



Received: 19-11-2023
Accepted: 29-12-2023

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Addressing Core Values in Professional Development in the Context of English Language Teaching: Case Study

Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hanh

Lecturer, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Corresponding Author: Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hanh

Abstract

The need for professional development will increase across all professions. Recent research has been conducted to highlight the role of core values in guiding action steps in teachers' professional development plans. This paper focuses on investigating the commitment to core values in professional development in a local English language-teaching context at the university in Ho Chi Minh City,

Vietnam. The results are based on qualitative data from ten interviewees, who were pre-selected based on long-term service of five years or more, to gain insight into the core values of faculty. The results are recommended as a basis for establishing standards of professional behavior in her English language-teaching environment in the region.

Keywords: Core Values, Professional Development, English Language Teaching

1. Introduction

In order to enhance professional learning, researchers propose the creation of professional learning communities with the suggestion that the focus is not just on individuals' learning but on professional learning for collective knowledge and growth, i.e., professional learning communities help teachers enhance their own and their school's development (Stoll, 2010)^[23]. The concept of professional learning was further developed by Hallinger & Liu (2016)^[13] as the continuous acquisition of new knowledge and enrichment of the teaching profession. In the teaching context and the corporate one alike, if teaching professionals have opportunities to learn to improve excellence and understanding of learners' needs, they may improve their teaching practice and help learners better. Lezotte (2005, p. 182)^[15] "concluded that school reform could be neither successful nor sustainable unless it was embraced by the teachers, administrators, and support staff that define the professional learning community." Sparks (2005, p. 156)^[22] asserts, "Successful professional learning communities clearly demonstrate what is possible when teachers learn and collaborate within their schools as part of their daily work." In the same manner, numerous researchers stress the importance of professional development activities, such as workshops, conferences, action research, team teaching, and so on, thanks to which schools learn by listening to teachers' ideas for innovations (Timperley, 2008^[24]; Vescio, 2008). Curwood *et al.*, 2015^[9] added the modes of workshops, conferences, and sharing sessions for professional learning, which could be delivered face-to-face or virtually using conferencing technology.

There are also empirical studies in the context of ELT with similar conclusions about creating professional learning communities to enhance professional learning among teachers as the ultimate goal for the sustainability of a language school (Richards & Farrell, 2005; LaRocco, 2009; Murray, 2010; Lorimer & Schulte, 2012; Donaldson, 2009)^[18, 14, 17, 16, 10]. In practice, there have been many professional learning projects implemented in local English language teaching institutions in Vietnam, such as the RMIT, Scottish School, ILA, etc., to name some. Professional learning has stepped beyond the context of higher education to prove itself a meaningful practice at all academic levels, from primary to high school (Senge *et al.*, 2018)^[20].

2. Literature review

In this literature review, the article focuses on the role of core values in professional development and their transfer to professional development.

2.1 The role of core values in professional development

In order to enhance professional learning, researchers propose the creation of professional learning communities with the suggestion that the focus is not just on individuals' learning but on professional learning for collective knowledge and growth, i.e., professional learning communities help teachers enhance their own and their school's development (Stoll, 2010) [23]. The concept of professional learning was further developed by Hallinger & Liu (2016) [13] as the continuous acquisition of new knowledge and enrichment of the teaching profession. In the teaching context and the corporate one alike, if teaching professionals have opportunities to learn to improve excellence and understanding of learners' needs, they may improve their teaching practice and help learners better. Lezotte (2005, p. 182) [15] "concluded that school reform could be neither successful nor sustainable unless it was embraced by the teachers, administrators, and support staff that define the professional learning community." Sparks (2005, p. 156) [22] asserts, "Successful professional learning communities clearly demonstrate what is possible when teachers learn and collaborate within their schools as part of their daily work." In the same manner, numerous researchers stress the importance of professional development activities, such as workshops, conferences, action research, team teaching, and so on, thanks to which schools learn by listening to teachers' ideas for innovations (Timperley, 2008 [24]; Vescio *et al.*, 2008). Curwood (2015) [9] added the modes of workshops, conferences, and sharing sessions for professional learning, which could be delivered face-to-face or virtually using conferencing technology. There are also empirical studies in the context of English language teaching with similar conclusions about creating professional learning communities to enhance professional learning among teachers as the ultimate goal for the sustainability of a language school (Richards & Farrell, 2005; LaRocco, 2009; Murray, 2010; Lorimer, 2012; Donaldson, 2009) [18, 14, 17, 16, 10]. In practice, there have been many professional learning projects implemented in local English language teaching institutions in Vietnam, such as the RMIT, Scottish School, ILA, etc., to name some. Professional learning has stepped beyond the context of higher education to prove itself a meaningful practice at all academic levels, from primary to high school (Senge *et al.*, 2018) [20].

