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Monash University, Australia

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Professional Development of EFL Instructors in Indonesia: Challenges from Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the professional development challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in Indonesian higher education. Based on a reflexive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with ten instructors from five different universities, and utilising MAXQDA for data management, this study discovers four interconnected themes: limited access to pedagogical resources, institutional constraints, workload pressures, and personal limitations. Participants reported difficulties in accessing current ELT knowledge, particularly in remote areas, and highlighted the impact of rigid institutional structures, accreditation requirements and seniority-based promotion systems on PD engagement. Gendered responsibilities and family obligations, particularly among female teachers, have further restricted participation in long-term PD programmes. These results confirm and complicate the existing literature on PD in Southeast Asia and reveal how systemic, cultural and logistical factors intersect to shape the professional development of instructors. The study highlights the need for more comprehensive and context-sensitive PD policies, including digital resource platforms, flexible timetables, and family support systems. It also calls for institutional reforms to prioritize pedagogical quality rather than bureaucratic compliance. To tackle these issues, institutions of higher education should establish organised mentoring initiatives and dedicate specific time for the development of instructors.

Keywords: English language instructors, higher education institutions, MAXQDA, qualitative research, professional development

Professional development (PD) constitutes a pivotal element in augmenting teachers' expertise and efficacy. As articulated by the OECD (2009), it comprises activities that enhance educators' abilities, knowledge, and competencies. Functioning as a perpetual process of reflection, learning, and application, professional development fortifies teaching practices, thereby resulting in improved student learning outcomes (Desimone, 2009). Research concerning the professional development of middle school teachers has examined components such as motivation, pedagogical training, and program effectiveness (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). Nonetheless, a considerable gap persists in the examination of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors within Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs).

University-level EFL instructors are responsible for multiple roles, including teaching, conducting research, and engaging in community service (Kemal et al., 2019). These responsibilities define their professional status and contribute to the overarching quality of education. However, effective professional development in this domain necessitates more than merely fulfilling these duties—it requires continuous enhancement of linguistic proficiency, pedagogical strategies, and research methodologies.

Despite the intensifying global emphasis on English language education, Indonesian EFL instructors encounter significant challenges. According to the English Proficiency Index (EPI, 2023), their language proficiency remains relatively low, eliciting concerns regarding instructional quality. Within this context, a more profound investigation of professional development among EFL instructors in Indonesian universities is imperative. This study aims to identify the obstacles hindering EFL instructors' professional growth and emphasise strategies for enhancing teacher training programs to better align with evolving educational demands (Mu'in, 2018). To further investigate the difficulties encountered by EFL teachers in higher education, the following research question is posed:

RQ: What are the challenges encountered by EFL instructors in higher education institutions in Indonesia in enhancing professional development?

Literature Review

Professional Development of EFL Instructors in Higher Education

PD is essential for EFL instructors to maintain pedagogical relevance and adapt to evolving educational demands. In HEIs, PD is not only a matter of individual growth but also a strategic necessity aligned with institutional goals and accreditation standards. Desimone's (2009) framework offers a foundational model for understanding effective PD, emphasising five core features: content focus, active learning, coherence with institutional goals, sufficient duration, and collective participation. This model has been extended by scholars who highlight the importance of reflective practice (Man & Walsh, 2021), self-directed learning (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019), and digital competencies (Hockly & Dudeney, 2022) in contemporary PD programs. García and Kleyn (2023) further argue for PD that supports translanguaging and intercultural competence, especially in multilingual contexts.

