inquiry as well, in which teachers position themselves as knowledge makers and practitioners (Russell, 2005; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). In technology-infused or blended learning research studies, reflective practice has produced a lens through which teachers' adaptations to pedagogic innovations and institutional demands can come to be understood (Larrivee, 2000).

Reflective Practice Theory is appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, it focuses on teacher agency and professional self-direction at the heart of what it means for teachers to engage with and make sense of PD interventions. Secondly, it allows for a context-responsive mode of investigation into PD in the specific institutional and culture-bound forms of Vietnamese higher education. Thirdly, it suits this study's narrative and collaborative methodology, namely through application of self-analysis and focus group interview to generate data. In lieu of seeing PD in prescriptive mode or in a simple process-oriented manner, reflective practice allows for an in-depth investigation of how teachers experience, interpret, and reconstruct their learning in blended learning contexts.

Research Questions

To achieve its objectives, the study addresses the research questions:

- How do EFL teachers perceive their professional development experiences in blended learning?
- What improvements can be made to better support their needs?

Methods

Research Design

This study applied collaborative auto-ethnography (CAE) to research the experiences and professional development (PD) expectations of EFL lecturers of blended learning (BL). CAE has been explained as a qualitative methodology that entwines personal narratives with systematic analysis in which researchers are participant-analysts in reflexively scrutinizing their experiences (Chang et al., 2012). CAE is best suited to researching PD in BL because of its potential for reflexive observation of teachers' practice and institutional circumstances (Phillips et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024). By CAE application, this research conveys teachers' reasons for taking PD in BL, their difficulties, and institutional constraints.

Participants and Context

The study was conducted at a Vietnamese university that has been integrating BL for several years. While the university obliges lecturers to adopt a learning management system (LMS) for 10% of their courses, how this LMS component intersects with BL significantly differs among faculties and individual lecturers. In the program of EFL, the LMS has been used for various asynchronous activities such as uploading lecture slides, administering online quizzes, facilitating discussion forums with guidance, and uploading student assignments. There is, however, no institutionally created framework for influencing pedagogical integration of these tools. In practice, lecturers must rely on trial and error or recommendations from peers to try out LMS functionality while there is little support and feedback from the institution. The piecemeal and minimally scaffolded adoption of BL thus manifests an imminent need for a structured and pedagogically sophisticated PD model.

Participants included four full-time EFL lecturers who also formed the research team, in accordance with ideals of collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2012). Participants are all full-time English as a foreign language teachers in the same Vietnamese institution and have between 15 and 31 years of teaching experience in majors in English language in the undergraduate program. Four participants are a small-group size in accordance with ideals of collaborative autoethnography that prize richness rather than breadth (Chang et al., 2012), that demand depth of insight rather than breadth of population (Li et al., 2024), and that place meaning-making in terms of mutual critical scrutiny of experience in a shared environment. Participants took an active role in generation and interpretation of data to guarantee that findings would come to represent a jointly informed critical perspective.

The group comprised one male and three female lecturers in the age group of 35 to 45 years (Table 1). The participants had diverse levels of academic qualification: two of them had a doctoral degree, one of them held a master's degree, and one of them was a PhD candidate. All of them have been compelled to adopt elements of blended learning in their respective teaching in the form of asynchronous LMS tasks, discussion forums in an online setting, and digital submission of work. But their exposure to formal education in BL pedagogy has varied to an unprecedented extent, adding richness and variety to their views in their reflections as well as in their group discussions. Dual role of researchers and teaching experience assisted them in drawing relevant insight into the difficulties of integrating BL into their own practice that reflected CAE's reflective inclination.

Table 1.

