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Investigating the Barriers to Teachers' Professional Development in an EFL Context

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Abstract

As part of a large-scale study, the current study explored the barriers perceived by Iranian EFL teachers to impede their professional development. To this end, 200 EFL teachers teaching at various private foreign language institutes participated in the study. The study enjoyed a mixed-method design. That is, first, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 50 participants of the study on the basis of which the barriers to teachers' PD questionnaire (BTPDQ) was developed and validated. The results of the interview content analysis and the findings of the descriptive statistics of BTPDQ 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.). The findings might prove fruitful and innovative for the managers of foreign language education centers, teachers, and policy makers. Foreign language education policy makers, curriculum developers and syllabus designers are thus suggested to plan such effective and durable PD activities as teacher study groups, peer observation, online teacher PD methods and social-media-based programs in order to interest and involve EFL teachers in up-to-date PD activities.

Keywords: Barriers, EFL Teachers, Professional Development, Professional Development Activities

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1. Introduction

Teachers' professional development (PD) throughout their career life is of crucial importance to policy makers and has been the focus of research especially recently (Avalos, 2011). Likewise, improving their quality and PD are the main concerns of many teachers in order to improve the students' learning outcomes (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Throughout their professional lives, professionals need to renew and boost their performance by using the experience and knowledge of their peer professionals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teachers as professionals are no exception and need to grow professionally to remain effective in their teaching. Thus, teacher PD is of prime importance to increase the quality of education (Desimone, 2009).

There are different procedures and programs in order to improve language teachers' PD. As stated by Richards and Farrell (2005, pp. ix-x), an extensive variety of PD activities can be applied to teachers including 'workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, journal writing, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analysis of critical incidents, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research'. Traditionally, teachers had to participate in such traditional PD procedures as traditional workshops where their needs and interests did not matter (Flint et al., 2011). Lumpe (2007) believes that in traditional procedures of PD, teachers suffer from isolation in professional community since such traditional procedures as one-sided workshops transmit information to teachers in a unilateral way. Therefore, the quality of the given PD activity can be considered as an important challenge for teachers' PD and when teachers' access to quality PD is limited, these challenges might even be exacerbated (Powell & Bodur, 2019) meaning that when PD activities are of low quality, then teachers may not benefit from them.

1.1. Significance of the study

The prominent role of teachers' PD in changing or improving their teaching practices is extensively acknowledged in the literature (Van Den Bergh et al., 2015). Moreover, teacher PD is increasingly perceived as a promising way to help teachers meet the demands on them (Guskey, 2002). As Fullan (2001) maintains, programs of teacher PD are regarded as one of the most promising and freely accessible courses to improve their profession. Additionally, teacher PD programs and activities are seen as a route to improve competence and superior professional gratification (Huberman & Guskey, 1995).

Accordingly, neglecting the prominence of teacher PD would bring about several unfortunate consequences because the previous research findings have indicated that educators' professional capability and

development is highly significant and influential not only in the achievement of the learners, but also in the organizations' mission accomplishment (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006).

This having been said, gaining a deeper insight into the obstacles hindering EFL teachers from participating in PD activities is deemed essential. The significance of the study might lie in the fact that it could elucidate the barriers to PD of English teachers in Iran, as a typical context of EFL environment, the findings of which can be generalized to other similar EFL contexts. Thus, the results of this study might be of crucial significance to EFL teachers, managers of the language education centers, and foreign language policy makers to avoid the factors found in the present study to deter EFL teachers' PD in order to boost their teachers' effectiveness and their organizations' accomplishments and missions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Day (1997, p. 4) defines PD as "all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom". According to Blank (2010), teacher learning (e.g., teacher professional development) is a life-long process that begins in teacher education and continues in teacher's work, which could affect teachers positively (Carver & Katz, 2004).

