Professional Development of EFL Teachers in ASEAN countries and Japan Context

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Abstract

With the growing global emphasis on educational quality, many ASEAN countries, and Japan, have increasingly focused on the professional development (PD) of English teachers. This study investigates the perception, provision, practice and suggestion in English teacher professional development across selected ASEAN countries and Japan. Existing studies have often focused on single countries or treated teacher professional development as a general issue, overlooking the comparative dimension across multiple ASEAN and Japan contexts. This systematic review examines 39 studies published between 1993 and 2025, focusing on ESL and EFL classrooms and the ways teachers enhance their professional skills. This study involved 100 participants from five ASEAN countries and Japan, including one participant each from Cambodia and Japan, 40 from Malaysia, 24 from Myanmar, 24 from Thailand, and 10 from Vietnam. Data were collected through Google Forms distributed via email, Facebook, and Telegram groups, as well as during a conference meeting in Malaysia, using a questionnaire consisting of 38 items on a 9-point Likert scale. The data were analysed using SPSS version 20 over a two-month period. Descriptive statistics were employed by calculating the percentage distribution of responses for each item, followed by the computation of mean scores and standard deviations to identify central tendencies and variability across participants' responses. The findings reveal that while most teachers hold very positive attitude towards PD especially in areas such as lesson planning, teaching techniques, and the use of ICT. However, significant concerns remain such as time constraints, limited access to international opportunities like scholarships, and gaps in assessment skills. Notable differences were also observed between countries. The study concludes that although teachers recognize the value of PD, more structured support, international access, and targeted training are needed. The results have implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and future researchers interested in improving PD practices in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: EFL teachers, professional development, ASEAN and Japan

Introduction

Many countries are working hard to improve their education systems, especially in higher education. In ASEAN and Japan, teacher professional development is a top priority because it helps improve the quality of teaching, research, and student learning (DeMonte, 2013) .One important measure of a school and university's quality is the number of English teachers with advanced degrees and strong teaching skills.

This study focuses on six countries-Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam-that have similar educational goals and challenges. These countries often work together on regional education projects and receive support from international partners. For example, Japan supports Myanmar through the JICA project, and Thailand and Myanmar have signed many agreements to work on education together. Myanmar and Malaysia also have a strong educational relationship, especially in the area of higher education (Sam et al., 2013). Myanmar and Vietnam have been strengthening their educational relationship through government-supported forums, scholarship programs, and university partnerships, aiming to support Myanmar's educational reform and promote long-term cooperation (VNA, 2019). Learning from these countries can help Myanmar improve its teacher training systems.

Each country has its own approach to improving EFL teachers' professional development. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has implemented initiatives such as training programs and partnerships with international organizations to enhance teacher competencies. In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has introduced policies such as the "English Education Reform Plan" (2014), which includes training programs, overseas study opportunities, and the recruitment of native English-speaking assistant language teachers (ALTs) to support local teachers, as well as hands-on teaching methodologies, ICT training, and subject-specific workshops (MEXT, 2016). The Ministry of Education (MoE) and British Council have implemented initiatives such as the Professional Up-skilling of English Language Teachers (Pro-ELT) program, which provides intensive training and resources to improve teaching methodologies and language skills. Additionally, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 emphasizes continuous teacher development through workshops, online courses, and collaborations with international institutions. Myanmar's National Education Strategic Plan 2021–2030 focuses on digital tools and modern teaching (MOE, 2021). The Thai government supports EFL teacher professional development through initiatives like the Khurusapha 7-module training program and policies promoting communicative language teaching (CLT) and ICT integration (EFF, 2023; Kwangsawad, 2017). In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the British Council have implemented various initiatives, including training programs, workshops, and partnerships with international organizations to enhance teachers' language skills and pedagogical practices. Despite all these efforts, it is still hard to make sure all teachers in the region have equal access to good professional development.

By comparing professional development practices in these six countries, we can see both strengths and weaknesses in how each country supports its EFL teachers. Some of the countries, such as Japan and Malaysia, have more developed education systems, while others, like Myanmar, are still developing. Developing countries can learn from the policies, strategies, and programs used by more advanced systems. This comparison helps highlight what is working well and what needs improvement.

Relevant government departments and education authorities can use these findings to understand the gaps in their current professional development programs, including issues related to planning, provision, and teacher access. This research can support the development of more effective, well-structured, and teacher-friendly professional development systems. By applying successful strategies from other countries and addressing local challenges, governments can create professional development programs that better meet the needs of teachers and improve the quality of English language education across the region. This research explores how English teachers in ASEAN and Japan professional development. It also looks at what training they receive, how satisfied they are, what practices they use, and what suggestions they have for improving teaching.