2.2 Transfer to core values in professional development

The literature shows alignment between professional development and core values (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Elmore, 2002) [11, 12]. Since education is a knowledge profession, continuous professional development is even more important (Sparks, 2001; Brandt, 2004; Senge, 2010) [21, 6, 19]. Therefore, those who develop professionally, and vice versa, demonstrate adherence to standards of professional behavior that are typically structured in accordance with the organization's core values (Mann & Mohammad, 2016; Ulferts, 2021 [25]). In general, many researchers have already confirmed this direction, based on the universal fact that core values are essentially basic human needs. One classic representation of the correspondence between core values and human needs is Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. In the new economy, Ashmos & Duchon (2000) [1] and Covey (2006) [8] offer a conceptualization of core values that is based on human

needs and focuses on the "spirit." Covey (2006) [8] visually illustrates the core values of the holistic development paradigm below (Fig 1):

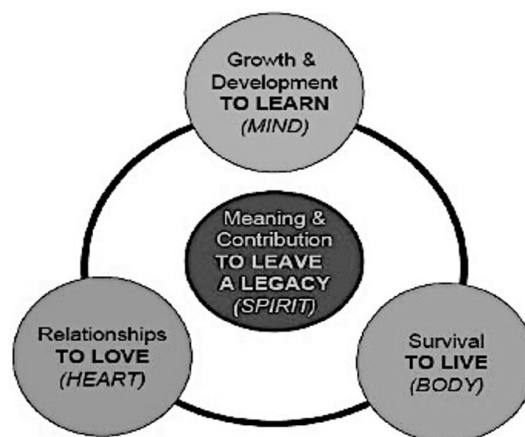


Fig 1: Professional development

According to this paradigm, today's employees must have the opportunity to utilize all four parts of their nature: body, mind, heart, and soul.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim of the study

A variety of studies are being conducted in the field of professional development. However, there are not enough empirical studies in local contexts that provide insight into the role of core values in professional development in English language teaching.

This paper aims to contribute to the literature on this topic and explores the commitment of English language teaching professionals to core values in their ongoing professional development. To achieve our goals, we need to answer the following research questions:

1. How do English language teaching professionals perceive core values in professional development?
2. Which results are consistent with the core values you want to achieve?

3.2 Research design

This study used a case study design and a qualitative approach. First, a survey was conducted to identify role models among teachers of the English Literature Department of a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which was expected to provide answers to the research questions. In addition to this key question, the researchers asked some additional questions to clarify some information.

3.3 Participants

The researchers attempted to reduce bias by involving faculty from across the department, where they had worked for more than 20 years. This not only provides good knowledge of the faculty but also facilitates formal access for the participants.

In this study, all teachers within the department were invited to participate in a survey to ascertain their perceptions of professional learning in the departmental context and, accordingly, formally provided quantitative data as part of the case study evidence. I have identified the example you provided. All ten of her selected interview partners are

faculty members with whom they have worked for more than five years.

3.4 Data analysis technique

The researchers used the four steps suggested by Creswell (2003). In steps 1 and 2, all responses were transcribed, and meaningful quotes were highlighted to provide an overall overview and discussion of the information from the interview. In step 3, you will classify these properties into categories and label each one with a code. Step 4 is the most important. The themes were carefully addressed to the research questions, taking into account the literature reviewed as a result of the findings. Below is a sample table of analysis steps:

Table 1: Example of a tabular analysis procedure

Theme	Categories	Properties
Recognizing core values in professional development	Know your core values and understand their roles	→T stands for “teacher” “ I have heard.....” (T1) “Core values must be consistent with the goals to be achieved”. (T2)
Expected learning outcomes consistent with core values	Growth and development, research, survival, relationships, meaning and contribution	->T stands for “teacher” +“Core values which eventually improve my expertise...” (T3) + “....conduct research....” (T4) + “....develop cooperation” (T5) + “....develop relationships....” (T6)

4. Discussion of the results and findings

4.1 Recognizing core values in professional development

Based on the identified characteristics, it can be concluded that all participants were well aware of the five core values of faculty: growth and development, research, survival, relationships, meaning and contribution. Specifically, all teachers first expressed their awareness of the core values of professional development. Second, although most of them had a correct understanding of the core values and their role in professional development, some could not clearly recall the name of each value. Last but not least, all respondents had a good understanding of the core values that teachers must or should adhere to and achieved their professional development goals accordingly.