In the Indonesian HE landscapes, EFL instructors face unique pressures stemming from the Tri Dharma obligations: teaching, research, and community service (Lamb et al., 2021). These responsibilities often compete with the time and energy needed for PD engagement. Moreover, institutional cultures marked by seniority hierarchies and limited autonomy (Alifia et al., 2022) constrain instructors' agency in pursuing self-directed learning. While PD opportunities exist, they are often sporadic, urban-centric, and digitally uneven—leaving regional instructors with limited access to online platforms and mentoring networks (Zein, 2017; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

Examining neighbouring ASEAN countries, Malaysia has carved out a role as a regional hub for higher education by offering a middle-level niche characterised by affordable costs and fairly reliable quality assurance. Singapore, on the other hand, aims to develop world-class universities and position itself as a premier international centre for high-quality university education in Southeast Asia and beyond. Their universities enjoy greater independence, and the incentive structures have been revamped to reward high-performance lecturers, provide opportunities for staff development (Hill & Wie, 2012). Indonesia faces a more complex scenario. In terms of worldwide innovation and higher education indices, Indonesia ranks only in the second tier or lower. Challenges in higher education include the number of professors, irregularities in their appointments, and addressing the shortage by opening up more professorial positions as needed. Without standardised salaries for lecturers, their responsibilities are defined, but their salary rights remain unaddressed. Additionally, the lack of standardised salaries for private university lecturers (PTS) is equally concerning (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025; Sitanggang et al., 2023)

PD engagement is shaped not only by pedagogical needs but also by institutional structures and sociocultural dynamics. Sadeghi and Richards (2021) note that teacher motivation and professional identity influence PD uptake, while Yumarnamto (2019) critiques the instability of ELT policy in Indonesia, which undermines teacher satisfaction and long-term commitment. These insights suggest that PD must be understood within the broader ecology of institutional governance, educator agency, and systemic support.

Recent studies highlight the growing importance of digital PD, especially in post-pandemic contexts. Hockly and Dudeney (2022) advocate for PD programs that integrate emerging technologies such as AI and VR, while Renandya et al. (2018) emphasise the need for reflective and self-directed learning models tailored to local constraints. However, existing research focuses on school-based teachers, leaving a gap in understanding how HEI governance, accreditation pressures, and institutional priorities shape PD engagement among university-level EFL instructors.

English Language Instructors in Indonesia

In Indonesia, English language educators operate within varied sociocultural and educational environments, navigating complex institutional regulations. English is crucial for enhancing individuals' abilities to compete in the global market. As part of its strategy to enhance human

capital and global competitiveness, the government emphasises English proficiency, although it remains a foreign language within Indonesia's school system (Lauder, 2008). In Indonesian higher education, English teachers must fulfil three core duties: teaching, conducting research, and participating in community service, known collectively as the Tri Dharma of higher education (Lamb et al. 2021). These responsibilities are vital for instructors to maintain their professionalism, their salaries, and obtain certification funding.

To improve the quality of their professionalism, EFL instructors in Indonesia face several problems. Access to PD is uneven across regions. Urban institutions typically offer more opportunities and resources, while instructors in rural or regional HEIs face digital infrastructure gaps, limited funding, and fewer mentoring networks (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025; Sitanggang et al., 2023; Zein, 2022). Gendered and familial responsibilities also shape PD participation, particularly for female instructors balancing academic duties with caregiving roles (Gaus & Hall, 2016).

The profession itself is often undervalued, with teaching perceived as a fallback career (Yumarnamto, 2016; Syaodih, 2011), affecting motivation and long-term commitment to PD. Institutional visions and rigid policies may limit instructors' ability to pursue meaningful development, reinforcing a compliance-based rather than growth-oriented PD culture. Moreover, only 20% of Indonesian EFL instructors meet international proficiency standards (Hamied & Mustafa, 2019), reflecting systemic gaps in training and support. Despite initiatives like "English for Everyone" and partnerships with the British Council, implementation remains inconsistent due to funding and policy fragmentation (Zein et al., 2020).

Knowledge Gap

Although there is increasing attention on teacher PD globally and in Indonesia, the current literature lacks a detailed exploration of the specific constraints affecting EFL instructors' engagement in PD within HEIs, neglecting the distinct governance requirements of HEIs—such as the Tri Dharma duties (teaching, research, and community service), accreditation challenges, and institutional performance metrics—that uniquely influence university-level instructors (Lamb et al., 2021; Gaus & Hall, 2016).