Literature Review

Teacher development is basically the process of becoming the best kind of teacher that one can personally be. When teachers ask themselves how they can be better and enjoy their teaching more, they are actually thinking about ways of developing. It is practical to claim that teacher development draws on inner resource for change. It is centred around personal awareness of the possibilities for change and of what predisposes the change process. It builds on the past, as recognizing how past experiences have or have not been developmental helps identify opportunities for change in the present and future. It also draws on the present, in encouraging a fuller awareness of the type of teacher one is now and of other's people responses. Therefore, it is a self-reflective process, since it is through questioning previous practices that alternatives of being and doing are able to develop.

Teacher and ELT Background Issue

Although teacher education programs have been in existence for a long time, second/foreign language teacher education is a relatively recent development. According to Day (1991), in the past language teachers were either been native speakers or had some recognized expertise in the language usually based on their knowledge of the literature and culture of the target language. However, in the last forty years there has been an explosion in the teaching and learning of foreign languages, both in the actual classroom teaching and in the education of second/foreign language teachers and this has been particularly rapid in the field of ELT. There are several significant background issues to be discussed. The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has evolved considerably, facing complex background issues that influence both pedagogy and teacher development. Recent challenges include the rapid integration of technology and resistance to changing methodologies, alongside concerns over inclusivity in resources and digital tools. These shifts are reshaping ELT by pushing for a balanced approach to traditional and innovative teaching practices, particularly through methods that incorporate technology, as well as culturally responsive content.

Methodological Skills

The way scholars understand methodological skills has changed a lot over time. These skills are very important in second and foreign language teaching. They help teachers create a classroom where students are active and learn better. Richards (as cited in Ur, 1996, p. 5) explains methodological skills as the "activities, tasks, and learning experiences used by the teacher within the language teaching and learning process." In the 20th century, people began to see these skills and subject knowledge as the foundation for good language teaching. Methodological skills include organizing and managing the classroom. They also include giving clear input and checking students' understanding. Teachers must give useful feedback and interact well with their students. These skills create a good learning environment. Teachers use peer correction, focused feedback, and error analysis to help students improve. These techniques help students learn from their mistakes in a positive way. However, language teaching also needs special methods for language learning. Teachers should plan communicative activities that let students practice real-life speaking. This means they must balance fluency and accuracy to help students use language naturally and correctly (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 15).

Communication Skills

Communication is one of the most significant factors affecting classroom learning. Apart from general communication skills, which are closely related to teachers' personality and general style, language teachers should be able to perform a variety of communication tasks in the language classroom. Therefore, for teachers who are non-native speakers, language proficiency belongs to the core of generic skills that underlie competence in the teaching of English (Richards, 1998). Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful classroom interaction, influencing everything from student engagement to comprehension and retention. Language teachers must possess both general communication skills and specific communication abilities relevant to the language classroom. For non-native English-speaking teachers, language proficiency becomes a core component of teaching effectiveness, as it underpins their ability to model accurate language use, manage classroom discourse, and support students' linguistic development (Richards, 1998).

Contextual Knowledge

A teacher's professional context extends well beyond the immediate classroom, encompassing influences from local, regional, national, and international communities. Understanding these contextual factors is crucial for language teachers, as it enables them to align their teaching practices with broader educational, cultural, and policy frameworks. Richards (1998) emphasizes that this awareness includes understanding the impact of factors such as language policies, community expectations, sociocultural norms, school administrative practices, curricular demands, and the specific characteristics of student groups-such as age and proficiency level.

**Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Framework**

TPACK is considered a valuable framework for guiding teachers' professional growth in the face of rapidly evolving educational technologies (Niess, 2011). Originally introduced by Mishra and Koehler (2006), the framework emphasizes the interrelationship between three core domains of teacher knowledge: technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK).

CK refers to teachers' understanding of subject matter, including concepts, theories, and effective methods for delivering content. PK involves knowledge of instructional strategies, classroom management, lesson planning, assessment, and understanding students' learning needs. TK concerns teachers' ability to use digital tools and resources to enhance learning.

The framework also highlights the intersections of these knowledge types: pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) links teaching strategies with subject matter; technological content knowledge (TCK) connects technology with content learning; and technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) focuses on applying technology within instructional methods. Mishra and Koehler (2006) emphasize that TPACK is flexible, allowing educators to adapt it to different teaching contexts.