The factors thought to hinder teachers' PD include time shortage, excessive workload, lack of required resources, lack of managerial attention to reinforce PD, and passive working climate (Snoek, Swennen, & Klink, 2011). Klink, Kools, Avissar, and Sakata (2017) pinpoint that contextual barriers are not the only explanation for teachers' reluctance to engage in PD activities. They also highlight fear of change and lack of interest as the individual barriers which might hinder PD. According to Smith (2003), PD is not only about learning, but it also necessitates unlearning and challenging beliefs, which demands that teachers forget their comfort zone of traditional beliefs. However, forgetting this comfort zone might be undesirable and unpleasant for some.

Day (1999) enumerates factors affecting the process of teachers' professional learning as work experience, past events, career level, social and political conditions, school cultures, leadership and colleague support, dialogue between the individual and the colleagues and the principal, the quality of learning experience, the relation of learning experience with the cognitive and sensual needs, and the responsibility of teachers for their own learning. Afterwards, Kwakman (2003) used adult learning theory and social

psychological theory of work stress to refine factors that fit conceptualization of teacher learning as participation in PD activities. She stated that personal factors and workplace factors influenced teachers' participation in PD activities.

2.2. Research on Barriers to PD

A number of studies in the literature explored the barriers which the teachers experienced in the way of their PD. In a study, specifically devoted to collaborative continuing professional development (CPD), Kenndey (2011) examined potential barriers deterring teachers' CPD in Scotland. He collected the required data by interviewing 10 key informants and eight practicing teachers. The results of the data analysis showed that such structural barriers as timetable issues were among the teachers' main concerns. Also, it was found that the teachers' lack of time to contact with the colleagues to work collaboratively out of class (i.e. collegial support as a form of PD) was among the prominent barriers mentioned by the teachers impeding them from developing professionally.

Recently, Sprott (2019), in a qualitative study, examined the factors that deterred teachers' PD and concluded that the two most prevalent factors were 'structural obstacles' and 'rigid hierarchical mandates'. Sprott adds that the former prevents collaborative opportunities among teachers and the latter results in top-down procedures in implementing PD activities, both of which finally take teachers' attention away from growth opportunities in the profession.

Similarly, Avidov-Ungar (2018), conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with 40 teacher leaders, investigated the barriers to their PD. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed thematically. The results indicated that participants mentioned five barriers to teacher PD including logistical difficulties pertaining to time and place, pressure from a high work-load, absence of staff support and cooperation, insufficient support from school's administration, pressure from progress measurement visit, and inadequate training.

Another study on teachers' problems with PD programs is conducted by Meng and Tajaroensuk (2013) who found the challenges teachers faced when they participated in in-service PD programs. The participants of the study included 55 Chinese EFL teachers who completed a questionnaire about teachers' problems in PD programs and attended semi-structured group interviews to yield more in-depth information on the subject under investigation. The results of the analysis of the questionnaire data proved that shortage of good and practical programs was the main obstacle. The other

obstacles were found to be lack of continuity of in-service PD, teachers' heavy work load, and lack of financial support for the programs.

Similarly, Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), in a qualitative piece of research, studied the challenges which impacted the teachers' involvement in CPD in the context of Africa. To this end, 12 teachers from primary schools took part in the study by completing a structured questionnaire and sitting a semi-structured interview. After the analysis of the data, four main themes emerged which included lack of contribution of the school management to teachers' CPD, reluctance of teachers to participate in PD activities, lack of planning for CPD, and the career stages of teachers.

In another study, Hennessy, Habler, and Hofmann (2015) explored the factors supporting and restricting professional learning of Zambian primary school teachers on interactive teaching and use of mobile technology. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews as well as some workshop recordings. The factors were found to be classified into the three categories of teacher (e.g., teacher motivation, teacher collaboration, perceptions of opportunities for change and professional development, and teacher views of the abilities of the learners), school (e.g., school leadership and organization, availability of resources) and the community and policy issues (e.g., viewpoints of policymakers and parents).

