

# PRIMARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** Teachers' professional development (PD) is viewed as the center of educational reforms in many countries, and this topic has been widely researched by scholars such as Avalos (2011), Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011), Le (2002), and Whitehouse (2011). However, primary English language teachers (PELTers)' PD has been under-researched in Vietnamese contexts. This paper outlines a project researching PELTers' PD in a period of ongoing educational transformation, initiated by the National Foreign Languages Project. The authors highlight a 'mixed methods' research design with data collected from 68 surveys and five individual semi-structured interviews in a province in North Vietnam. Both the impact of language policy on Vietnamese PELTers' PD and their responses to top-down PD requirements and provision are under investigation. Some initial findings are (i) PELTers' rationales for PD; (ii) their engagement in PD forms and topics; (iii) benefits of PD; (iv) their PD need areas; and (v) factors affecting PD engagement. PELTers' suggestions for improving PD in their contexts are also discussed. This paper offers significant insights for EFL researchers, policy-makers, EFL teacher training institutions and other educators.

*Keywords:* professional development, EFL teachers, primary English language teaching

## 1. Introduction

Education reform in Vietnam officially started some years after the introduction of the "Doi Moi" or Open Door/Renovation Policy in 1986. In the new context of globalisation, English serves as an important communication tool for economic and social development, and a leading foreign language subject in the school system. Furthermore, general education renovation and EFL in particular, have been one of the goals of the Open Door Policy, therefore in 2006 the Government renewed the Law of Education, and on 30 September

2008, Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) introduced Project 2020 under Decision 1400 of the Prime Minister which aimed to renovate thoroughly the tasks of teaching and learning foreign languages within the national educational system in the period 2008–2020 (Government of Vietnam, 2008). Project 2020 was revised and adapted to be more suitable for the new period 2017–2025 on 22 December 2017. Some specific objectives of the project (hereby referred to as the NFL Project) are the implementation of a new ten-year general English program (from English 3 through to English 12), with 100% of grade 3, 70% of grade 6, 60% of grade 10 students who will be learning this

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new program by the school year 2020-2021, and 100% of the graduates from English teacher training programs to be well qualified in both their teaching profession and English proficiency level by 2025 (Government of Vietnam, 2017).

To achieve these goals and objectives, there has been an urgent need for new training and retraining of many teachers in both methodology and English proficiency. Currently, over 86,000 Vietnamese EFL teachers work at all school levels in the national education system, but a majority of the teaching staff have not met the standard requirements of their professional teaching roles (Nguyen, forthcoming). For example, statistics from a reliable media agency indicated that in a large city, only 31.7% primary school teachers, 36.5% mid-school teachers and 25.83% high school teachers passed the competence test in English proficiency and ELT methodology (Tuệ Nguyễn, 2015).

Various methods and activities have been utilized to train these in-service low-quality teachers, for example: face-to-face training, online training or blended training, different professional development (PD) activities: reflective teaching, keeping and sharing journals, peer mentoring and coaching, forming and/or joining a teacher support group or network, forming or joining local and national teachers' associations, etc. (Murray, 2010). Teachers of different levels of proficiency, and from different places will choose to take part in the most suitable PD activities to improve their English proficiency and teaching skills.

For the primary English language teachers (PELTers), they most often choose to attend the blended training programs during summer in order to achieve the acquired certificates from MoET. This model seems to be more

effective than others because it is direct training (i.e. they get hands-on experience) with more practice.

Calling on data from a large-scaled project researching Vietnamese EFL teachers' PD under the context of the NFL Project, this paper highlights PELTers' experiences and perceptions via analysis of 68 survey responses and five interview transcripts, collected during a summer PD course in a province in North Vietnam. The paper is therefore organised into the following parts: (1) Introduction; (2) Conceptualisation of PD for teachers/PELTers; (3) Description of the study; (4) Data collection and analysis; (5) Preliminary findings; and (6) Conclusion. In particular, the findings address five major themes that lead to further discussions and implications for future related studies.