Figure 1
TPACK Framework
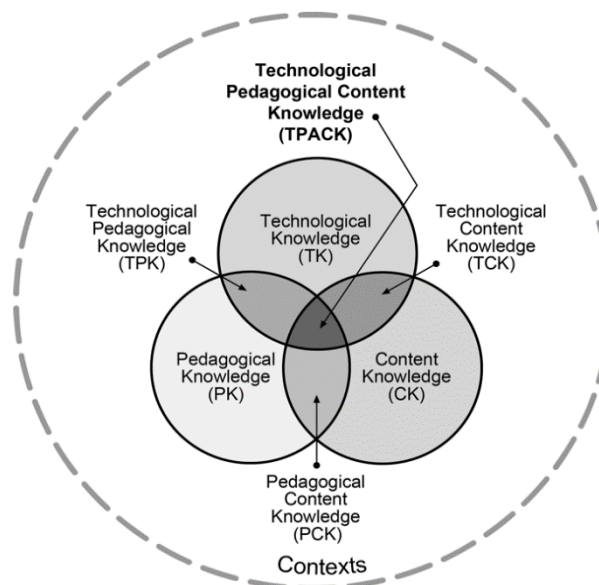
By identifying teachers' strengths and needs across these domains, TPACK can guide the design of targeted professional development programs. This framework is therefore useful for policymakers, training centers, and organizations responsible for supporting English language teachers in the countries in this study. Accordingly, the present study employed this framework as a basis for conducting the needs assessment.

Previous Study

Teacher professional development is a critical factor in improving the quality of English language education in ASEAN and Japan. Despite various efforts by governments and educational institutions to provide pre-service and in-service training, many challenges remain across different contexts. Although Cambodia is attempting to align its teacher professional development with international standards through both pre service teacher training (PRESET) and in service teacher training (INSET), there are still significant challenges. Most teachers in their study reported that they had not received or participated in the majority of capacity building training activities. The challenges identified included limited training opportunities, a lack of teaching materials, heavy teaching workloads, weak school leadership, and the low professional status of teachers, all of which hinder their professional development (No & Heng, 2017).

In the context of Japan, local Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and foreign assistant language teachers (ALTs), who team teach English together, appear to have limited professional development opportunities, and their learning has not been well documented. In most cases, there is no scheduled time for team teachers to exchange ideas or engage in discussions about their teaching and learning within schools. This lack of collaborative opportunity persists despite numerous recommendations made in previous studies (Hiratsuka, 2014). Regarding the professional development of university English teachers in Japan, sufficient access to resources was reported as the greatest source of job satisfaction, as it directly supports their teaching and learning growth. Beyond material support, teachers emphasized the importance of intrinsic factors for their professional development, particularly the need for affiliation, opportunities for self-growth, and a sense of autonomy (Tsutsumi, 2014).

In Malaysia, survey analysis indicates a general lack of ICT resources and infrastructure in schools, which hinders the integration of ICT tools in the teaching and learning of English. Another major obstacle is the limited allocation of time for professional development, along with challenges related to teachers' proficiency and mastery of the English language (Jamil et al., n.d.).

In Myanmar, according to Moet and Kálmán (2024), teachers are actively engaged in professional development activities, share the outcomes of their teaching practices, and provide constructive feedback to colleagues. Nevertheless, some teachers show less cooperation, mainly due to limited time and a reluctance to accept comments or suggestions from others. Another study found that while teachers expressed positive attitudes toward collaborating with colleagues, they rarely had the opportunity to practice it (Sandar, n.d.) due to excessive workload and limited school facilities, teachers face difficulties in their collaboration.

In Thailand, the study highlights teachers' pressing needs in three key areas: English language competencies, pedagogical strategies for teaching all skills, and technological skills (Poonpon, 2021). Another study also emphasized the need to strengthen their English proficiency and communication skills for more effective instruction. They reported challenges in English teaching, including limited techniques and classroom management knowledge, which often led to reliance on traditional methods such as grammar translation and rote memorization. Another findings also underscored the importance of technological development, as well as training and

workshops to enhance teachers' instructional capabilities (Weerathong & Mongkolhutthi, 2023).

In Vietnam, this study examined the challenges high school EFL teachers face when participating in language proficiency training programs. Most participants identified time and financial constraints as the main challenges, with nearly 70% citing time and about 50% citing expenses. Overall, the findings suggest that personal financial conditions and family responsibilities are the primary barriers to teachers' participation in training courses (Nhan, 2018).

Research Objective

Professional development is widely acknowledged as essential for improving both teaching quality and student outcomes. However, despite its importance, EFL teachers across Asia face a range of challenges that limit their access to and benefits from PD opportunities. Existing studies have often focused on single countries or treated teacher professional development as a general issue, overlooking the comparative dimension across multiple ASEAN and Japan contexts. This study was conducted to address that gap by comparing the perceptions, needs, practices, and suggestion for PD development of EFL teachers in six countries. The rationale for undertaking this research lies in the need to identify both shared regional challenges and country-specific concerns. Understanding these similarities and differences provides valuable insights for designing more effective, context-sensitive PD programs and for informing educational policy across the region.

1. To find out how EFL teachers feel about professional development
2. To examine the extent of satisfaction with the provision and quality
3. To understand how teachers take part in professional development
4. To collect teachers' ideas and suggestions to improve professional development

Methodology

This study used a questionnaire to collect data from English language teachers in several ASEAN countries and Japan. The purpose was to explore their perceptions, provision, practices, and suggestions related to professional development. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and percentage, were used to analyse the responses, especially for the Likert-scale items and general background information.