Moreover, another study, investigating the challenges of teacher CPD, was conducted by Shelile and Hlalele (2014) based on the premise that many teachers in inclusive schools did not have sufficient knowledge and skills required for teaching. In order to collect the data by means of semi-structured one-to-one interviews, 10 teachers from primary schools and one teacher trainer were selected as the participants of the study. The results of the data analysis revealed that the challenges included acute shortage of human and financial resources, use of such traditional models of CPD as workshops, existence of the culture of teacher isolation, and lack of quality leadership for CPD.

Hence, based on what was mentioned above, the following research question was postulated for the present study.

> What are the barriers thought to impede professional development of Iranian EFL teachers?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

We selected a total of 200 EFL teachers teaching at different private foreign language education institutes in Iran based on convenience sampling to participate in the study. The participants included both female**s** (N=114)

and males (N=86) holding B.A. (N=118), M.A. (N=71), and Ph.D. (N=11) degrees in English Language Teaching, English Translation, and English Literature. Furthermore, their teaching experience varied from 1 to 20 years (47.5% below five years, 25% between five to ten years, and 27.5% above 10 years). The participants were teaching at different levels ranging from pre-intermediate to advanced levels. Additionally, 50 participants of the study were selected based on convenience sampling to attend the semi-structured interview as mentioned earlier. The informed consent of the participants was also obtained.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1. Semi-structured Interview

With the aim of exploring the barriers lying in the way of EFL teachers' PD, 50 EFL teachers, selected based on convenience sampling from among the participants of the study, attended a semi-structured interview. We requested the participants to specify the barriers that they thought prevented their professional development. It is noteworthy that the questions of the interview were expert viewed by two scholars in the field for validation purposes. The interviews were conducted in the English language which included one main question with three sub-categories (see Appendix 1). Each interview took approximately 15 minutes. The main purpose behind the interview was to explore the ideas of EFL teachers regarding the barriers they thought impeded their PD, the results of which also acted as the basis of the items of the questionnaire.

Although we used the semi-structured interview to mainly extract the questionnaire items, it also proved to be fruitful in providing us with detailed accounts of the quality of barriers to PD which is evident throughout the discussion section in the form of *juicy bits* of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

3.2.2. Barriers to Teacher Professional Development Questionnaire (BTPDQ)

A researcher-made questionnaire called BTPDQ (see Appendix 2) was used in the present study in order to assess the barriers which prevented EFL teachers from developing professionally. The BTPDQ is made up of 28 items which are answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5. The BTPDQ was constructed in English and its items were mainly derived from the results of the semi-structured interview conducted in the present study. The BTPDQ was pilot tested with 82 subjects similar to those of the present study in order to ensure its validity. The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was calculated to be 0.73, above the recommended value, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be

statistically significant ($P=0.00 < 0.05$). A Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation was then run which yielded eight factors, the results of which are presented in Appendix 3. Furthermore, having run Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency index, we found the questionnaire to enjoy a high reliability index of 0.90.

3.3. Procedure

As mentioned before, a semi-structured interview was first conducted by the researchers with 50 EFL teachers. The interviews were transcribed to extract the main themes and common patterns of the responses and identify the core codes. Based on the findings of the interviews and also drawing upon an extensive review of the related literature in the field on the topic, the questionnaire (i.e., BTPDQ) was developed. The BTPDQ was then expert-viewed, based on the results of which, the required changes were made. Next, it was piloted with 82 subjects similar to those of the present study and was subjected to factor analysis (see Appendix 3) for validation purposes, the results of which showed the BTPDQ enjoyed acceptable construct validity as mentioned earlier. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was also ensured adopting Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency estimation. After ensuring about the reliability and validity of the BTPDQ in the piloting phase, we administered the questionnaire to 250 EFL teachers in order to receive their ideas about the challenges they felt hindered their PD; however, only 200 teachers answered and returned the questionnaire. According to Dörniey (2007), the study can thus be considered a mixed- method one (qual→QUAN). More precisely, the work can be regarded as an *exploratory sequential* mixed method study (Creswell, 2014).