Summary of participant profile

Participants	Gender	Academic Qualification	Teaching Experience	Institutional BL Training Attended	Self-Initiated PD (e.g., MOOCs, webinars)
Participant 1	Female	MA in TESOL	31 years	University training workshops	online webinars
Participant 2	Female	PhD in Education	21 years	University training workshops	online courses on BL
Participant 3	Female	PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics	15 years	University training workshops	online webinars
Participant 4	Male	PhD in Education	19 years	No formal institutional training	online webinars

Data collection & analysis

Data were collected through self-reflection and focus-group discussions that are one of CAE's (Chang et al., 2012) core components. The semi-structured focus-group discussions established a communal space for discussants to share their PD experiences for BL. These elicited narrative-type answers so that discussants would critically examine their professional development and create meaning together through discussion. Each discussion takes 45 to 60 minutes. In addition to the focus-group discussions, guided self-reflections have been utilized to gather these data in addition to being a core component of collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2012). Discussants created two rounds of self-reflections, one at the beginning and one after FGD sessions, to document their evolving knowledge of professional development in blended learning. These self-reflections have been conducted in writing in Vietnamese or English and tended to fall in the range of 500 to 800 words. Discussants have been urged to undergo reflective consideration of some of their choice prompts for example: (1) What PD support have I received to adopt blended learning? (2) What challenges have I experienced or gaps in my PD process? (3) What would an ideal PD program for your setting look like? The self-reflections have been posted over four weeks asynchronously and then in group meetings. These have assisted in enabling iterative discussion and enlivening shared understanding through critical self- and peer-review. Data from discussion and reflections have been transcribed in Vietnamese.

Data analyses used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Inductively-oriented approach was used in which themes would emerge out of participants' narratives and not through application of pre-existing schemes. Through this method, it was achievable to discern shared themes among individual narratives under CAE framework. After each member of the team read all reflected work and transcripts several times, preliminary codes were created in individual efforts and then collectively through discussion for interpretive agreement. Through repeated discussion, codes were aggregated into larger themes that portrayed shared

commonalities in terms of challenges, expectations, and learning about professional development in blended learning. These themes were refined through peer review and member checking to make sure that these accounted for participants' experiences in a way that was consistent to reflective nature of data. Through this collaborative endeavor, it was ensured that these themes accounted for participants' shared experiences with PD for BL with fidelity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount owing to the dual role of participants as researchers and the personal nature of self-research. Informed consent was obtained and confidentiality ensured through pseudonyms and anonymized data. Findings were cross-checked through group discussion to determine appropriate representation of participants' experiences. The approach ensured an ethically responsible and reflexive accounting of PD experiences of BL lecturers.

Trustworthiness

To ensure this collaborative auto-ethnography work's credibility, several methods were used to enhance credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Chang et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2022). Credibility was ensured through data triangulation with a mix of focus-group discussion and self-introspection in addition to peer debriefing to verify interpretation (Lapadat et al., 2024). Dependent feasibility was maintained through a planned process of research and group discussion to verify consistencies (Li et al., 2024). Confirmation was reinforced through reflexive journaling and peer checking to give participants a chance to vet and correct findings (Phillips et al., 2022). Transferability was made easier through detailed description of the institutional environment so that findings can be translated to comparable contexts for blended learning (Chang et al., 2012). These procedures support the rigor of this study, which has significant implications for PD for BL discourse. Given that participants in this study assumed the dual roles of researchers and tellers, we took particular precautions to detect and reduce any potential bias. The entire research process included continuous reflection; we used personal reflective journals to critically analyze our assumptions, positionalities, and emotional reactions (Chang et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2022). In order to make sure that a range of viewpoints prevailed over a consensus story, we candidly addressed our disagreements in later meetings.

Findings

Expectations in PD programs

The participants expressed a clear desire for a more holistic approach to professional development (PD) for blended learning (BL). They emphasized the need for comprehensive training that covers not only the technological aspects of BL but also pedagogy and assessment. As Participant 1 stated,

We need training that not only teaches us how to use the technology but also helps us understand how to teach effectively with it. There are different tools on the LMS that we don't know how to use. Moreover, we are not sure if the tools we are using are appropriate for our students' learning.

This sentiment was echoed by Participant 2, who added, *“I want to know how to assess students in a blended environment, not just use a platform.”* The lecturers highlighted the importance of integrating digital tools into teaching while ensuring teachers are equipped with the pedagogical knowledge necessary to engage students in both in-person and online components of a blended learning environment.

Another key expectation was the implementation of ongoing support mechanisms. Participants noted that PD should not be limited to one-off workshops but should involve continuous mentoring, feedback, and refresher training. Participant 3 emphasized,

I have attended some workshops on blended learning organized by the university. After these initial trainings, we don't know if we have implemented blended learning properly in our courses. Actually, we need regular follow-up sessions to get feedback on how we're applying what we learned.