Participants

The study involved 100 English language teachers from five ASEAN countries and Japan. Forty participants were from Malaysia, followed by 24 from Myanmar, 24 from Thailand, and 10 from Vietnam, with only one participant each from Cambodia and Japan. Most participants were female (94%), and their ages ranged from 25 to over 55, with the largest group (50 participants) aged 35–44. Teaching experience varied, with 40 teachers having around 20 years of experience, 38 having around 10 years, and the remaining 22 having more than 20 years. In terms of educational background, 60 teachers held a bachelor's degree, while 40 held a master's degree, and a few were pursuing a PhD.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine EFL teachers' perceptions, provision, participation, and suggestion regarding professional development across five ASEAN countries and Japan. The design was chosen because it allows for the systematic collection of standardized data from a large number of participants, making it possible to measure teachers' responses and compare results across different contexts. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant experience in teaching English and engaging in professional development activities.

Research Context

The research context of this study involves EFL teachers in five ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam and Japan. In these contexts, professional development opportunities are often limited, unevenly distributed, or insufficiently tailored to teachers' needs. Within the broader field of TESOL, understanding teachers' perceptions, provision, participation, and suggestions for professional development is critical to enhancing the quality of English language education in these countries.

Research Instruments

This study used a 38-item structured questionnaire to collect data from EFL teachers in Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Based on the TPACK framework, the questionnaire examined teachers' technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, as well as their application in English teaching. It comprised four sections: (1) demographic information, (2) perceptions of professional development (PD), (3) participation in PD activities, and (4) suggestions for improving PD. Teachers' responses were captured using a nine-point Likert scale (*1= Strongly disagree, 9=strongly agree)* to enhance clarity and reduce neutral or ambiguous answers.

Demographic information was collected through a five-item questionnaire designed to gather background data (age, gender, teaching experience, highest qualification and country of origin) to contextualize participants' responses and enable meaningful comparisons across groups. The content validity of the questionnaire was established through review by three English language teaching experts. A pilot study conducted in our classroom reported the following Cronbach's alpha values for each section.

Teachers' perceptions of PD were measured using a nine-item questionnaire examining their attitudes, beliefs, and views regarding the importance and effectiveness of PD. The scale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$ (Saidi & Siew, 2019).

Teachers' participation in PD activities was assessed using an 18-item questionnaire investigating the types, frequency, and extent of teachers' engagement. The scale also demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$.

Teachers' suggestions and recommendations for PD were collected through a six-item questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items, designed to capture insights on how PD could be improved to better meet teachers' needs. This scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .91$. Content validity was evaluated

using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), which yielded scores of 0.53 for Part 1, 0.94 for Part 2, and 1.00 for Part 3, indicating strong agreement among the three language experts for Parts 2 and 3. According to Ismail and Zubairi (2022), items with an IOC value below 0.50 were carefully revised prior to actual data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from 100 EFL teachers across five ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam and Japan. Online distribution was conducted via Google Forms, with links shared through email, Facebook, and Telegram groups. Additionally, hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed during a professional conference in Malaysia to reach participants who preferred paper-based responses. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and provided consent before responding. Data collection took place over a period of two months. Responses from online submissions were automatically recorded, while hard copy responses were manually entered into SPSS version 20 for analysis.

The data were analysed using SPSS version 20 over a two-month period. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all 38 questionnaire items. For the five demographic questions, percentage distributions were computed to summarize participants' background characteristics. For the 33 Likert-scale items, percentage distributions, mean scores, and standard deviations were calculated to examine the frequency of responses, average levels of agreement or perception, and variability among participants.

Research Results

This study examined EFL teachers' perceptions, provision, practices, and suggestion for professional development (PD) across six Asian countries. Overall, the results show that teachers strongly recognize the value of professional development for both teachers and student learning ($\bar{x}$ = 8.15, SD = 1.65). They also believe that PD helps improve their teaching skills ($\bar{x}$ = 8.09, SD = 1.32). Most participants reported that PD improves their teaching skills and provides useful follow-up activities ($\bar{x}$ = 7.56, SD = 1.49). However, common challenges emerged, particularly institutional support ($\bar{x}$ = 6.12, SD = 2.11), the lack of sufficient time ($\bar{x}$ = 6.17, SD = 1.92), and access to necessary resources ($\bar{x}$ = 6.53, SD = 2.35).

Regarding participation in professional development (PD) activities, the most frequently reported practice was lesson preparation, with most teachers indicating that they regularly prepare their lesson plans in advance ($\bar{x}$ = 8.41, SD = 1.36). This was followed by reviewing lessons to improve them ($\bar{x}$ = 7.70, SD = 0.95) and trying new teaching techniques ($\bar{x}$ = 7.70, SD = 1.28), suggesting active engagement in enhancing teaching quality. In contrast, some activities were less frequently undertaken. Teachers rarely received scholarships or fellowships abroad to support PD ($\bar{x}$ = 4.42, SD = 3.21), seldom engaged in team-teaching with colleagues ($\bar{x}$ = 5.13, SD = 2.66), and did not consistently record reflections in their teaching diaries ($\bar{x}$ = 5.56, SD = 2.18).