## **2. Conceptualisation of teachers' professional development**

In their daily life and work, teachers experience various activities and interactions that may facilitate their knowledge and skills, their teaching practice and improvement from personal, social and emotional perspectives. These activities, whether formally such as structured topic-specific seminars or informally, namely hallway discussions and everyday conversations (Desimone, 2009), whether partly or primarily intended for improved performance namely workshops, local and national conferences, college courses, special institutes and centres can be counted in a complex development process (Little, 1993). The process can empower teachers' competence in terms of instructional skills, curriculum development, implementation and evaluation skills throughout their lifelong teaching career, and act as leverage for teacher development.

The conceptualisation of teachers' PD has also attracted scholars from a vast range of broader views over the past decades (Desimone, 2009, p. 182), specifically the application of situated and cognitive views of learning as interactive and social based in discourse and community practice. PD can also facilitate teachers to encounter challenges of the teaching job, since teachers themselves are fully aware of the fact that they need to learn and adapt to the multiple contexts, taking into account both the individual teacher-learners, the PD programs, the systems and context in which they are participants (Borko, 2004).

On the basis of teacher needs, the effectiveness of a PD activity can also be ensured through (i) topics that emerge from teacher interests; (ii) long-term commitments from the participants and related parties; and (iii) engagement in clear measurement and evaluation of goals and teaching targets (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). In a broader context, continuing PD can be driven by such major characteristics as identified learning needs, sustainability, subject specific, classroom-based, collaboration, external expertise utilisation; and by other supporting factors, including funding and policy platform (Whitehouse, 2011).

### 3. The study

Recently the PD of teachers in general has been well acknowledged in research (Desimone, 2009) and international studies cover conceptualisation of PD, features of a quality PD activity, models and stages of teachers' on-going development, factors affecting teacher development, impact of PD engagement on teachers, etc. in different contexts (Broad & Evans, 2006; Caena, 2011; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Day & Sachs, 2005; Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, &

Mckinney, 2007; Kennedy, 2005; Offices of Development Effectiveness, 2015; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). However, the studies of PELTers' PD in Vietnamese contexts have not received sufficient attention. Grounded on the above general world-view of PD for teachers and the authors' experiences in working with Vietnamese PELTers in a range of PD programs under the NFL Project, this study investigated the current contexts that Vietnamese PELTers have been undertaking PD and that have shaped their PD engagement, with particular regards to their rationales for PD and provision for their PD. The study also examined PELTers' experiences of certain PD forms and topics provided by MoET and/or local training departments. The study further explored how PD engagement places impact on PELTers and what factors affect their undertaking PD, as well as offering PELTers' opportunities to raise their voice about how to empower their PD engagement, considering their PD needs and contexts.

### 4. Data collection and analysis

In this descriptive study, we employed a mixed-methods approach to provide an insight into the research problem (Creswell, 2015) and minimise the disadvantages of a single research method (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected between July and August 2017. The data focused on PELTers' experiences of PD regarding (i) their PD context; (ii) their engagement in specific PD programs and/or activities; (iii) factors affecting PELTers' PD engagement; (iv) impacts of PD engagement on PELTers; and (v) PELTers' own suggestions for improving their on-going PD.

The designed surveys were piloted by five language teachers in an education provider in Hanoi. The vetting process helped identify

possible vagueness in the survey questions and involved several adaptations in terms of both the language and format. The final surveys were then distributed to PELTers in a northern province, about 80 kilometres far from the capital. These PELTers, currently working within the geographical location, were assigned to attend an official PD program co-organised by their provincial Department of Education and Training (DoET) and an authorised EFL teacher education institution under the NFL Project. The program consisted of 400-hour blended training, of which there were 100 hour-face-to-face training and 200 hour-online learning. PELTers also did micro teaching during training and at real primary schools as part of the program, and completed other required assessment tasks before being granted with a program certificate.