4.2 Expected Learning Outcomes Aligned with Core Values

All respondents shared expected learning outcomes in their professional development. Interestingly, the results were well aligned with faculty core values and human needs as presented in the holistic personality development paradigm (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Covey, 2006) [1, 8].

▪ **Growth and Development**

When asked about the learning outcomes they expected if they subscribed to the faculty's core values, most respondents similarly responded to the need for excellence in professional development.

They clearly explained that they chose to join the faculty and follow its core values because of the need to improve their knowledge. T1 (hereinafter T stands for “teacher”) clarified that “core values are guidelines for meeting the

needs of learners. Therefore, the core values of English language teaching professionals expect to develop habits of mind for self-actualization, and Maslow's conceptualization is similar to that of Lezotte (2005) [15], Donaldson (2009) [10], Mann & Mohammad (2016), he added, confirming the findings of modern researchers and so on. Similarly, T2 emphasized the importance of having a proper understanding of the core values of professional development, which encourages English teachers to actively improve their own knowledge and teaching methods.

▪ **Research**

The qualitative data shows that most interviewees are aware of the importance of being flexible in order to gain confidence in conducting research. T2 and T5 confessed they gained such confidence thanks to attending regular research workshops held by the faculty. T5 added that “It was at such workshops that I had exposure to and gradually perceived the Faculty's core values, one of which I like most is flexibility”. Obviously, this professional development activity is apparently an effective one in communicating the core values and raising teachers’ awareness of flexibility to enhance their research capacity, which stresses the importance of teachers’ engagement in order to be open to change for improvements, as stated in literature (Sparks, 2001; Lorimer & Schulte, 2012; Senge, 2010) [21, 16, 19]. Furthermore, all the interviewees exhibited research publications, both nationally and internationally. T5 & T6 mentioned the Faculty's Conference as a forum for exposure to the core values and at the same time, presenting research achievements.

▪ **Survival**

The results of this baseline response are very important. Individual and collective successes are the latest topics of constant discussion among professionals, educational leaders, and teachers regarding the important concept of survival (Barendsen & Gardner, 2006; Betts, 2009; Senge, 2010) [2, 3, 19].

When asked about the expected learning outcomes in line with this core value, T4 responded, “As people grow professionally, they will be able to inspire others”. T5 was more explicit: “Individual success contributes to group success and collective success”. T1 and T2 were even more serious and stated that adherence to core values must be mandatory so that all faculty members experience participation in professional development for the benefit of all.

▪ **Relationships**

The teachers who participated in this study were interested in this question. T6 even considered integrity to be the most important core value as a young teacher. It was easy to understand when the teacher shared that he had just completed a paper.

According to most respondents, especially when carrying out important tasks that require respecting others, learning good things from them, while also having the integrity to say no, T2's further integrity is based on agreement and harmony for mutual learning, and regarding the role of the leader as teacher, this opinion is echoed by his Bolman & Deal (2008) [4], Betof (2009) [3], Donaldson (2009) [10] and This is clearly consistent with Cohen (2010) [7]. Additionally, according to T2, teacher professional

development activities such as research camps help build relationships, allowing teachers to understand each other better and be more open to criticism that they consider constructive. This fosters honesty among teachers. T6 said: "When teachers adhere to the core teaching values, they are conscious enough of integrity to know what is right and what is wrong to adjust their professional behavior". But they also do their best to maintain the relationship."

▪ *Meaning and Contribution*

Commitment to core values, as practiced in most parts of the world in both business and educational institutions, is expected to ultimately lead to social responsibility (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Covey, 2006; Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Ulferts, 2021)^[1, 8, 25].

The undergraduate teachers who participated in this study were no exception, all emphasizing the core value of responsibility and, surprisingly, seeing this as an outcome. According to respondents, it is an honor for teachers to contribute to society. Although T3 was a young teacher, he had been involved in social work since his student days and was already aware of the responsible role. She simply believed that the performance of her students at graduation was really the product of their teachers. T5 agreed with this idea and said: "We are happy from the bottom of our hearts that our faculty teachers make a huge contribution to the country's human resources, many of whom are successful people and even government decision-makers". Successful graduates return to contribute to the development of the faculty and, of course, the teachers and ultimately the students." Qualitative results show that English language teaching faculty has made significant contributions to the university.