When it comes to suggestions for developing their professional skills, teachers across different countries reported that their highest priority is classroom management ($\bar{x}$ = 8.00, SD = 1.35). This was followed by the use of modern teaching methods, particularly the integration of ICT ($\bar{x}$ = 7.81, SD = 1.57), and strengthening their ability to manage their own professional growth ($\bar{x}$ = 7.57, SD = 1.72).

Table 1

ASEAN + Japanese EFL Teachers' Responses on Part 1 of the Questionnaire (n=100)

SN	Part-1	Countries											
		Cambodia		Japan		Malaysia		Myanmar		Thailand		Vietnam	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
6	Most teachers are willing to participate in professional development activities.	8.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.25	2.05	6.29	2.30	6.29	2.30	8.00	0.00
7	Most department heads, schools, faculties, language institutions, and university authorities provide sufficient opportunities and support for English teachers' professional development.	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	6.25	2.38	5.34	2.32	5.34	2.32	7.00	0.00
8	PD activities are important for the success of both teachers and learners.	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	8.00	1.73	7.84	2.28	7.84	2.28	9.00	0.00
9	Current PD activities have improved my teaching skills.	9.00	0.00	7.00	0.00	8.25	1.30	7.79	1.81	7.79	1.81	8.00	0.00
10	Necessary tools for PD, such as appropriate rooms, computers, and projectors, etc are sufficiently provided.	8.00	0.00	6.50	1.50	6.50	2.60	5.83	2.43	5.83	2.43	5.00	0.00
11	Sufficient time is available for PD activities, and teaching timetables are adequate.	7.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	6.50	1.50	5.88	2.33	5.54	2.61	4.00	0.00
12	PD is mostly voluntary, and teachers are free to choose whether to participate or not.	9.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	8.00	0.71	5.84	2.29	5.88	2.33	7.00	0.00
13	The impact of PD activities on students' learning is evaluated.	9.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	8.00	0.71	6.08	2.29	6.08	2.29	7.00	0.00
14	PD activities are followed up to ensure that teachers implement the knowledge and skills gained.	9.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	8.50	0.50	6.79	2.25	6.79	2.25	8.00	0.00

As shown in Table 1, across all six countries, teachers strongly agreed that professional development (PD) is important for the success of both teachers and learners (Cambodia: $\bar{x}$ =9.00, SD=0.00; Japan & Malaysia: $\bar{x}$ = 8.00, SD=0.00, Myanmar & Thailand: $\bar{x}$ =7.84, SD=2.28; Vietnam: $\bar{x}$ =9.00, SD=0.00). Most teachers also believed that current PD activities had improved their teaching skills (Cambodia: $\bar{x}$ =9.00, SD=0.00; Myanmar & Thailand: $\bar{x}$ =7.79, SD=1.81, Malaysia: $\bar{x}$ =8.25, SD=1.3), and many expressed a strong willingness to participate in PD (Japan: $\bar{x}$ =8.00, SD=0.00; Vietnam: $\bar{x}$ =8.00, SD=0.00). The most common concern across five countries (except Vietnam) that department heads, schools, and language institutions do not provide sufficient opportunities and support for teachers' professional development (Cambodia & Japan: $\bar{x}$ =5.00, SD= 0.00, Malaysia $\bar{x}$ =6.25, SD=2.38, Myanmar & Thailand: $\bar{x}$ =5.34, SD=2.32,). In Vietnam, the primary issue was the time constraint for engaging in PD activities ($\bar{x}$ =4.00, SD=0.00). Additional challenges emerged in some contexts: Japanese teachers noted that PD is not mostly voluntary and teachers are not free to choose whether to participate or not. ($\bar{x}$ =5.00, SD=0.00), Cambodian ($\bar{x}$ =7.00, SD=0.00), Thai ($\bar{x}$ =5.54, SD=2.60) and Malaysian ($\bar{x}$ =6.50, SD=1.50) teachers highlighted a lack of time to engage in PD. Malaysian ($\bar{x}$ =6.50, SD=1.50), Burmese ($\bar{x}$ =5.83, SD=2.43) and Vietnamese teachers ($\bar{x}$ =5.00, SD=0.00) reported lack of necessary tools such as rooms, computers, and projectors.