Sixty-eight PELTers agreed to become the researched participants. They responded to a pen-and-paper survey in Vietnamese, consisting of two sections. Section 1 covered 10 content questions regarding PELTers' PD experiences. Questions 1-3 addressed PELTers' frequency of PD engagement, rationales for PD and PD providers. Questions 4-5 focused on participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of their engagement in specific PD forms and topics, using a four-scale rating from 'not effective' to 'very effective'. Questions 6-7 examined participants' PD needs, based

on their reflection on one most effective PD program or activity they had attended over the past five years. Questions 8-9 aimed to investigate participants' perceptions of factors affecting their PD engagement as well as impact of their PD engagement. Question 10 addressed participants' opinions on how to improve their PD engagement. Section 2 covered six close-ended demographic questions, namely participants' gender, work location, employment status, qualification, mode of training and work experience.

Most of the surveyed participants are female (N = 62; 91.18%), which is not phenomenal in overall Vietnamese teaching personnel contexts as well as in PELT. They were teaching at various schools in rural areas in the selected province. It was worth noticing that only over a quarter of participants secured their employment status with tenure conditions while 61.71% of their colleagues were in less-than-one-year contracts. Nearly two-thirds of the participants previously attended full-time teacher training courses, and a great number of them held a bachelor's degree in English language teaching from teacher education colleges and universities (N = 55; 80.88%). Participants' experience in PELT varied from below three years to twenty years, with over half of them having been teaching for three to ten years, and 27.94% belonging to the 10 – 20 years group (See Table 1).

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Information	Details	Number (N = 68)	Percent
School geographical location	<i>Metropolitan areas</i>	2	2.94%
	<i>Rural areas</i>	58	85.29%
	<i>Missing information</i>	8	
Employment status	<i>Tenure</i>	19	27.94%
	<i>Long-term contract (&gt;1 year)</i>	4	5.88%
	<i>Short-term contract (&lt;1 year)</i>	42	61.76%
	<i>Missing information</i>	3	

Information	Details	Number (N = 68)	Percent
<b>Highest qualification</b>	<i>Bachelor's degree (from junior colleges)</i>	9	13.23%
	<i>Bachelor's degree (from colleges and universities)</i>	55	80.88%
	<i>Master's degree</i>	1	1.47%
	<i>Missing information</i>	3	
<b>Training mode</b>	<i>Full-time</i>	44	64.71%
	<i>In-service</i>	18	26.47%
	<i>Missing information</i>	6	
<b>Years of PELT experience</b>	<i>&lt;3 years</i>	5	7.35%
	<i>3 – 10 years</i>	40	58.82%
	<i>10 – 20 years</i>	19	27.94%
	<i>&gt;20 years</i>	0	0%
	<i>Missing information</i>	4	

After completing the survey, 15 participants consented to taking a follow-up semi-structured interview in the second phase of data collection. Finally, five participants were selected to become the interviewees on ground of their willingness, their teaching experience and their understanding of PD in PELT contexts. These participants were provided with further explanations of the research, and they had opportunities to ask questions related to the interview protocol. When they were ready, their responses were audio-recorded. They reflected on their PD, addressing (i) their engagement frequency and effectiveness of specific PD programs and/or activities; (ii) benefits and constraints on PD engagement; (iii) their PD needs; and (iv) their suggestions for improving PD. The interview recordings lasted approximately 20 minutes on average. All the interviewees' information was kept confidential and secure for the research purposes, with no anticipated risks to their participation in the whole course of the study.

In this study, we conducted an iterative and recursive process for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis. For the survey data, we coded the responses from R01 to R68, counted frequency on percentage terms and noticed typical patterns. In several open-

ended questions, for example, questions 6, 7 and 16, we categorised participants' answers into related themes and then quantified these themes for preliminary findings. For the interviews, the data were transcribed, coded (Teachers A, B, C, D, and E) and analysed qualitatively, with attention to sub-themes emerged as well as the development of final theme clusters to support the findings. Both the data sources were then weaved for triangulation and further discussion. In the following part of this article, we discuss major themes that reflect PELTers' perceptions and experiences of PD engagement.

### 5. Findings and discussion

The analysis of the collected data revealed five major themes: (i) rationales and provision for PELTer's PD engagement; (ii) PELTers' engagement in different forms and topics of PD; (iii) impacts of PD engagement on PELTers; (iv) factors affecting PELTer's PD engagement; and (v) empowering PELTer's PD. The following sections discuss these major themes in detail.