5. Conclusion

Employees around the world strive for comprehensive personal development. This development is evident in the field of teaching English as a knowledge profession. Continuing professional development is not traditionally about filling the mind with more knowledge, but innovative English teachers are developing other skills, in line with the core values of Vietnamese university English departments. More conscious of developing: research, survival, relationships, and contribution. As identified by Timperley (2008)^[24], the faculty's core values are not about telling English teaching professionals what is good or what they should do, but rather about teaching English in a work environment and providing guidance on what is essential for natural professional development. Furthermore, English teachers are very clear about how to design their professional development path according to goals that suit their abilities, which is consistent with her Avidov-Ungar (2016) research findings.

6. Acknowledgement

The Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City supported this research. We are thankful to our colleagues who provided expertise that assisted the research.

7. References

1. Ashmos DP, Duchon D. Spirituality at Work: A Conceptualization and Measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*. 2000; 9(2):134-145. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649260092008>

2. Barendsen L, Gardner H. *The Three Elements of Good Leadership in Rapidly Changing Times*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
3. Betof E. *Leaders as Teachers: Unlock the Teaching Potential of Your Company's Best and Brightest*. Massachusetts: ASTD Press, 2009.
4. Bolman LG, Deal TE. *The Human Resource Frame. The Symbolic Frame. Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
5. Bolman LG, Gallos J. *Reframing Academic Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
6. Brandt R. Is This School a Learning Organization? 10 Ways to Tell. *Journal of Staff Development*. 2004; 24(1):10-12.
7. Cohen W. *Effective Leadership and Personal Integrity: Peter Drucker on Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
8. Covey SR. *Leading in the Knowledge Worker Age, Leader to Leader*. 2006; (41):11-15. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.184>.
9. Curwood JS, Tomitsch M, Thomson K, Hendry G. Professional learning in higher education: Understanding how academics interpret student feedback and access resources to improve their teaching. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*. 2015; 31(5):556-571. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2516>.
10. Donaldson GHC. *Learning Together: The roles of continuing professional development, collegiality and chartered teachers in implementing - Improving teaching, improving learning. Curriculum for Excellence*. HM Inspectorate of Education, 2009.
11. Elmore RE, Burney D. *Investing in teacher learning: Staff development and instructional improvement in community school district #2*. New York, NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1997.
12. Elmore RE. *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional development in education*, Albert Shanker Institute, 2002. http://www.shankerinstitute.org/Downloads/Bridging_Gap.pdf. Retrieved on October 15th 2022.
13. Hallinger P, Liu S. *Leadership and Teacher Learning in Urban and Rural Schools in China: Meeting the Dual Challenges of Equity and Effectiveness*. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 2016; 51(C):163-173. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2016.10.001> (Retrieved on October 15th 2022).
14. LaRocco DJ. *On the Path to Becoming a Professional Learning Community: Charting Change in one Suburban Middle School*. Connecticut: University of Hartford, 2009.
15. Lezotte LW. *More effective schools: Professional learning communities in action*. In R. DuFour, R. Eaker, & R. DuFour (Eds.), *On Common Ground: The power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service, 2005, 177-191.
16. Lorimer C, Schulte J. *Reimagining TESOL*

- Professionalism: The Graduate Student Perspective. *The CATESOL Journal*. 2012; 23(1):31-44.
17. Murray A. Empowering teachers through professional development. *English Teaching Forum*. 2010; 48(1):2-11.
 18. Richards JC, Farrell TSC. *Professional Development for Language Teachers - Strategies for Teacher Learning*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
 19. Senge P. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (2nd Edition). New York: Doubleday Currency, 2010.
 20. Senge P, Reid W, Dold C. Burns, the Study of Leadership. *Open Journal of Leadership*. 2018; 7:89-116. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2018.71006>. (Retrieved on October 15th 2022).
 21. Sparks D. Why Change is So Challenging for School: An Interview with Peter Senge. *Educational Leadership*. 2001; 22(3):42-47.
 22. Sparks D. Leading for transformation in teaching, learning, and relationships. In R. DuFour, R. Eaker, & R. DuFour (Eds.), *On Common Ground: The power of professional learning communities* (pp. 155-175). Bloomington, IN: National Education Service, 2005.
 23. Stoll L. Professional learning communities. In Penelope Peterson, Eva Baker, Barry McGaw (Eds), *International Encyclopedia of Education*. Elsevier, 2010, 151-157. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-044894-7.00435-8>
 24. Timperley HS. Continuing Professional Development. In James Wright (Eds) *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Elsevier, 2008, 792-802. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.92134-2>
 25. Ulferts H. (ed.) *Teaching as a Knowledge Profession: Studying Pedagogical Knowledge across Education Systems*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/e823ef6e-en>. (Retrieved on October 15th 2022).