Table 2

Participants' Responses on Part 2 of the Questionnaire in Terms of Practice (n=100)

SN	Part-2	Cambodia Mean	SD	Japan Mean	SD	Malaysia Mean	SD	Myanmar Mean	SD	Thailand Mean	SD	Vietnam Mean	SD
15	I share teaching resources and experiences with my colleagues face-to-face.	5.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	5.57	2.28	6.66	2.18	6.66	2.18	7.00	0.00
16	I share teaching resources and experiences with colleagues online.	5.00	0.00	7.00	0.00	5.25	2.17	6.08	2.53	6.08	2.53	6.00	0.00
17	I take part in designing or reviewing course programs.	1.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	4.50	1.12	5.25	2.52	5.25	2.52	6.00	0.00
18	I take part in workshops related to English language teaching.	1.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.50	1.50	6.29	2.46	6.29	2.45	6.00	0.00
19	I observe myself and reflect on my teaching.	9.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	7.50	1.66	7.33	1.82	7.33	1.82	7.00	0.00
20	I consistently record in my diary and reflect on my teaching experiences.	3.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	6.25	0.83	5.33	2.48	5.33	2.48	8.00	0.00
21	I conduct research on issues related to teaching, either alone or with others.	3.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	5.75	1.64	5.50	2.63	5.50	2.63	4.00	0.00
22	I review my lessons to improve them.	9.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	7.50	0.50	7.92	1.73	7.92	1.73	8.00	0.00
23	I engage in team-teaching (teach a class with colleagues).	8.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	6.25	2.49	5.13	2.62	5.13	2.62	1.00	0.00
24	I collaborate with colleagues to design exam papers.	1.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	6.25	2.59	5.12	2.67	5.12	2.67	5.00	0.00
25	I attend seminar, workshops and conferences on teaching methodology.	1.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	7.50	1.12	6.62	2.20	6.62	2.20	7.00	0.00
26	I watch videos and listen to podcasts about teaching methodology.	9.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	7.50	1.12	6.83	2.31	6.83	2.31	9.00	0.00
27	I usually prepare my lesson plans.	9.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	8.75	0.43	7.21	2.18	7.21	2.18	9.00	0.00
28	I reflect on the objectives, content, and exams of the courses I teach, as well as how well my students have learned from them.	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.75	0.83	7.12	1.95	7.12	1.95	8.00	0.00
29	I try out new teaching techniques and solutions to problems I have noticed in my courses.	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.75	0.75	6.80	1.94	6.80	1.94	8.00	1.00
30	I read documents about teaching methodology.	9.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	6.75	0.43	6.54	2.24	6.54	2.24	4.00	0.00
31	I attend coordination meetings with teachers of the same module.	5.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.00	1.41	6.17	2.61	6.17	2.61	7.00	0.00
32	I have received scholarships and fellowships abroad.	1.00	0.00	9.00	0.00	4.25	3.27	4.08	3.23	4.08	3.23	2.00	0.00

As shown in Table 2, when examining participation, Cambodian teachers reported the highest involvement in personal reflection, trying new methods, and reviewing lessons for improvement (x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00). Japanese teachers were most active in attending workshops, reflecting on their teaching, experimenting with new techniques, and using educational videos (x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00). Burmese and Thai teachers demonstrated strong commitment to reviewing their lessons (x̄ =7.92, SD=1.73). Malaysian teachers showed strong engagement in lesson review (x̄ =8.75, SD=0.43) and self-observation (x̄ =7.75, SD=0.83), while Vietnamese teachers reported high involvement in lesson preparation (x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00) and in using videos and podcasts on teaching methodology (x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00).

In contrast, teachers across ASEAN countries (except Japan) reported the lowest involvement in reviewing scholarship and fellowship opportunities abroad (Cambodia: x̄ =1.00, SD=0.00; Malaysia: x̄ =4.25, SD=3.27; Myanmar & Thailand: x̄ =4.08, SD=3.23; Vietnam: x̄ =2.00, SD=0.00). Japanese teachers, however, indicated the lowest participation in team teaching and lesson planning. Country-specific patterns were also evident: Cambodian teachers seldom engaged in designing or reviewing

course programs and workshops (x̄ =1.00, SD=0.00), Malaysian teachers reported limited involvement in course program design (x̄ =4.50, SD=1.12), while teachers in Myanmar and Thailand showed low engagement in exam paper design (x̄ =5.12, SD=2.67) and team teaching (x̄ =5.13, SD=2.62). Similarly, Vietnamese teachers reported minimal participation in team teaching (x̄ =1.00, SD=0.00), reflecting a tendency to work individually rather than collaboratively.