3.4. Data Analysis

Having collected the required data, we carried out data analyses using descriptive statistics. The semi-structured interviews were exposed to content analysis which were then 'quantitized' (Dörnyei, 2007) and subjected to frequency analysis. Descriptive statistics of the participants' responses to BTPDQ including mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage were also calculated to answer the research question of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Questionnaire Results

To answer the research question, descriptive statistics were calculated, the results of which are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for BTPDQ

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PD Barriers	200	64.00	140.00	105.92	16.40
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As shown in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the BTPDQ were 105.92 and 16.40 respectively. The ultimate score was computed in the possible range of 28 to 140. Moreover, the minimum score gained by the EFL teachers in the study was 64 and the maximum score was 140.

Furthermore, descriptive statistics were calculated for the barriers perceived by Iranian EFL teachers deterring their PD, the results of which are shown in Table 2 (Appendix 4).

As it is evident from Table 2, 75% of the teachers reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that teachers' lack of motivation (i.e. item 1) prevented them from developing professionally while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed so, which means that most of them believed lack of motivation prevented them from participating in PD activities. Also we achieved similar results for teachers' lack of cooperation with other colleagues due to lack of teamwork spirit (i.e. item 4) which prevented them from developing professionally with which 71% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. As shown in Table 2, the lowest mean belonged to item 25 (i.e. policy makers and curriculum developers' top-down managerial behavior impeding teachers' PD) with which only 48 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed followed by item 20 (i.e. supervisors' lack of cooperation with teachers in providing them with the required feedback) with which nearly 55 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed.

4.1.2. Interview Results

As shown in Appendix 1, the semi-structured interview included one main question with three sub-categories which required the sample to specify the factors that prevented them from developing professionally. The results of teachers' responses to this question are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

The Interviewees' Responses to the Interview Question (i.e. Barriers to PD)

Barriers	Frequency (out of 50)	Percentage
Psychological barriers (e.g. teacher demotivation)	50	100%
Lack of teamwork spirit	36	72%
Poor performance of educational system (e.g. Institutes' lack of organized plan for PD)	24	48%
Lack of financial support from institute managers	20	40%
Educational policy makers	12	24%

As illustrated in Table 3, all of the respondents (100%) believed that psychological barriers (e.g., lack of motivation, burn-out, and fear of one's weaknesses to be disclosed to others) prevented them from participating in PD activities. Additionally, the majority of the teachers (72%) mentioned lack of teamwork spirit among Iranian EFL teachers as a barrier to PD, and nearly half of them (48%) attributed the barriers to poor performance of the educational system (e.g., institutes' lack of organized plan for PD, weak training courses at university, PD activities not being long-lasting enough to have the needed effect on the teachers, and poorly designed PD courses). Moreover, some teachers (40%) believed that language institutes did not support them financially to participate in PD activities. Finally, a few number of teachers (12%) believed that the negative attitudes of educational policy makers and curriculum developers towards EFL teachers were among the barriers to PD.

4.2. Discussion

The present study investigated the factors that impeded Iranian EFL teachers' PD. The results of the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire confirmed, to a great extent, what the participants pointed out in the semi-structured interview in this regard. The results showed that the barriers were classified under three major categories: *teachers themselves, managers of the language institutes,* and *the policy makers*. The results of the content analysis of the interviews indicated that the factors attributed to teachers included such psychological barriers as teachers' lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, fear of their weaknesses being disclosed to the colleagues or to the manager, and reluctance to cooperate with other teachers. Additionally, factors ascribed to managers of the language institutes included lack of financial support to hold PD activities for their teachers, low payments, and their lack of an organized plan for PD. The third category of factors, which included factors related to policy makers, consisted of weak training courses at university, lack of planning for long-lasting PD activities to have durable effects on teachers, and poorly designed PD courses.