This research explores the intersections of institutional frameworks, geographic settings, and sociocultural elements in shaping the professional development experiences of EFL instructors within Indonesian higher education institutions. It offers a context-specific examination of the challenges and opportunities in professional development, anchored in local circumstances and established theoretical frameworks.

To guide this investigation, the study utilises Desimone's (2009) framework for effective PD, highlighting five essential elements: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. This framework guides the formation of interview questions and the thematic coding approach, facilitating a systematic identification of both institutional and personal limitations. Furthermore, the study incorporates perspectives on institutional and

organisational support, such as policy alignment, leadership culture, and funding mechanisms, along with self-directed and reflective learning (Man & Walsh, 2021; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019), to capture the agency and adaptive strategies of instructors navigating complex PD environments. These conceptual perspectives collectively provide a basis for understanding how PD is implemented, limited, and negotiated within Indonesian HEIs.

Method

This research utilised a qualitative, interpretivist methodology to investigate the professional development experiences of EFL instructors at Indonesian higher education institutions. The methodology is based on the notion that meaning is socially constructed and influenced by context. Data analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006), highlighting researcher subjectivity, reflexivity, and the interpretative role in developing themes. This approach effectively examines intricate, context-specific experiences within institutional cultures.

Participant and Sampling Technique

The study involved participants chosen through convenience sampling, a non-probability approach frequently employed in qualitative research to enlist individuals who are readily available and willing to join (Etikan et al., 2015). A total of 18 EFL instructors were approached, with 10 agreeing to participate voluntarily. To be included, participants had to (a) currently work as EFL instructors at an Indonesian higher education institution, (b) have at least five years of teaching experience, and (c) be involved in professional development activities, which could be supported by institutions, led by the ministry, or initiated by themselves. Among the participants, two had earned doctoral degrees in education, while the others held master's degrees in education and TESOL. All participants were certified lecturers, matching the study's focus on professional development (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The sample consisted of instructors from five different institutions, including three public universities, a polytechnic, and a vocational academy, covering both urban and semi-urban areas. Although convenience sampling allowed for a variety of participants, the ability to generalise the results to institutions outside this sample may be restricted. Table 1 summarises participant characteristics.

Table 1*Participant characteristics*

EFL instructors	Gender	Year of teaching	Educational qualification
P 1	Female	15 years	M.Ed.
P 2	Female	17 years	M.TESOL, M.Ed.
P 3	Male	10 years	M.Ed.
P 4	Female	13 years	M.Ed.
P 5	Female	12 years	M.TESOL, M.Ed.
P 6	Male	25 years	Doctorate in Linguistics
P 7	Male	22 years	Doctorate in Education
P 8	Female	12 years	M.TESOL, M.Ed.
P 9	Male	13 years	M.Ed.
P 10	Male	12 years	M.A

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a widely utilised method in qualitative research for the elicitation of profound insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Bryman, 2016). The interview questions and answers were conducted in English due to the participants' high self-reported proficiency level and academic degrees in English-related subjects. Additionally, the researcher conducted preliminary discussions with participants. These discussions yielded several notes concerning the experiences of EFL instructors in their professional development process. Ethical considerations were conscientiously addressed by explicating the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures to participants before securing their written consent (Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews were systematically scheduled during non-instructional periods and conducted in tranquil settings within the participants' respective institutions. Each interview spanned approximately 40 to 60 minutes and was audio recorded using a smartphone. Following transcription, participants were contacted to verify the accuracy of their responses, thus ensuring the credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcribed data were subsequently imported into MAXQDA for qualitative analysis.

The interview protocol was developed based on key principles of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) and reviewed by a senior qualitative researcher. The interview consisted of two segments. The initial phase involved gathering background information from individuals. The second section consisted of 33 inquiries that asked them about the concept of

teacher professional development, their efforts in developing their professionalism, their teaching quality, and their commitment to their job. Sample questions included:

- “What professional activities have you joined to improve your professional development so far?”
- “What source of tension impacts your professionalism as an EFL instructor?”
- “Do you think institutions help EFL instructors to play their role as instructors?”
- “What aspects should be supported by the institutions to have professional EFL instructors?”
- Participants were made aware of their rights, the confidentiality protocols, and the fact that joining the study was entirely voluntary. In alignment with ethical standards (Cohen et al., 2018), written consent was obtained. The study secured approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) University of Szeged with reference number: 13/2024, and no incentives were provided. During transcription, all data were anonymised and stored securely on an encrypted, password-protected device that only the researcher could access.