#### 5.1. Rationales and provision for primary English language teachers' engagement in professional development

Over the past five years, participants have actually had a relatively high frequency of PD engagement, at least on an annual basis. In particular, almost one third of them (N = 23) responded that they attended PD programs as many as twice or three times per year while 16 of their colleagues even participated in more than three PD programs annually. These ratios tended to imply that their rural working contexts did not hinder their PD involvement. The provision for PELters' PD was aligned with the NFL Project and the requirements of teachers' qualifications across all levels. Participants were deemed to undertake PD organised by the mainstream Education and Training units at various levels, ranging from their schools (N = 10) to local district departments, provincial department and MOET (N = 60), as well as by other PD providers in non-public sectors (N = 3).

It is worth noticing that while policy requirements were major rationales for most PELters' PD engagement, personal needs also drove approximately 40% of the participants to actively engage in PD activities both inside and outside their school contexts. The findings correlated with one response in the follow-up interview. This teacher stated:

Actually, I enjoy PD very much. I don't think it [PD] is just the requirements from the ministry [MOET] and the department [DOET]. As a teacher, I want to have on-going development, better my teaching and become updated in my field. It is my personal needs and interest. (Teacher A)

### 5.2. Primary English language teachers' engagement in forms and topics of professional development

Participants evaluated their engagement in both PD forms from positive perspectives. Of all seven PD forms listed in the survey,

100% of the researched PELters believed that they were most familiar with *Peer observation* and *Workshops/ training courses*. They ranked these two forms at highest levels of effectiveness at 69.11% (N = 4) and 48.53% (N = 33), respectively. Participants also expressed their favour for *Online/ blended training* and *Qualification programs* at relatively high effectiveness level. Yet there was likelihood that these two forms placed medium impacts rather than high impacts on the attendees. Interestingly, while nearly half of participants never engaged in *Observation visits to other schools* (N = 30), those who had opportunities to undertake this PD form believed that they benefited greatly from visiting and learning from their colleagues in other teaching contexts. The participants did not express their engagement in *Action research/ education conference*. This was because normally PELters were keen on practical PD rather than on dealing with theories and academic issues. They perceived that this form was more relevant to teachers at higher education levels and that they had never been trained or required to do research and/or attend conference as presenters. They seemed not to be aware of this activity as a necessary PD form.

With regards to PD topics, participants evaluated *PELT pedagogy* courses to be most effective (39.34% for medium level of effectiveness and 60.66% for high level), then *Using technology in ELT* and *Textbook and material adaptation*, both at approximately 56% for high level of effectiveness. However, when asked to describe ONE most effective program that PELters had attended, as many as 87.72% participants cited their engagement in the latest training course on the new textbooks (in 2017, at the time of the current study) to be most beneficial. This PD program was delivered by a prestigious PD provider,

also a well-recognised EFL teacher education institution in Hanoi and sponsored by the NFL Project.

The reasons why the majority of participants in this study found the new textbook training course most beneficial were expressed in their answers to the survey question number 6. The most mentioned reason was their achievement in the objectives of the course. Nearly two-thirds of the surveyed teachers (70.59%) said that they became aware of the teaching approaches and methods in the new textbooks, and they could apply pretty effectively many techniques of classroom management, and useful ways of teaching phonics, grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills. Moreover, 22 participants agreed that another objective they could achieve was to be able to teach songs and chants in the new text books. This was confirmed by all the interviewed teachers. They said that prior to this workshop, they only chose easy or familiar songs and chants to teach and skipped the rest. However, they got to be fully aware of the importance of using songs and chants in a language class, and had learnt how to adapt or create the new ones to teach, just right during the short course.