Among the above-mentioned factors, teachers' lack of enough motivation, their reluctance to cooperate with each other due to lack of teamwork spirit, and the language institutes' lack of an organized plan for PD were found to be among the most frequently mentioned barriers.

The importance of teacher motivation in PD has been highlighted in multiple other studies (e.g., Binkhorst, Handelzalts, Poortman, & Joolingen, 2015; Prenger, Poortman, & Handelzalts, 2017; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2016). Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2016), for instance, specified low salary as one of the major demotivating factors of Iranian EFL teachers which corroborate our findings in this respect where the participants mentioned this factor as a source of demotivation that finally prevented them from developing professionally; a finding also supported by the remarks of the interview participants of the study, one of whom stated,

> I am not financially well-supported enough to burden the difficulties of taking part in in-service courses. Some of them like workshops or conferences are not cheap at all. Our salary, especially [that of] teachers of private institutes is very low. I really lose my motivation at the end of the terms when I am paid just ten thousands Tomans [less than one dollar] per hour.

The findings in this respect are consistent with those of Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015) and Hennessy, Habler, & Hofmann, (2015) who also concluded that teachers' lack of motivation was among the factors preventing them from participating in CPD events. One possible reason for this finding could lie in the importance of teacher motivation in language teaching in general and PD in particular. Motivation is categorized into two types by Williams and Burden (1997) including initiation motivation (i.e. the reason for doing something) and sustaining motivation (i.e. efforts at persisting in doing something). It could thus be argued that teachers not only need to possess initiation motivation in order to find the underlying reasons for participating in PD activities, but they also need to have sustaining motivation in order to be able to continue to attend PD activities during their professional life. Accordingly, we might be able to say that teacher motivation, to a large extent, could influence teachers' decision in attending or avoiding the PD activities.

The participants' reluctance to cooperate with each other could be related to lack of collegial support among them, the importance of which has been stressed in the literature (Imants & Van Veen, 2010). Harris and Anthony (2001), for instance, refer to collegial support as an important factor in teachers' development. De Vries, Grift, & Jansen, (2013) believe that collaboration with colleagues not only provides feedback and new ideas, but

it also motivates teachers to exchange experiences through cooperation, interaction and negotiation which ultimately impact learners' performance. Yet, judging from the findings of the interview conducted with the participants in the study, it appeared that some of the teachers did not have teamwork spirit to give and receive collegial support as a favorite participatory PD activity as one stated,

> I like to collaborate with my colleagues. I like to have sessions to discuss our problems rising in class and get help from each other, but unfortunately, most of them don't like it. Once, we planned for weekly sessions to do so, but only two of them participated. Or another week which they took part, they didn't talk even one word. I'd like to do peer observation, but they won't. Their excuse is lack of enough time.

Powell and Bodur (2019), Sprott (2019), Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), Hennessy et al. (2015), Shelile and Hlalele (2014), and Kennedy (2011) have already identified teachers' lack of collaboration or teacher isolation as one of the challenges hindering teachers' PD. This finding shows that the support received from colleagues is low, meaning that teachers show little interest in collaboration, and teamwork. This could suggest that the value of knowledge-sharing with colleagues should be discussed during teacher meetings and pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. This might, of course, be also heavily rooted in the general culture of the nation wherein cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, and sharing common experiences and ideas in various sectors and areas (e.g., scientific affairs, social efforts, business endeavors, etc.) are not usually appreciated and valued.

Another category of barriers found in the present study to hinder PD included the language institutes themselves because they simply ignored planning effective PD methods. The results of the semi-structured interviews showed that most of the participants believed in the necessity of planning some durable and organized courses for the teachers to participate in PD activities as one of the responsibilities of the institutes. As an example, one of them remarked, 'Institutes should keep all their teachers updated by engaging them in PD methods, but we do not have any PD method here. The only one was a TTC [Teacher Training Course] held about two years ago'.

