

Professional Development for Managers and Teachers in Early Childhood Education Institutions: Current Situation, Demands, and Solutions

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents the research results on the current situation, demands, and solutions for the professional development of managers and teachers at Vietnam's early childhood education institutions. The study was based on a survey of 7349 managers and teachers across 63 provinces and cities, employing a combination of qualitative methods (focused in-depth interviews, workshops, and group discussions) and quantitative methods (questionnaire survey). The findings indicated that most managers and teachers value the comprehensiveness and relevance of the issued regulations and guidelines; however, specific challenges have remained in their practical implementation. The research also showed that professional development has enhanced the knowledge and skills to meet job requirements. The most effective forms of training are concentrated sessions combined with distance learning, especially in the stage of digital transformation. However, challenges persist, particularly concerning the organization of training programs, timing, contents, and instructional materials. The article also highlights the need for early childhood managers and teachers to enhance their knowledge and practical skills in order to meet pedagogical and professional requirements in the context of educational reform; therefore, some solutions are recommended to improve the effectiveness of professional development, meeting the demands for enhancing professional competence and early childhood education reform.*

KEYWORDS: Early childhood education, professional development, manager, teacher.

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1. Introduction

Managers and teachers are the key driving force who play an essential role in realizing the educational goals outlined in Education Law No. 43 and the early childhood education program. Recognizing the role of this workforce for determining the early childhood education quality, the National Assembly, the Government, the Ministry of Education and Training, and other ministries and agencies have issued a series of legal documents specifically aimed at supporting the professional training and development of management staff and teachers. Some of these include Decree No. 115/2020/ND-CP on public employee management, Decree No. 101/2017/ND-CP on training and professional development for government officials and public employees, and Decree No. 105/2020/ND-CP on policies for early childhood education development (Government, 2017, 2020).

Additionally, Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training regulates continuous professional training for teachers and managers at early childhood education institutions, general education institutions, and continuing education centres. This was later amended by Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT, which revised and supplemented several provisions of the continuous professional training regulations for managers and teachers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2022). Moreover, Circular No. 25/2018/TT-BGDĐT introduced national standards for principals, while Circular No. 26/2018/TT-BGDĐT established professional standards for early childhood education teachers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a, 2018b). These regulations provide a unified framework over the country, serving for educators to self-assess and for evaluation

by relevant authorities. They also help assess professional competence and qualifications for the implementation of professional development training plans to improve management skills and teaching skills for teachers. Furthermore, these policies promote the development, recruitment, and utilization of a core of managers and teachers in preschool institutions.

The article was based on the regulations concerning continuous professional training for early childhood education managers and teachers, such as Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT and the standards for professional qualifications of management staff and teachers, and focused on analysing the practical aspects of professional development. These aspects include the organization and implementation of training for professional development at preschool institutions and the participation of management staff and teachers in such professional development training programs (Ministry of Education and Training, 2022). The article also found the demands for organizing professional development in the future to propose solutions for enhancing the effectiveness of professional training in preschool institutions, meeting the current educational reform requirements.

2. Literature Review

Scientific research has demonstrated that the professional competence of early childhood education managers and teachers is a central determinant of early childhood education quality—encompassing process quality, structural quality, and child outcomes (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Egert *et al.*, 2020; Cabus *et al.*, 2023). Continuous professional development is identified as a key driver enabling this workforce to maintain and enhance educational quality (Zaslow *et al.*, 2010).

Professional competencies refer to in-depth knowledge and skills within a disciplinary domain (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; Eraut, 1994). In this paper, professional competence is theorized as the flexible and creative application of knowledge in real-world contexts. Consistent with this view, prior studies (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Egert *et al.*, 2020; Cabus *et al.*, 2023) also confirm

that the competence of managers and teachers predicts early childhood education quality—spanning process and structural dimensions as well as children’s developmental outcomes. Accordingly, continuous, systematic professional development that targets knowledge, skills, and professional ethics/dispositions is essential to meet practical demands and to improve early childhood education quality.

Building on a developmental perspective, Ericsson *et al.* (1993) argue that attaining high-level professional performance in a specific field requires sustained, deliberate practice over an extended period; expertise is not solely the product of innate talent but of structured practice designed to strengthen specific skills. Similarly, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) (see also early childhood education updates) propose a five-stage progression—novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert—in which performance becomes increasingly skilful and automatized. These frameworks have been widely applied in management, training, and CPD for early childhood education managers and teachers.