Participant 4 added, *“Continuous support, like a mentor who can guide us through the challenges, is crucial.”* This ongoing support was seen as vital for refining teaching practices and ensuring that BL strategies were effectively applied.

The participants also called for more collaborative learning opportunities within PD programs. Peer learning, communities of practice, and shared resources were viewed as essential to their professional development. As Participant 1 explained,

It would be so beneficial to learn from each other, not just the trainers. If we could share ideas and resources, we'd be able to build on each other's strengths. We would love to listen to our colleagues who have been successfully implementing blended learning in their courses. It would be more practical.

This collaborative approach was seen as a way to foster a dynamic and supportive professional community, further enhancing the effectiveness of PD initiatives.

Experiences with existing PD programs

Participants' experiences with existing PD programs revealed several limitations in their effectiveness. A recurring theme was the “one-size-fits-all” approach, where training content was too generic and did not address the specific teaching contexts of individual lecturers. Participant 2 reflected,

I felt like the training sessions were aimed at everyone, regardless of how experienced we are with blended learning. I myself found the sessions repetitive while I am sure that some other lecturers who were new to blended learning struggled to keep up without targeted support.

This mismatch left some teachers feeling that the content did not match their individual needs. For example, Participant 3 noted, *“I'm familiar with some of the tools, but the training was too basic. I needed something more advanced to help me improve.”* On the other hand, Participant 4 mentioned, *“I'm just starting out with blended learning, and I felt overwhelmed because the content was too technical for me to follow.”*

The participants also observed that the impact of PD training on their teaching effectiveness

was limited. They found that much of the content was not easily applicable to their real teaching practices. As Participant 1 pointed out,

Some of the tools introduced in the training didn't even work with the LMS we're required to use. Moreover, some applications lacked relevance to our disciplines, offering features that did not align with our instructional goals or the nature of the content we teach.

This sentiment was shared by Participant 2, who added, “*The training was helpful in theory, but when I tried to apply it in class, it didn't fit with what I was doing on the ground.*” These challenges made it difficult for the participants to incorporate new strategies into their teaching effectively.

Finally, there was a notable disconnect between institutional policies on BL and the practical realities faced by lecturers. The university had introduced BL policies, including the requirement to use a learning management system (LMS), but the participants felt that these policies were not fully supported by the necessary resources or practical guidance. As Participant 3 explained,

The policy states that we should use the LMS for 10% of our teaching, which amounts to just five periods per course. However, this limited time is nowhere near enough to implement blended learning effectively. Despite this requirement, no one has really explained how to integrate the LMS in a meaningful way or provided any concrete guidance or support.

Participant 4 echoed this, stating, “*There's a policy, but the support doesn't match the expectations. We're left to figure it out on our own.*” This gap between policy and practice left many lecturers feeling unsupported and frustrated.

Gaps in PD programs

One of the major gaps identified in the PD programs was the lack of tailored training opportunities. Participants emphasized that the PD programs did not adequately differentiate based on the varying levels of expertise and experience among lecturers. Participant 1 commented,

The training was the same for everyone. I've been teaching for years, and I needed something more specific to my level of expertise. I think the sessions covered broad, introductory concepts that I was already familiar with, leaving me without the deeper insights or specialized techniques that could have truly enhanced my teaching practice.

Participant 2 also shared, “*I felt like the training wasn't designed for my context. It wasn't relevant to the challenges I'm facing in my courses.*” The participants felt that the lack of customization meant that many teachers were left with unmet needs, which hampered their ability to improve their practice effectively.

Another gap was the inadequate support and resources available to lecturers. Participants noted that there was limited access to essential materials, technology, and expert guidance. As Participant 3 pointed out,

We don't have enough access to updated teaching materials or new technologies. Some

of us are using outdated systems that don't align with current teaching practices. The LMS is somehow limited as the technologies we need are not integrated or purchased.