School's commitment and support seem to play an effective role in teachers' willingness to devote themselves to it (Bush & Middlestone, 2006 as cited in Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015), lack of which is among the factors thought to hinder teachers' PD (Hennessy et al., 2015; Shelile & Hlalele, 2014). Consequently, it could be argued that teachers need opportunities created by foreign language institutes/education centers to

increase their knowledge and skills in the form of different PD activities. Thus, some institutes' ignorance of creating opportunities for teachers to engage in PD is one of the challenges that might seriously impact their involvement in PD.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study explored the barriers which Iranian EFL teachers felt impeded their PD. The results indicated that the barriers included the three broad categories of 'teachers themselves', 'managers of the language institutes', and 'the policy makers'. Also, the most commonly-reported sub-category of barriers was found to be EFL teachers' lack of enough motivation due to low payment they received from the language institutes where they worked.

Another sub-category of barriers was found to be teachers' lack of cooperation due to their lack of teamwork spirit. One of the reasons for the lack of cooperation among teachers mentioned by the participants was revealed to be their fear of their weaknesses being disclosed to other colleagues. However, this cannot be considered a logical excuse, at least in academic environments, where one needs to develop the attitude that constructive criticism and insightful suggestions could prove fruitful in boosting one's career and teaching.

The other barrier was found to be related to language institutes' management system which ignored planning effective PD activities. Foreign language institutes and education centers thus need to play their vital role in teachers' PD by presenting and fostering various PD activities and obviating the obstacles deterring teachers from developing professionally.

More specifically, the managers of foreign language education centers should be concerned about their teachers' professional quality. They are suggested to provide their teachers with appropriate and fruitful PD activities based on rigorous, but feasible plans, because as the results showed, one of the barriers to PD was the foreign language education centers' lack of organized plans for PD activities.

Foreign language education centers/institutes can also be a great place for teachers to learn and cooperate with other colleagues. Indeed, colleagues are a good source of information from whom one can learn enormously. The foreign language institutes could thus provide a learning community through such PD activities as teacher support groups, peer observation, classroom action research which do not need a huge amount of budget. They could also support their teachers financially to enable them to attend different

conferences, workshops, seminars, symposia, etc. to learn from their colleagues.

Foreign language education policy makers, curriculum developers and syllabus designers are also recommended to highlight the role of, and plan such effective and durable PD activities as peer observation, teacher study groups, online teacher PD methods and social-media-based programs in order to interest and involve EFL teachers in up-to-date PD activities more if they expect long-term effects. Moreover, teachers are suggested to develop their teamwork spirit in order to perform such collaborative, interactive and participatory methods of PD as collegial support.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1- What do you think are the main barriers\ obstacles for professional development in foreign language teacher education in Iran?

a) Is it related to teachers themselves, their lack of study and preparation?

b) Is it related to educational policy makers? e.g., owners and managers of the institutes or the Ministry of Education?

c) Is it related to teacher training courses at university or educational - system of the country?

d) What else do you think it is related to?

Appendix 2: Barriers to teachers' professional development questionnaire (BTPDQ)

Dear teacher

Please take your time to fill up the following questionnaire, as it will help us to explore the barriers to teachers' professional development. Please choose your idea about factors that prevent teachers from developing professionally in each item. Thanks for your support.

Years of teaching experience: below 5years ☐ between 5 and 10 ☐ above 10 years ☐

- PD stands for professional development
- strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, No idea=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5

Items					
1-Teachers are **not motivated** enough to develop professionally.					
2-Teachers **don't have enough self-confidence** to develop professionally.					
3-Teachers have **the fear of their weaknesses to be disclosed** to colleagues or managers in PD activities.					
4-Teachers don't cooperate with each other due to **lack of teamwork spirit** to share ideas and experiences to develop professionally.					
5- Teachers **don't adopt new methods** or technological devices in their classes to develop professionally.					
6-Teachers **are not innovative** enough to develop professionally.					
7- Teachers feel burn-out which prevents them from developing professionally					
8- Teachers' excessive work load prevents them from developing professionally.					
9-**Educational policy makers don't provide opportunities** for teachers to develop themselves professionally.					
10- The educational policies of Iran's government are resistant against teaching English as a foreign language which prevents teachers from developing professionally.					
11- The educational system of the country doesn't support language institutes to train their teachers professionally.					
12- The teacher training courses at universities are weak.					
13- **Some teachers' majors are not English** (i.e. they are graduates of other disciplines than language).					
14- The language education institutes **don't have organized plans for PD**.					
15- The PD courses are **poorly designed** by the Ministry of Education for English teaching at schools.					
16- Most of PD **activities are not long lasting** to have a durable effect on teachers.					