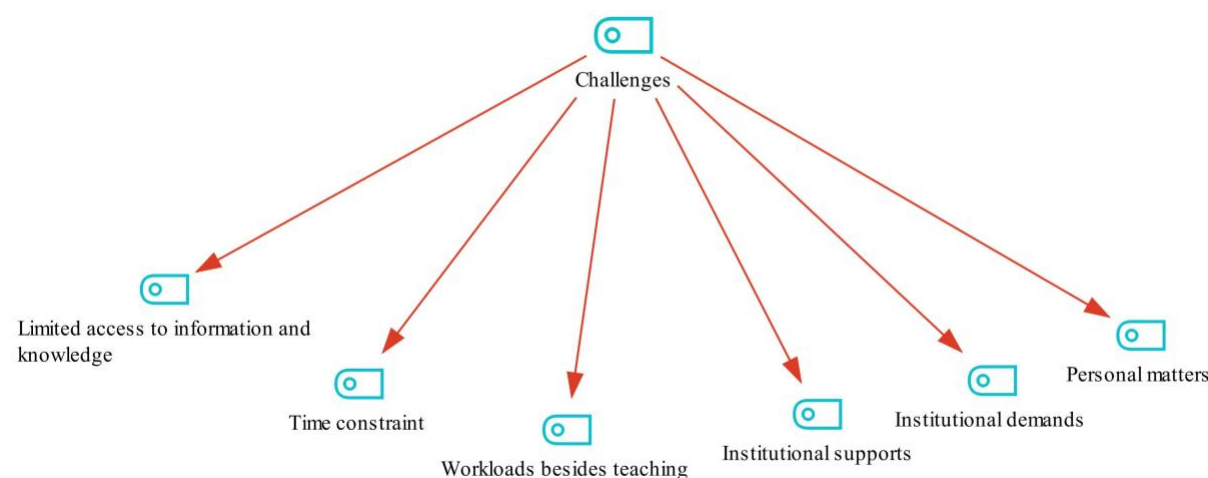
Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) in accordance with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase method: familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition, and write-up. The lead researcher manually performed the coding while engaging in iterative reflection throughout. To increase reflexivity, a peer researcher examined selected transcripts and engaged in analytical discussions to challenge assumptions and refine interpretation. This process was not designed to achieve inter-coder reliability but aimed to foster critical reflexivity and transparency in theme development.

Data management tasks such as organising transcripts, retrieving coded sections, and recording analytical insights were facilitated by MAXQDA (Kuckartz, 2014). Thematic development was carried out manually to ensure thorough engagement with the data and maintain interpretive depth.

Results

This section presents six key themes that emerged from the data, each highlighting a distinct challenge faced by EFL instructors in Indonesian higher education. Each theme is supported by participant quotes and interpreted in relation to professional development (PD) and institutional structures. The themes found from the analysis are explained below (refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1*Challenges Faced by EFL Instructors in Indonesian HEIs*

Limited Access to Information and Knowledge

Based on the data analysis, it is found that there are several challenges faced by the EFL instructors in higher educational settings in Indonesia. One of the challenges is the availability of access towards information and knowledge about English language teaching. The participants revealed problems in updating their knowledge about ELT especially related to updated teaching methodology and innovation in ELT which they believed this information and knowledge are significant in increasing their professional competence in ELT. One participant, referred to as P1, explicitly stated:

“Access to get information about teacher development, about EFL career. Our place is too far from the capital city, and we have limited experts here” (P1).

“...but the problem is we don’t know about the information. Our professional development is just average or getting worse, because we don’t get any workshops” (P 5).