Participant 4 highlighted, *"There's no dedicated support system to help us implement blended learning. We're basically on our own."* This lack of resources and support created significant barriers for lecturers trying to apply what they had learned in PD programs, leaving them without the necessary tools to succeed in a blended learning environment.

Discussion

Discussion of the findings in comparison with previous studies

The study's findings support other research on the issues and demands of PD for EFL teachers in BL. In line with Philipsen et al.'s (2019) successful PD component integration, which prioritizes contextual appropriateness, sustained support, and reflective learning designs, respondents underlined the significance of an integrated pedagogy, technology, and assessment approach to PD that is holistic in nature. This supports criticisms of general one-size-fits-all training designs that have been demonstrated to be ineffective in meeting the diverse needs of teachers or offering significant pedagogical support for the adoption of BL by Bruggeman et al. (2021) and Garone et al. (2022).

Furthermore, our research revealed a disconnect between institutional policy and practical implementation, which is supported by findings by Fairman et al. (2022) and Kieu et al. (2024a), who discovered that top-down professional development ignores real-world issues in instruction. Similar to Kessler (2018) and Nguyen and Sit (2025), who discovered that teachers face a lack of institutional support when implementing technology-enhanced instruction, there was evidence that their institution requires them to integrate with BL but offers little structured support. Moreover, our findings' emphasis on peer collaboration and shared learning is consistent with Kleinschmit et al.'s (2023) emphasis on the importance of communities of practice for maintaining professional development. Respondents in this study preferred continuous mentorship and knowledge-sharing networks that resemble teacher learning circles proposed by Fahmi and Yousef (2014), in contrast to formal PD designs that concentrate on theoretical instruction. This suggests that compared to generic training programs, experiential and collaborative PD designs perform better in BL contexts.

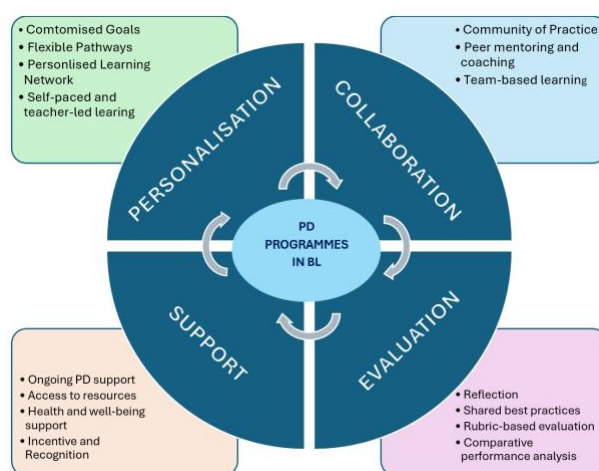
While previous work has described challenges in implementing blended learning and universal PD program limitations (Garone et al., 2022; Philipsen et al., 2019), this work makes an original contribution in foregrounding educators' reflective voices through a collaborative autoethnography. In comparison to big-data surveys or top-down evaluation, our methodology uncovers teachers' subtle, in vivo experiences of professional work under institutional constraints, pedagogical change, and unequal support. Through narrative reflection and community inquiry, participants not only revealed PD gaps but also envisioned pragmatic, viable substitutes with roots in experience. Finally, in adopting an integrative approach that places reflective practice in a central role as a guiding principle of PD program design, proposed work contributes to existing designs conceptually and practically to understandings of teacher learning in tech-rich environments, particularly in under-explored Southeast Asian contexts.

A proposal of a professional development model for blended learning

From this research's findings, we present a Comprehensive PD Model for Blended Learning that addresses and responds to this study's findings of key challenges and expectations. The model has four key elements of personalization, collaboration, support, and evaluation that work to facilitate teacher development in an adaptable, viable, and situationally aware manner. These four elements are not only reflective of pragmatic considerations but also draw from Reflective Practice Theory's conceptual foundations (Schön, 2017), which views professional learning as an iterative and self-generated process rooted in practitioners' experiential lives.

Figure 2.

The proposed PD model for blended learning



According to the foundational tenets of Reflective Practice Theory (Larrivee, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), effective PD occurs when teachers are encouraged to observe, question, and reconstruct their beliefs about teaching and their own teaching practices in cycles of critical appraisal. Since teachers reflect backwards, assess their own needs, and make appropriate learning adjustments, personalization in this framework of teachers choosing their own learning objectives and professional development paths is thus consistent with the idea of reflection-on-action. Additionally, it upholds the defining value of reflective teaching and teacher agency (Farrell, 2019).