17- **Teachers are underpaid** which prevents them from concentrating on PD activities.					
18- **Teachers are busy** with their family and personal matters to earn a living which prevents them from developing professionally.					
19- **Lack of financial support from institute managers** to hold PD programs prevents teachers from developing professionally.					
20- **Supervisors don't cooperate with teachers** in giving feedback and guidance required to help them develop professionally.					
21- **Shortage of sufficient technological facilities** adopted in EFL classes prevents teachers from developing professionally.					
22- Managers don't appreciate teachers for their hard work which prevents them from concentrating on PD.					
23- Managers do not trust some of their teachers to experience teaching in more advanced levels, so this prevents teachers from developing professionally.					
24- Managers' top-to-down managerial behavior and attitudes towards teachers prevents them from developing professionally.					
25-Language education Policy makers and curriculum developers' top-to-down managerial behavior and attitude towards teachers prevent them from developing professionally.					
26- **Teacher educators' poor pedagogical and general proficiency knowledge** prevents teachers from developing professionally.					
27-Classes do not require very high knowledge on the part of teachers to motivate them to enhance their skills and abilities and thus develop professionally.					
28- Difficulty of access to recent literature in the field (e.g. articles, books, etc) prevents teachers from developing professionally.					

Appendix 3: Factors Loadings for the Rotated Factors of the Barriers to EFL teachers' PD

Item	Factor Loading							Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Item 1	.56							.58
Item 2	.71	-.58						.87
Item 3	.44	.51	-.46					.84
Item 4	.55		.42					.81
Item 5	.55	.42						.74
Item 6	.64			-.49				.83
Item 7	.60					-.44		.86

Item 8	.81							.90
Item 9	.50	.52						.62
Item 10	.53			-.55				.83
Item 11					.72			.79
Item 12	.59	.40						.82
Item 13	.59		-.49	-.44				.84
Item 14	.62	-.62						.86
Item 15	.71	-.57						.89
Item 16			-.73					.86
Item 17								.79
Item 18	.61		-.47	-.47				.86
Item 19					.76			.77
Item 20	.74	-.52						.86
Item 21	.54						-.46	.77
Item 22	.45					.46	.48	.76
Item 23						.45		.67
Item 24		.57						.65
Item 25							-.55	.80
Item 26	.46	.45						.55
Item 27	.54							.62
Item 28	.42			.40				.60
Eigenvalues	28.99	42.02	50.66	58.42	64.94	69.69	74.13	77.74
% of variance	28.99	13.02	8.64	7.75	6.52	4.74	4.43	3.6

Note: loadings <0.4 are omitted

Appendix 4: Table 2

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Barriers Impeding PD of EFL Teachers

N	Item	Likert scale%					Mean	SD
		SD	D	NI	A	SA		
1	Teachers are not motivated enough to develop professionally.	3.5	11.5	10.5	16.0	58.5	**4.15**	1.20
4	Teachers don't cooperate with each other due to lack of teamwork spirit to share ideas and experiences to develop professionally.	2.5	7.5	19.6	14.1	56.3	**4.14**	1.12
14	The language education institutes don't have organized plans for PD.	3.0	10.0	12.0	25.0	50.0	**4.09**	1.13
16	Most PD activities are not long lasting enough to have a durable effect on teachers.	1.5	12.0	16.5	20.0	50.0	**4.05**	1.13
8	Teachers' excessive workload prevents them from developing professionally.	0.5	13.5	21.0	13.5	51.5	**4.02**	1.14
7	Teachers feel burn-out which prevents them from developing professionally.	2.0	4.0	17.0	44.0	33.0	**4.02**	0.91
22	Managers don't appreciate teachers for their hard work which	3.5	7.0	21.5	27.5	40.5	**3.95**	1.10