These quotes illustrate how physical distance from urban centres and a lack of expert networks hinder instructors’ ability to stay updated with ELT innovations. This structural barrier undermines their professional growth and classroom effectiveness, echoing concerns raised in Postholm (2018) and Hismanoglu (2009).

Workloads Besides Teaching

EFL instructors handle numerous teaching activities and often complain about their additional workloads. Besides their heavy teaching duties, they must also follow institutional rules for extra tasks.

“While instructors in other countries may focus solely on teaching, in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh and at this institution, our responsibilities extend far beyond that. We are also tasked with managing organisational duties within the institution. If I could concentrate on teaching and conduct research related to my teaching methods, it might enhance my professional development. However, due to our demanding schedule, which requires us to work full-time from 8 AM to 5 PM, this is currently not feasible” (P2).

The participant complained that a lot of workloads make it difficult to improve their professional development (Broad, 2015). The time is allocated for university demands. Other EFL instructors also mentioned that he is overwhelmed with a lot of tasks from the university, including preparation documentation for teaching, which he thought was not that urgent.

“I think it’s quite dilemma for this institution, in my opinion, they also need to improve the quality of the teacher but they will do it in terms of regulation, they don’t even realize that this regulation, probably hindrance or becoming the problem for several individual to grow, but sometimes I also support the institution action because the institution need to guarantee that the teaching learning process run above the minimal requirement, that’s why this documentation is required for example, we need to finish the RPS before the teaching learning process ends but sometimes the time that they give to us maybe not fair. It is just documentation you have to follow because some sorts of documents for accreditation things, but there are other more important aspects that we forgot as an institution” (P 3).

It is in line with the research findings by Syaodih (2011) Workloads are one of the hindrances which the EFL instructors from having a proper time to explore their self and their professional development, and workloads also hurt teachers’ health, wellbeing, and attrition (Creagh et al., 2023).

Time Constraint

Time scarcity, driven by institutional obligations, prevents instructors from engaging in skill development. It is because they are busy with many other activities besides teaching.

“...the problem is we cannot upgrade our skills, particularly in English, because we are busy with administration, accreditation and some tasks that are not related to our skills, and there is no space for us to improve our skills because of the time” (P 4).

“However, there have been certain difficulties, as the knowledge acquired at university differs from my current responsibilities. For example, we are constantly occupied with tasks, accreditation, and administrative duties unrelated to our formal education” (P5).

Participants described how institutional routines crowd out time for PD. This reflects Mitton-Kükner's (2015) findings that time constraints are a major barrier to teacher learning, especially when career advancement is tied to compliance rather than growth.

Institutional Supports

While some universities offer flexible PD opportunities, others lack structured support, especially in private or vocational HEIs. From the interview, we found that there were two sides to the opinions regarding this issue. Some participants mentioned that the university has provided a lot of opportunities for the instructors to improve their professionalism. It includes university programs and the collaboration between the university and the Ministry of Education. However, others mentioned that there is a lack of opportunity for the instructors to upgrade their quality, either in teaching or career improvement.

“The university provides us with flexible space and a schedule to participate in events organised by the Ministry of Education. I believe that by taking part in initiatives such as the Kampus Mengajar program, Praktisi Mengajar, and MSIB, we can develop our teaching skills and social interaction abilities” (P3).

The instructor believes that these kinds of opportunities help them grow in teaching skills. The university does not regulate strict rules for the instructors to improve themselves.

Other participants, however, have different opinions. They mentioned that universities do not seem to have special programs to increase instructors' ability. Some participants mentioned that they must try hard to find the PD programs by themselves.

“I would indeed like my university to allocate various time slots for each lecturer to discuss their teaching skills regarding the progression of instructional materials. I anticipate this should be available, yet currently, it is not” (P9).

Others stated that the status of the university also determines the concern of the university in supporting PD of the instructors.

“My university is a vocational institution, which means its focus is minimal on enhancing my professionalism. They are more oriented towards engineering expertise and do not priorities the development of English language skills” (P5).