The model's communal mode is based on the claim that socially mediated mode of reflection is the most effective (Russell, 2005). Group projects, peer learning circles, and peer mentoring all establish dialogic spaces for cooperative reflection where teachers can review their own work and gain new insights from interacting with others. Loughran (2002) elaborated on the communal mode as a process of mutual construction of meaning that turns individual reflection into a process of mutual inquiry.

Third in this framework, institutional support is necessary to maintain reflection-in-action in dynamic learning environments such as blended learning. Teachers need resources, time, and support to evaluate their own teaching decisions as they experiment with new tools or innovations in the learning format. Reflective practice is anchored in a broad institutional

culture for professional development by the model's emphasis on mentoring, exposure to pedagogical resources, and appreciation for teachers' work.

Ultimately, this assessment component encourages intentional self-review and feedback processes that motivate teachers to track their own growth and make their own decisions about how to improve. This supports the idea that reflection is a continuous, iterative process where progress is continuously evaluated and improved. According to Zeichner and Liston (1996), reflective teaching for long-lasting change can be combined with intentional and continuous reflection through the use of rubrics, reflective logs, and peer cycles of feedback.

Overall, the model offers a theory-informed and practice-oriented framework that facilitates teachers in making sense of and adapting to the demands of blended learning. Grounded in Reflective Practice Theory, it moves beyond training prescriptions to foster deep, rich engagement with professional development so that teachers become active agents in their own learning.

Conclusion

With a practitioner-focused model based on Reflective Practice Theory, the study contributes to the growing body of work in professional development in blended learning. It fosters self-direction, critical analysis, and ongoing engagement with pedagogic transformation by presenting educators as reflective professionals rather than as recipients of professional development. By providing an example of how reflective ideals can be rigorously incorporated into institutional training development through formative assessment feedback, mentoring, peer debate, and personalization, it introduces new ideas to professional development. This reflective approach not only makes professional development more fluid and relevant, but it also captures the complex situations that practicing teachers face when integrating learning with higher education settings. The resulting model then serves as a conceptual link between theory and practice, providing a framework for developing responsive and long-lasting interventions as well as an equal diagnostic tool for identifying current PD deficiencies.

Future research, including interdisciplinary and educational system comparisons, can look at this model in action in various institutional contexts. Other researchers can also look at how different forms of reflection such as individual and group, formative and summative affect the quality and sustainability of teacher learning. This work demonstrates that policy developers and institutional leaders have a responsibility to create reflective spaces and support systems that transcend discrete individual workshops and establish professional development as an ongoing, dialogic process.

Additionally, the study's results lend credence to Reflective Practice Theory as a suitable conceptual framework for understanding and creating successful professional development. Respondents' references to peer collaboration, personalization, and ongoing evaluation support important reflective ideas that demonstrate that effective professional development must go beyond merely imparting knowledge and support educators in engaging in critical, iterative self-reflection. The investigation highlights the advantages of viewing professional learning as an evolving process that is focused on teachers rather than an invariant institutional duty by

establishing an emergent model on this theoretical foundation. That has significant ramifications for how educational institutions view teacher development not as a standardizable trajectory calibrated to standardization, but as a process calibrated to experience, environment, and collaboration.

Although this proposed model provides a structured and adaptable framework for PD in BL, more investigation would help determine its long-term impacts and practical implementation. Future studies could test this framework in various learning environments, determine how it affects student learning outcomes and teacher engagement, and identify barriers to institutional adoption. Comparative research conducted in various institutional and cultural contexts may also shed more light on the ways in which professional development programs can be modified to accommodate different learning requirements. In conclusion, this study fills important gaps in the literature on teacher professional development in BL contexts and offers an evidence-based implementation plan. Schools, teachers, and policymakers can promote the high-quality and long-lasting implementation of BL contexts to eventually support more effective learning and instruction among students by emphasizing a cooperative, teacher-centered, and reflective professional development approach.

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