Participants also shared other objectives of the course they could get, though at different percentages, such as being able to design progress and achievements tests or assess students via projects, effectively use and adapt textbooks, teacher's books, supplementary materials, and tasks and activities suggested in these teaching materials. The survey results also revealed that 75% of the participants felt pretty contented or very contented with the length of the course, the different forms of learning and assessment that this blended training course provided. Actually, the PELTers were asked to attend ten days' direct training by trainers (i.e. 100-hour face-

to-face learning in class, plus twice the time (200 hours) learning online with the help of online trainers, and 50 hours' practice of micro-teaching at training location, and 50 hours doing observation and teaching for assessment at local primary schools. During the interview, one teacher reflected:

This training course [about using the new textbooks] is the most effective for me. It is practical in the way that we did not have to go to the training location for a longer time, as my house is 40 km away. I can choose the time suitable for me to learn online. When I learn online, some problems arise, but I can contact the teacher in charge or email to the trainers to ask for help. And I know the answers to the quizzes online immediately, which gives me motivation. (Teacher B)

Her sharing coincided with what another teacher further commented below:

The teaching and observation task at a primary school is challenging, but we can learn from each other, listen to useful comments from the trainer and other observers to reshape our teaching, and can apply what we learn into reality. (Teacher E)

Regarding English language competence (e.g. B1 and B2 – CEFR), more participants found this PD content at medium level of effectiveness than high level of effectiveness (49.23% versus 40.00). Only a few participants indicated that these language courses were much less beneficial than expected (N = 5). They further explained that the assessment tasks were somewhat difficult for them and some knowledge was not practical in their teaching context.

### *5.3. Impact of professional development on primary English language teachers*

Participants addressed levels of impact that PD engagement placed on them as

PELTers. A major finding is that participants' high PD frequency and positive perceptions on the effectiveness of PD topics resulted in their positive change in professional skills and professional knowledge. In particular, a striking high number of PELTers stated that they improved significantly in their PELT pedagogy (91.04%) and English language competence (76.12%), the two key components in all PD programs for EFL teachers. Likewise, there was a remarkable improvement in their awareness of professional teaching role requirements and standardisation (76.00%). PELTers understood that they took responsibility for degree accreditation and qualifications to align with MOET's policy requirements. Positive impacts could also be viewed in such aspects as *Opportunities for networking with colleagues and experts* (65.15%) and *Motivation for further PD* (56.92%).

Another finding is that the majority of researched PELTers hardly realised any difference in their opportunities for increased incomes, i.e. salary and/or payment (53.13% and 32.81% for 'no impact' and 'little impact', respectively). This is understandable in a way that PD engagement is part of professional role requirements for Vietnamese teachers across all levels, and salary/ payment schemes are on a regular tenure basis, standardised by state laws. Likewise, nearly two-thirds of the participants (N = 41) claimed that their PD engagement did not facilitate their employment opportunities, namely official tenure. However, a slightly lower number of participants (N = 36) perceived that they gained positive change in their employment status. Engaging in PD programs, particularly qualification and/or language competence courses, was one of key requirements for employment recruitment. Two interviewees – Teachers B and C both echoed that this was

a prerequisite for their tenure or long-term contracts.

#### 5.4. *Factors affecting primary English language teachers' professional development*

Although PD programs brought countless benefits to as well as great impacts on these PELTers' career, the survey also unveiled a number of factors that affected the researched PELTers' participation in these PD programs.

Four factors that were totally or quite agreed by most of the teachers to have great effects on their decision whether to take part in PD activities included: equal opportunities for PD (N = 68), relevance of PD programs to their PD needs (N = 68), opportunities for active learning (N = 67), and financial support (N = 66). Other factors also counted by these PELTers were: logistical support (N = 64), quality of PD programs (N = 64), time when PD programs take place (N = 63), and personal issues (N = 56).