It is also like a private university status. The instructor mentioned that because it is a private university, the institution does not pay a lot of attention towards improving EFL instructors' capacity.

“The issue with the institution is that they must guarantee proper operation, right? Their focus extends beyond just EFL instructors; it includes the quality of the facilities, the curriculum, and the documentation. Providing support to EFL instructors involves

offering opportunities for them to enhance their teaching skills. For instance, if they wish to teach a particular subject, they should be encouraged to do so; if they prefer certain techniques, they should be permitted to utilise them, in my view” (P1).

Moreover, EFL instructors mentioned that the only support they receive is the support of the facilities in the teaching and learning process.

“As I mentioned before, LP3i places significant emphasis on facilities, such as laptops, projectors, TVs, and sound systems, to aid teaching. However, they don’t focus as much on providing books. It seems these resources are mainly available for instructors, while students receive free copies instead”. (P10).

These contrasting experiences show how institutional type and status shape PD access. While national programs exist, their implementation varies, leaving some instructors unsupported.

Institutional Demands

Rigid institutional expectations, especially around documentation and performance metrics limit autonomy and PD engagement. From the interview results, many instructors mention that the university demands high achievement of student results, more engaging teaching practices and excellent examination results. In the following excerpt one of the participants mentioned:

“Sure, this may be one reason why enhancing our methods is essential. By staying informed of new strategies and evolving approaches, we can implement them in the classroom, potentially boosting quality. This could lead to student improvement”. (P 1).

Others also mentioned that the requirement from the university to be a great teacher in terms of teaching document preparation is also taking a lot of instructors’ time. They said this requirement is not too important compared to teaching itself.

“The challenge I face is that being an EFL instructor at the university level differs significantly from teaching at a school. In this country, there is a set career path we must adhere to, and this path includes specific requirements. For instance, we must develop lesson plans following a certain format; any deviation from this is considered incorrect. Although I don’t believe it’s necessary to dwell on this, it’s the reality. Our lesson plans, referred to as RPS, must be formatted correctly, or else we’re evaluated as inadequate educators, which seems quite unreasonable to me, but it’s the way things are”. (P3)

Further, he mentioned that these requirements limit his opportunity to improve his professional development.

“So, it also hinders the quality of how we improve our professional development. For example, when I do this research, it will consume my time focusing on the classroom;

when I do something in the classroom, I will not do the research. I need to get to a certain point that I must get this semester. So, I think it becomes a hindrance for me as an EFL instructor, while there is also an internal regulation that affects the quality of my teaching, like the way it is to be formed, the way to dress, but you know, sometimes it is like limiting the freedom” (P 3).

The emphasis on compliance over creativity restricts instructors’ ability to innovate or pursue PD. This reflects a broader tension between bureaucratic accountability and professional autonomy in HEIs.

Personal Matters

Personal responsibilities, including family obligations and gendered expectations, further limit instructors’ PD participation. At one point, they have to fulfil their tasks as an instructor at a university; on the other hand, they also have family members to be supported and taken care of. They also ever thought of quitting the job, since the pay is not good enough, but the work is a lot.

“There are times I consider quitting this job because it feels repetitive and dull. Despite this, I have obligations to support my family” (P1).

The other mentioned that personal matters also take up a lot of their time. They are overwhelmed, but the tasks should go on.

“I have a significant number of tasks, particularly housework, which leaves me without time to conduct additional research or attend workshops, especially those lasting more than one day” (P 4).

Their multiple roles besides EFL instructors at the university also lead them to have limitations on improving their professionalism. As mentioned by one of the EFL instructors.

“Fundamentally, we, teachers and the department, face obstacles, but on a personal level, as a married woman, I need my husband’s approval if I wish to pursue further education. Additionally, the institution occasionally restricts our opportunities; we may have to wait two to three years for the chance to advance our studies” (P 8).

These quotes highlight how personal and cultural factors intersect with institutional barriers, particularly for women, reinforcing the need for family-responsive PD policies.

Discussion

This study examined the complex issues that EFL instructors in Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs) encounter, showing how institutional, structural, and individual factors

interact to influence their experiences with professional development (PD). The results validate, expand upon, and complicate previous research in several fields.