Table 3

Participants' Suggestions / Recommendation on English Language Teaching (n=100)

SN	Part-3	Countries											
		Cambodia		Japan		Malaysia		Myanmar		Thailand		Vietnam	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
33	Teachers' teaching techniques	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	6.75	1.09	7.21	2.26	7.21	2.26	9.00	0.00
34	Teachers' communication skills with colleagues and learners	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	6.25	2.17	7.13	2.26	7.13	2.26	9.00	0.00
35	Teachers' assessment skills	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	6.25	2.05	7.66	1.87	7.66	1.87	9.00	0.00
36	Teachers' use of modern tools like ICT in teaching	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	8.00	1.22	7.21	2.18	7.21	2.18	9.00	0.00
37	Teachers' classroom management skills	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	8.00	1.22	7.54	1.87	7.54	1.87	9.00	0.00
38	Teachers' ability to manage their own professional development	9.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	7.00	1.58	7.54	1.87	7.29	2.34	9.00	0.00

As shown in Table 3, with regard to suggestion, teachers across all countries emphasized the need to further develop their classroom management skills (Cambodia: x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00; Japan: x̄ =8.00, SD=0.00; Malaysia: x̄ =8.00, SD=1.22; Myanmar & Thailand: x̄ =7.54, SD=1.87; Vietnam: x̄ =9.00, SD=0.00). In addition, teachers in Japan, Cambodia, and Vietnam identified other priority areas for development, including teaching techniques, assessment, communication, and ICT use. Teachers from Myanmar and Thailand highlighted teacher assessment skills as a major area for improvement (x̄ =7.66, SD=1.87). For Myanmar, another important focus was the ability to manage their own professional development (x̄ =7.54, SD=1.87), while in Thailand (x̄ =7.21, SD=2.18). and Malaysia (x̄ =8.00, SD=1.22), teachers pointed to ICT use as a key area requiring further growth.

Discussion

As far as I am aware, previous research has largely focused on individual countries or considered teacher professional development in general terms, without examining comparative perspectives across multiple ASEAN countries and Japan. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring and comparing EFL teachers' perceptions, needs, practices, and recommendations for professional development in six countries.

Teachers' Perceptions and Satisfaction of Professional Development

Consistent with previous studies (DeMonte, 2013), teachers across all six countries strongly recognized the importance of professional development (PD) for improving both teacher performance and student learning. They also noted that PD enhances teaching skills and provides useful follow-up activities. Despite this, teachers reported several challenges in accessing effective PD. Across five countries (except

Vietnam), the most common concern was the lack of institutional support from their organizations, which aligns with (No & Heng, 2017; Sandar, n.d.). In Vietnam, the primary issue was time constraints for participating in PD activities, which aligns with (Nhan, 2018) who reported that teachers do not have enough time for PD activities due to their personal commitments. Additionally, country-specific differences emerged. Japanese teachers noted that PD is not mostly voluntary, with limited freedom to choose activities which aligned with (Tsutsumi, 2014) who reported that Japanese teacher are lack of autonomy and freedom to involve PD activities such as curriculum setting, whereas teachers in Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand emphasized that they do not have sufficient time for PD which consistent with (Weerathong & Mongkolhutthi, 2023; Omar et al., 2017; Jamil et al., n.d.) they all reported that the allocation of time is a major problem for EFL teachers to engage in PD activities. Teachers in Malaysia, Vietnam, and Myanmar expressed concerns about not having the necessary tools for PD as reported by (Joseph & Zaitun, 2007; Nhan, 2018; Suriya, 2019).

Teachers' Participation in Professional Development

Regarding participation in professional development (PD) activities, the most frequently reported practice was lesson preparation, with most teachers indicating that they regularly prepare their lesson plans in advance. In contrast, some activities were less frequently undertaken. Teachers rarely received scholarships or fellowships abroad, seldom engaged in team teaching with colleagues. Examining participation by country, Teacher from different countries involved in different PD activities. Cambodian teachers reported the highest involvement in personal reflection, trying new methods, and reviewing lessons for improvement while Japanese teachers were most active in attending workshops, reflecting on their teaching, experimenting with new techniques, and using educational videos. Additionally, Strong involvement in reviewing lessons was observed among Burmese and Thai teachers. Malaysian teachers showed strong engagement in lesson review and self-observation, while Vietnamese teachers reported high involvement in lesson preparation and the use of videos and podcasts on teaching methodology. In contrast, teachers across ASEAN countries (except Japan) reported the lowest involvement in seeking scholarships and fellowship opportunities abroad, which aligned with (ASEAN, 2025; Nugroho, 2018) they all reported that EFL teachers have very limited opportunities to participate in international professional development programs, workshops, or training. Japanese teachers indicated the lowest participation in team teaching and lesson planning, which is consistent with (Shiobara & Sakui, 2019) teachers wished to allocate more time to collaborate with the team teacher on lesson planning and preparation. Cambodian teachers seldom engaged in designing or reviewing course programs and workshops which is in accordance with (Igawa & Tsujioka, 2009), Cambodian teachers prioritized attending workshops and seminars as their most important professional development needs while Malaysian teachers reported limited involvement in course program design or reviewing course program which aligns with findings from Saudi Arabia (Houssawi & Mohamedadam, 2016), where teachers had no role in curriculum development stages and were perceived primarily as curriculum implementers in classrooms. Although the contexts differ, this similarity suggests that exclusion of teachers from curriculum or course design may be a broader trend in EFL education. Teachers in Myanmar and Thailand showed low engagement in exam paper design and team teaching which is

consistent with (Moet & Kálmán, 2024; Sandar, n.d.) who reported that Burmese teachers may be less active in cooperating because of limited time and a hesitancy to accept suggestions from other teachers. Similarly, Vietnamese teachers reported minimal participation in team teaching, reflecting a tendency to work individually rather than collaboratively, which aligned with (Hoa, 2022) who reported team-teaching among Vietnamese teachers is limited by time constraints, differences in personalities, teaching styles, and beliefs, as well as varying roles and expectations, and is further hindered by insufficient effort.