When asked to clarify their ideas on these factors, several of participants gave further explanations. There were not always equal opportunities for all teachers to attend a PD event due to the inadequate provision of PD programs and the lack of teachers doing their teaching tasks at school, especially when the PD programs were held during school year. In this case, some teachers would not have chance to attend these programs. In other cases, the teachers who had been chosen could not participate the PD programs either, just because the time of the program was inconvenient for them. One teacher explained when being interviewed:

In my school, there are only two teachers. Each of us has to teach 24 periods [35 minutes each] per week. So when one goes to a PD course during working days, the other cannot do the colleague's work. If the PD course is held at



weekend, other problems might arise too, such as their family responsibilities, personal plans, or personal health. And the contents of some PD programs we attended did not meet our needs; the materials were not good enough; or more problematically, the trainers were not well-qualified or well-trained as we expected, etc. (Teacher D)

### 5.5. Empowering primary English language teachers' professional development

To solve the ineffectiveness and inconvenience of the current PD programs, and to help PELTers overcome their difficulties in attending PD programs, we need to understand the teachers' needs for PD, and listen to their suggestions for improving their PD engagement. After that we will design PD courses that meet the PELTers' needs in both contents and forms, and at suitable time, in order to maximize/ empower their engagement.

In the survey, we asked the PELTers about their needs for PD (question 7). We received responses from 51 teachers for this open-ended question, of which 29.41% preferred to be trained in teaching methods, 13.73% liked courses which focused on using IT in teaching or giving demo teaching of each lesson. Other teachers needed more training in using interactive boards (9.80%), teaching phonics and pronunciation (7.84%). A small number of teachers liked improving both their English language and teaching skills (N = 3), teaching listening (N = 2), and PD about managing classroom (N = 1).

When asked what they would suggest for improving PD programs and ensuring more of their engagement, not only 25 surveyed but all the interviewed PELTers were willing to share their thoughts. More than half of them (52%) shared the idea of shortening the training time

during the week, just two or three days at most, or they just want to be trained in the mornings or afternoons. They would like to spend the rest of the day on their school work or house work. Some of them suggested being able to schedule their time of training themselves.

The surveyed and interviewed teachers also talked about the content and methods of training. Three out of the five interviewees (Teacher A, C, D) said that training contents should be practical. Some training contents were still rather theoretical, i.e. trainers focused more on the principles or theories of teaching, such as "*Why should we use this method/ this song/ this game to teach children?*", or "*How can we teach language skills?*" "*What activities should be used in pre- or post-stages?*" so on and so forth. However, there was little time for demonstration or practice of those theories. Two teachers suggested:

Trainers should give demo teaching or examples using the lessons taken from English textbooks being used by us. For example, when trainers teach us how to teach phonics, they can use Unit 6, Lesson 3, Part 1, in *Tieng Anh 3* [This session focuses on teaching 2 sounds: /k/, /d/]. When they teach songs and chants, they can use many of them in the textbooks. This is the kind of hands-on training, and we prefer this way. (Teachers C and D)

Teacher A added: "Trainer should provide us techniques applicable in our teaching. Activities focusing on theories should be limited".

Other suggestions by the majority of the surveyed PELTers (N= 18 out of 25) for improving their PD engagement include: more seminars and workshops delivered by foreign specialists or native teachers, and held in or outside local regions; and more financial supports, more convenient teaching and

training conditions given by the NFL Project, local DoET and their schools. A teacher added:

We need to be allowed to teach fewer lessons or some replacement staff who teach for us during the time we attend training sessions; and more importantly, we need some money to cover our travel and accommodation expenses because our schools do not pay for the lessons/ the time we do not teach at schools, but at training locations. (Teacher E)

One more suggestion for PD programs is about course assessment. Some PELTers (36%) thought that there should be considerations about assignments and assessments for intensive PD courses within a short timeframe. They cited the training course on using new English textbooks that they had attended the previous year as a typical example. The course was so demanding with many assignments and assessment tools, namely participation, online and classroom quizzes, final test, micro teaching, observation, school visits and teaching practice. They had to cope with time management while still having to deal with their heavy workload at primary school. For these reasons, a few teachers suggested replacing micro teaching at training venue and/ or teaching practice at school with their filmed real teaching at primary school. An experienced teacher further explained:

In this way, we do not have to act as false students during micro teaching, and save us much time, money, and efforts on practice teaching at different schools. On your part [trainers' part], you do not have to travel a long way to the provincial schools to watch and assess us. (Teacher B)

We – researchers – feel this suggested alternative assessment a feasible one.