Instructors in rural areas indicated inadequate access to current ELT information and expert networks, showing ongoing infrastructure discrepancies. This research verifies Hismanoglu's (2009) observation of geographic obstacles, but also goes beyond it by demonstrating how digital PD platforms, while available, are underutilized due to institutional rigidity. This shows that digital solutions are ineffective in the absence of systemic support, confounding Chin et al.'s (2021) proposal for context-sensitive PD.

Heavy workloads emerged as a major obstacle to professional development, especially during institutional audit cycles. Instructors reported feeling overburdened by administrative responsibilities, accrediting documentation, and rigorous scheduling expectations, leaving little chance for pedagogical reflection or development. This conclusion supports Syaodih's (2011) and Creagh et al.'s (2023) observations regarding the negative influence of heavy workloads on PD participation. However, it complicates the picture by illustrating how these forces are profoundly rooted in institutional culture rather than simply logistical. Prioritizing accreditation measures over instructional quality reflects a larger performance trend in Southeast Asian higher education, where compliance frequently outperforms originality (Broad, 2015). This contradiction between professional autonomy and institutional obedience implies that professional development is bound not just by time, but also by the values that govern academic life, raising fundamental questions about how universities define and sustain teaching quality.

The institutional support for professional development among participants varied widely, showing a fragmented landscape across Indonesian HEIs. While some teachers have benefited from national initiatives such as *Kampus Mengajar* and *MSIB*, others, particularly those in vocational and private institutions, report minimal investment in PD infrastructure. This difference confirms Fairman et al.'s theory (2020), which argues that institutional culture and status influence PD access significantly, but also extends its work by highlighting how national programs can unintentionally strengthen existing inequalities when local institutions are unable to implement them effectively.

Furthermore, the seniority-based progression system has become a structural obstacle to PD involvement. Instructors describe the long waiting periods for learning leave and promotions, which are often related to strict timetables rather than merits and motivations. This result complicates the assumption that PD is equally accessible within hierarchical systems and suggests that institutional entry, as a tradition, can suppress initiatives and innovation. These findings point to the need to pursue more inclusive and responsive PD policies that recognise institutional diversity and challenge outdated progress models.

Personal obligations, particularly those linked to sex and marital status, have become a major obstacle to professional development. In particular, female teachers reported limited access to long-term PD opportunities due to care responsibilities and the need for the consent of their

spouses to continue their education. These findings confirm Mitton-Kükner's (2015) analysis of gender limitations in PD participation, but also expand it by revealing how cultural norms and family dynamics are linked to Indonesian HEI structures. The problem is not only logistical, but also deeply sociocultural, and professional aspirations are often negotiated within the expectations of the patriarchs. This suggests that PD policies must go beyond logistical flexibility and be actively engaged in gender equality, through family-responsive programmes, inclusive leave policies and the institutional recognition of domestic labor. Without such measures, access to PD remains uneven and reinforces the systemic disadvantages of women in the academic community.

One of the recurring concerns of participants was the institutional emphasis on documentation and compliance, especially through rigid RPS (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester) forms and audit-based performance metrics. Teachers expressed their frustration that these bureaucratic demands limited their pedagogical creativity and little space for significant professional development. Although the purpose of performance standards is to ensure responsibility, the priority of quantifiable outputs over quality of instruction confirms Creagh et al.'s (1923) criticism of the culture of performance in higher education. However, this study explains how performativity is not only externally imposed, but is also internalized by institutions seeking accreditation and legitimacy. In this context, PD becomes a checkbox, not a transformational process, and innovation is often sacrificed in order to meet it. These findings highlight the growing imbalance between institutional goals and the professional needs of teachers, suggesting that reform efforts must take into account not only policies, but also deeper cultural logics of equivalence of quality and documentation.