In the early childhood education sector, meta-analytic evidence indicates that in-service professional development programs exert positive effects on the competencies of managers and teachers (Egert *et al.*, 2018). Sheridan *et al.* (2009) further contend that rigorous continuous professional development requires a theory-and-evidence base that addresses not only forms (methods, structures, and delivery approaches) but also processes (mechanisms of change) and both proximal and distal outcomes (effects on practitioners and on the children/families they serve). Proximally, continuous professional development pursues two objectives: (1) advancing providers’ knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices for educating children and supporting families; and (2) cultivating a culture of ongoing professional growth at individual and system levels. Benefits accruing to knowledge–skills–dispositions can be expected in teacher–child/family interactions, the design of meaningful learning environments, the use of curricula and pedagogical strategies, and

other targeted behaviours. The second objective concerns sustaining quality by strengthening the capacity of individuals and organizations to self-direct and continue professional growth, progressively transferring responsibility for effective service delivery and ongoing improvement from external trainers/coaches/consultants to internal professional teams within early childhood education settings.

Key enablers of effective continuous professional development include (1) supportive policies and mechanisms that enable staff participation and (2) coherent plans, curricula, formats, learning resources, and transparent monitoring and evaluation of continuous professional development quality and effectiveness (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009). Yet Zaslow *et al.*'s (2010) review highlights persistent challenges: fragmented, overlapping, and insufficiently systematic content and scope; the practical constraints of a predominantly “non-traditional” workforce balancing family and work responsibilities (see also Ackerman, 2004); and low wages/benefits associated with high turnover (Whitebook *et al.*, 2001). These factors pose substantial obstacles for policymakers and programs designing and implementing continuous professional development for the early childhood education workforce.

In Viet Nam, childhood education studies report that the management of continuous professional development for preschool teachers is influenced by implementers' awareness and capabilities, the adequacy of facilities and equipment, policy directions, and the broader context of educational reform (Huong, 2024). Planning for training and continuous professional development should be aligned with staffing and utilization plans; otherwise, “training without appropriate placement/use” risks waste and undermines teacher motivation (Mai, 2019). Moreover, evaluations of continuous professional development effectiveness often emphasize course completion against professional standards, while under-assessing the organization and participation aspects of CPD and its longer-term, comprehensive effects on teachers' professional practice.

To address these weaknesses, MOET (2019) has issued detailed, nationwide regulations governing the organization and participation in continuous professional development. Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT (November 12, 2019) and its amendment, Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT, provide a comprehensive framework with interlocking components (participants, purposes, principles, curricula, modalities, materials, plans, trainers, implementing institutions, assessment and classification of results, and certification). These circulars also clarify coordination mechanisms among managing agencies, training providers, and preschool institutions. Together with Circular No. 25/2018/TT-BGDĐT (standards for principals) and Circular No. 26/2018/TT-BGDĐT (professional standards for early childhood education teachers), they form a national, system-level backbone for self-assessment and external evaluation and for planning professional development to strengthen management and teaching competencies across the workforce. This regulatory corpus provides a coherent analytical lens for the present study to examine current conditions, needs, and solutions for effective continuous professional development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the current situation, demands, and solutions related to professional development for early childhood education managers and teachers in Vietnam. This approach helps data triangulation and offered a comprehensive understanding from both policy and practitioner perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The research process included four stages: (1) review legal documents, national standards, and prior research on continuous professional development; (2) design research questions and instruments; (3) collect quantitative data through a nationwide questionnaire and qualitative data via workshops, group discussions, and in-depth interviews; and (4) analyzing and synthesizing findings to inform solution recommendations.

Based on national regulations on continuous professional development for early childhood education managers and teachers in Circulars No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT and No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT; national professional standards apply to early childhood education managers and teachers; and research frameworks on effective professional development (e.g., Sheridan *et al.*, 2009; Zaslow *et al.*, 2010), the research seeks to generate evidence to address four key research questions:

1) How is professional development for early childhood managers and teachers currently organized and implemented in terms of policies, objectives, plans, content, modalities, trainers, materials, and resources? What outcomes have been achieved, and which factors influence the effectiveness of professional development?

2) What professional development demands of managers and teachers should be prioritized in order to enhance their competencies and meet the demands of the ongoing educational reforms?

3) What factors, difficulties, and limitations hinder the effectiveness of professional development for managers and teachers?

4) What solutions can improve the effectiveness of professional development activities, ensuring alignment with the requirements of educational reform in the current context?

3.2. Research Samples

Sampling Strategy

The quantitative component used purposive stratified sampling to ensure national representation across 63 provinces and cities, type of preschool institution (public and non-public), and local context (advantaged and disadvantaged areas).