As many as 20 out of 25 teachers who answered the surveyed question 16, and many more of PELTers attended the training

course recommended that it was high time the training rooms were better equipped; and learning and training conditions were improved. They opined to the fact that the rooms need properly-operated projectors and good internet access so that trainees could watch demo video lessons. Besides, it would be much better if they could learn in air-conditioned training rooms, especially during such terribly hot weather.

## 6. Conclusion

We have provided an insight of the education transformation in Vietnamese contexts, addressing the call for English language education, English language teacher education under the implementation of the NFL Project. In particular, we have presented part of our large-scaled research project on EFL teachers' PD.

Within the scope of this paper, we focus on PELTer's experiences and perceptions of PD engagement. Albeit preliminary, our findings and discussions reveal that PELTers frequently participate in PD programs provided by MoET and DoET. They are even active in undertaking PD programs because they can see positive impacts of PD engagement on their professional improvements and because they have strong personal needs for development. With regard to the provision, it seems that they benefit much from PD providers who do not neglect PELTers' 'remote' work locations. The provision aligns with the NFL Project's objectives and from a positive perspective; we argue that PD engagement helps raise PELTer's awareness of the current foreign language policy and the entailed innovation in English language teaching. Despite a range of challenges, namely financial and logistical support as well as work and time conflicts,

PELTers express their willingness to further undertake PD if they have opportunities. They wish to attend PD of high quality, practicality and relevance. They also mention need-based programs that consider their teaching contexts and teaching time schedule. The topics of their greatest interest are teaching pedagogy with real-timed micro-teaching and more demonstration delivered by qualified master trainers and their peers.

As we can only provide our initial data collection and analysis in a PD program in one province, this research tends to have limitations regarding restricted time and generalisability. In stages that follow, we are going to analyse data sources collected from varied geographical locations and across a range of education levels. This paper; therefore, contributes our understanding of PD for Vietnamese teachers in general and PELTers in particular. Inquiries of our large-scaled research go beyond a mere description of PD contexts, aiming to redefine the way EFL teachers' PD in Vietnam has been interpreted to date and seek to inform its future trajectories. These inquiries, under the goals of the NFL Project, address PD alignment at different policy levels and PD stakeholders' perspectives, especially teachers' voice in EFL education and teacher education.

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## GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TIỂU HỌC VỚI VẤN ĐỀ THAM GIA PHÁT TRIỂN CHUYÊN MÔN

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**Tóm tắt:** Phát triển chuyên môn (PTCM) cho giáo viên là một trong những nhiệm vụ trọng tâm để cải cách giáo dục ở nhiều quốc gia. Chủ đề này thu hút sự quan tâm của nhiều học giả như Avalos (2011), Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011), Le (2002) và Whitehouse (2011). Tuy vậy, trong bối cảnh triển khai Đề án Ngoại ngữ Quốc gia, việc giáo viên tiếng Anh ở Việt Nam, đặc biệt ở bậc tiểu học, tham gia PTCM chưa được nghiên cứu đầy đủ. Chúng tôi sử dụng nghiên cứu phương pháp kết hợp tìm hiểu quan điểm và kinh nghiệm tham gia PTCM của giáo viên tiếng Anh tiểu học (GVTATH). Chúng tôi tiến hành khảo sát 68 giáo viên và phỏng vấn 05 giáo viên tại một tỉnh miền bắc Việt Nam. Dữ liệu thu thập được chúng tôi phân tích theo 5 mảng chính: (i) lý do GVTATH tham gia PTCM; (ii) các hình thức và chủ đề PTCM của họ; (iii) lợi ích của việc PTCM; (iv) các lĩnh vực PTCM GVTATH muốn tham gia; và (v) các yếu tố tác động đến việc PTCM của họ. Chúng tôi cũng tìm hiểu một số cách thức PTCM hiệu quả mà GVTATH gợi ý. Hy vọng bài viết này sẽ giúp ích cho các nhà nghiên cứu ngoại ngữ, nhà hoạch định chính sách, các trường sư phạm và giáo viên tiếng Anh bậc tiểu học.

*Từ khóa:* phát triển chuyên môn, giáo viên tiếng Anh, giảng dạy tiếng Anh bậc tiểu học