These findings reveal a variety of professional development landscapes in Indonesian higher education shaped by geographical differences, institutional pressures, cultural norms and bureaucratic constraints. Although national initiatives and policy frameworks provide some support, their uneven implementation and the persistence of seniority-based hierarchies, gender expectations and performing cultures limit their potential for transformation. The study not only confirms the existing criticism of the availability and equity of PD, but also exacerbates it by showing how structural and personal factors intersect in context-specific ways. To solve these challenges, it needs more than a programme expansion; it requires a rethink of institutional values, support systems, and cultural assumptions that define the professional significance of Indonesian HEI.

Implications for HEIs and Instructor Professional Development

The study's findings indicate the urgent need for Indonesian higher education institutions to implement more structured, inclusive, and responsive PD programs. The following practical guidelines are given to promote EFL instructors' professional development:

- Create credit-bearing PD programs that comply with the *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* mandate, providing micro-credentials and protected time for participants.

- Provide workload relief periods, especially before accreditation cycles, to enable instructors to prioritize professional development and creativity. Recognize professional development initiatives in performance assessments and promotion requirements.
- Increase access to blended and online professional development for instructors in remote locations. Set up resource repositories and mentorship pairs to encourage peer learning.
- Provide equitable financing and travel subsidies for conferences, certificates, and advanced studies. Implement clear rotation procedures for study leave to ensure equitable access.
- Family-Responsive Policies: To accommodate instructors with family commitments, provide short-format professional development sessions, flexible scheduling, and childcare support during PD weeks.
- Develop easy PD tracking tools that link classroom innovation and student learning outcomes, allowing institutions to analyze impact and continuously improve their offerings.

By implementing these steps, HEIs can provide a more conducive atmosphere for EFL instructors to grow professionally, hence improving the quality of English language education in Indonesia's higher education system.

Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations must be noted, even if this study offers insightful information about the difficulties EFL instructors in Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs) encounter in their professional development (PD). First, convenience sampling was used in the study, which can restrict how broadly the results can be applied. Second, because the study was limited to Indonesian HEIs and was carried out in a single country, institutional and cultural factors unique to Indonesia might not be representative of larger regional or worldwide trends. Third, self-reported interviews were used to gather the data, which could be influenced by social desirability effects, selective recall, or personal bias. Last but not least, the small sample size ($N = 10$) limits the range of viewpoints and might not fully portray the variety of experiences among EFL teachers in various institutional kinds.

To expand on these findings, future research should employ mixed-methods approaches that integrate qualitative insights with quantitative data to improve validity and depth. Comparative research of public, private, and vocational higher education institutions could shed light on how institutional type effects PD access and support. Furthermore, intervention-based research may assess the efficacy of specific PD models or institutional methods, such as structured PD pathways, digital learning platforms, or task management policies. Expanding the scope to include cross-country comparisons within Southeast Asia may uncover regional tendencies and inform policy harmonization across higher education sectors.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the intricate and interconnected difficulties that EFL instructors in Indonesian higher education institutions encounter when trying to further their professional development (PD). Heavy administrative workloads, variable institutional support, personal limitations like family obligations, and restricted access to current educational materials are some of the main challenges. Despite their great desire to improve teaching quality and student results, these issues collectively make it difficult for instructors to participate in professional development programs.

The results highlight the necessity for universities to implement more responsive and inclusive professional development methods. Practical suggestions include family-responsive policies, increased access to online and blended learning, workload respite during accreditation cycles, credit-bearing professional development programs in line with national regulations, and fair funding for further education. In order to promote a culture of continuous improvement, institutions should also put in place tracking mechanisms that connect professional development initiatives to classroom creativity and student accomplishment.

However, the study's small sample size, dependence on self-reported data, and concentration on a particular country setting restrict its scope. These limitations advise being cautious when generalizing the results. Future studies should examine institutional differences, use mixed-methods designs, and evaluate the effects of focused PD interventions. Southeast Asian comparative research could shed more light on regional patterns and guide the harmonization of policies. Finally, Indonesian HEIs can improve the quality and equality of English language instruction across the country by tackling these issues and putting strategic changes into place that will foster a more encouraging atmosphere for EFL teachers.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in The Writing Process

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