	prevents them from concentrating on PD.							
3	Teachers have the fear of their weaknesses to be disclosed to colleagues or managers in PD activities.	7.5	13.5	23.5	37.0	18.5	**3.94**	1.21
13	Some teachers' majors are not English (i.e. they are graduates of other disciplines than language).professionally.	4.5	9.0	18.5	28.0	40.0	**3.90**	1.16
17	Teachers are underpaid which prevents them from concentrating on PD activities.	1.0	16.0	15.5	29.0	38.5	**3.88**	1.12
12	The teacher training courses at universities are weak.	2.5	14.5	20.5	24.0	38.5	**3.82**	1.16
6	Teachers are not innovative enough to develop professionally.	1.5	19.0	20.0	16.5	43.0	**3.81**	1.22
26	Teacher educators' poor pedagogical and general proficiency knowledge prevents teachers from developing professionally.	1.0	14.0	23.0	27.5	34.5	**3.81**	1.09
19	Lack of financial support from institute managers to hold PD programs prevents teachers from developing professionally.	2.0	17.5	15.5	28.5	36.5	**3.80**	1.16
5	Teachers don't adopt new methods or technological devices in their classes to develop professionally.	3.0	21.0	11.5	22.0	42.5	**3.80**	1.27
18	Teachers are busy with their family and personal matters to earn a living which prevents them from developing professionally.	3.0	18.0	23.0	11.5	44.5	**3.77**	1.27
23	Managers don not trust some of their teachers to experience teaching in more advanced levels, so this prevents teachers from developing professionally.	5.0	12.0	22.0	25.5	35.5	**3.75**	1.20
11	The educational system of the country doesn't support language institutes to train their teachers professionally.	2.5	15.5	16.0	41.5	24.5	**3.70**	1.07
24	Managers' top-to-down managerial behavior and attitude towards teachers prevents them from developing professionally.	2.0	15.0	24.0	31.5	27.5	**3.68**	1.09
15	The PD courses are poorly designed by the Ministry of Education for English teaching at schools.	2.5	14.0	31.0	20.0	32.5	**3.66**	1.14
21	Shortage of sufficient technological facilities adopted in EFL classes prevents teachers from developing professionally.	6.0	10.0	29.0	28.0	27.0	**3.60**	1.16
10	The educational policies of Iran's government are resistant against teaching English as a foreign language which prevents teachers from developing	4.0	8.0	43.5	13.0	31.5	**3.60**	1.12

	professionally.							
2	Teachers don't have enough self-confidence to develop professionally.	3.5	13.5	31.5	25.5	26.0	**3.57**	1.11
27	Classes do not require very high knowledge on the part of teachers to motivate them to enhance their skills and abilities and thus develop professionally.	5.0	17.5	20.5	30.5	26.5	**3.56**	1.19
9	Educational policy makers don't provide opportunities for teachers to develop themselves professionally.	1.0	21.0	24.5	30.5	23.0	**3.54**	1.09
28	Difficulty of access to recent literature in the field (e.g. articles, books, etc) prevents teachers from developing professionally.	9.0	22.5	6.5	33.5	28.5	**3.50**	1.34
20	Supervisors don't cooperate with teachers in giving feedback and guidance required to help them develop professionally.	7.5	13.5	23.5	37.0	18.5	**3.46**	1.15
25	Language education Policy makers and curriculum developers' top-to-down managerial behavior and attitude towards teachers prevent them from developing professionally.	2.0	28.0	21.5	23.0	25.5	**3.42**	1.20

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