Teachers' suggestion and recommendation for their professional development

Teachers across all countries emphasized the need to further develop their classroom management skills, a concern also reported in previous studies. Many teachers receive limited pre-service training in this area, which reinforces its importance as a professional development priority (Freeman et al., 2013). In addition, teachers in Japan, Cambodia, and Vietnam highlighted teaching techniques, assessment, communication, and ICT use as other important areas for growth. Communication, in particular, has long been recognized as essential for effective teaching. As Dettmer, Dyck and Thurston (1996) and Rogers (1962) argue, communication is one of the most important skills a teacher should possess. Similarly, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012, p. 176) stated that "communication is the lifeblood of the school; it is a process that links the individual, the group, and the organization." By contrast, teachers from Myanmar and Thailand emphasized teacher assessment skills as a major area for improvement. This aligns with Black (1993) and Stiggins (2002), who stressed that teachers need a solid knowledge of assessment to evaluate students' progress and achievement, noting that assessment is "an important and critical component of education" everywhere, regardless of context. For Myanmar, another area of focus was the ability to manage their own professional development, while teachers in Thailand identified ICT use as a key area requiring further growth. Selinger (2000) observed that "information and communication technology has taken over teaching and learning around the globe." ICT tools are now widely used to support teaching and learning, especially in online contexts, and they help prepare students for real-life situations (Lowther et al., 2008; Weert & Tatnall, 2005).

In summary, the findings highlight both shared and country specific trends in EFL teacher professional development across Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Teachers consistently recognized the importance of professional development for improving teaching quality, student learning, and classroom practices, yet faced numerous barriers, including limited time, insufficient institutional support, inadequate resources, and restricted opportunities for collaboration. Classroom management emerged as a common priority for development across all six countries, while other needs such as assessment, ICT integration, communication, and teaching techniques varied by context. Most previous research has focused on single countries or treated professional development as a general issue, overlooking cross-country comparisons. By examining teachers' perceptions, satisfaction, participation, and suggestions, the research identifies both universal priorities such as classroom management and context specific needs. Understanding these similarities and differences is crucial because effective professional development is essential for enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes. The findings provide

valuable insights for designing targeted, context sensitive PD programs, guiding education policy, and ultimately improving teacher performance and student learning across the region.

Conclusion

This research explored the needs, challenges, practices, and suggestions related to English teacher professional development (PD) in five ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. The findings show that while teachers in all countries recognize the value and importance of PD, there are significant differences in how it is practiced, supported, and accessed across contexts. Teachers generally express a positive attitude toward PD and demonstrate strong commitment to improving their teaching through strategies such as lesson planning, reflection, collaboration, and applying new methods. However, common challenges include limited time, a lack of scholarships or international exposure, and unequal support for research activities. A significant portion of the teachers were women who reported dissatisfaction with the time pressure and scheduling of PD activities. Feedback also highlights workplace-related obstacles such as large, mixed-level classes and limited access to textbooks and other resources (Galaczi et al., 2018, p. 8). The findings of this study may serve as current insights into the professional development needs of EFL teachers in ASEAN and Japan contexts. Future training programs and workshops can be tailored to address these needs, ensuring effective and relevant professional support for English language school teachers in these countries.

Recommendation and Limitation

There are several limitations in this study that should be considered in future research. To begin with, the study was conducted over a relatively short period-approximately six months-which may have limited the depth and amount of data collected. Future research should allow more time to gather more comprehensive and reliable findings. Another limitation is the primary reliance on quantitative methods, which may not fully capture the specific and nuanced needs of teachers. To obtain more detailed insights into both English language proficiency and pedagogical development needs, future studies should incorporate qualitative tools such as interviews or focus group discussions. Additionally, participants were selected through random sampling; however, the number of participants from each country was not balanced. This uneven distribution may affect the comparability of the data across countries. Future studies might consider ensuring a more equal representation from each country to strengthen cross-national analysis. Moreover, the current research focused on the three independent components of the TPACK model. Future research could explore the interrelationship between these components to better understand how teachers integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge in practice. Lastly, while this study identified the basic professional development needs of EFL teachers, it did not examine how these needs vary based on other contextual variables, such as teachers' English proficiency levels or the types of institutions they work in (e.g., government schools, international schools, or universities). Investigating these relationships could provide more targeted recommendations for future training programs.

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