For participants involved in professional development activities: Each province/city selected 50 preschool teachers: 20 from public preschools in disadvantaged areas, 20 from public preschools in advantaged areas, and 10 from non-public preschools. In addition, 41 administrators participated, including 1 representative from the Department of Education and Training, 10 representatives from district-level Divisions of

Education and Training, and 30 administrators from 10 public preschools in advantaged areas, 10 from public preschools in disadvantaged areas, and 10 non-public preschools.

For participants involved in organizing professional development:

Research selected 41 educational administrators, including 1 administrator from the Department of Education and Training; 10 administrators from district-level Divisions of Education and Training; and 30 administrators from 30 preschool education institutions, comprising administrators from 10 public preschools in disadvantaged areas, 10 public preschools in advantaged areas, and 10 non-public preschools.

The study adhered to research ethics, with informed consent obtained via a Google Form outlining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality.

This approach balanced broad geographic coverage with operational feasibility for a nationwide survey coordinated by MOET.

Qualitative sampling: Each province, one administrator from the Department of Education and Training, two administrators from district-level Divisions of Education and Training (representing advantaged and disadvantaged areas), and one preschool teacher to attend the workshop and group discussion. The study ensured ethical compliance for participants involved in group discussions and in-depth interviews through informed consent, obtained with the agreement and coordination of local officials.

Collecting second reports: Reports at the local level were collected to gain insights into the specific practices and challenges various regions face.

Participants

The survey collected 7,665 responses, of which 315 were excluded due to duplication, missing data, or inconsistent responses. The final sample comprised 7,349 valid respondents, with 52.8% managers and 47.2% early childhood teachers. Participants represents diverse ethnic backgrounds, educational qualifications, and job positions at provincial, district, and

preschool levels. Additionally, 2099 educational administrators participated in organizing professional development activities (see Table 1). This multi-level sampling strategy enhanced the representativeness and contextual depth of the findings.

Workshop participants: 120 experts, managers, and teachers from 40 provinces and cities discussed and shared the professional development practices.

3.3. Research Instrument

The quantitative tool included 10 core items aligned with sections 4.1–5 of the results about regulatory frameworks, planning and organization, participation, effectiveness, content, materials, influencing factors, and future demands, was Google form. Measurement scales included:

- A three-point nominal scale (Disagree – No opinion – Agree) for questions about planning and organization;
- Multiple-response nominal scales for questions about participation, trainer sources, needs;
- Ordinal scales (frequency of participation,

effectiveness, influence levels, content exposure).

These scales were designed for clarity, low respondent burden, and compatibility with descriptive statistical analysis suitable for exploratory studies.

Although a formal pilot study was not conducted, the questionnaire underwent review by experts from the Ministry of Education and Training. Feedback from preliminary workshops and professional consultations was incorporated to refine wording, enhance content validity, and ensure alignment with national policy frameworks.

The questionnaire consisted mainly of nominal, multiple-response, and ordinal items designed to capture descriptive information on professional development practices. Because the instrument did not include multi-item Likert scales measuring latent psychological constructs, internal consistency reliability (e.g., Cronbach’s Alpha) was not calculated.

3.4. Data Analysing Method

Quantitative data were processed using SPSS version 26.0. descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-

Table 1. General information about survey participants

Information Count		Managers and teachers participating in professional development		Managers involved in organizing professional development		Total	
		Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Ethnicity	Other ethnic groups	889	16.9%	323	15.4%	1212	16.5%
	Kinh	4361	83.1%	1776	84.6%	6137	83.5%
Education Level	Intermediate Level	142	2.7%			142	1.9%
	College	602	11.5%	124	5.9%	726	9.9%
	University	4342	82.7%	1757	83.7%	6099	83.0%
	Postgraduate	164	3.1%	218	10.4%	382	5.2%
Job Position	Managers (province/district level)	258	4.9%	548	26.1%	806	11.0%
	Managers (preschool level)	1520	29.0%	1551	73.9%	3071	41.8%
	Early childhood education teachers	3472	66.1%			3472	47.2%
Total		5250	100%	2099	100%	7349	100%

tabulations, were used to analyse participation rates, perceptions of planning and organization, effectiveness of training forms, content coverage, influencing factors, and future demands. Inferential statistics were not employed, as the study's primary objective was descriptive and exploratory.

In addition, the study incorporated qualitative data analysis from workshop, group d, interview and secondary reports that were analysed using thematic analysis aligned with the study's research questions on current practices, needs, challenges, and solutions in professional development. Data from workshops, group discussions, and in-depth interviews were coded into key themes to complement, explain, and triangulate quantitative findings.

Data triangulation integrated quantitative and qualitative findings to (1) validate key patterns across multiple data sources, (2) explain discrepancies between policy intentions and implementation, and (3) enhance the credibility and policy relevance of conclusions. This integrated approach provides evidence-based recommendations for improving professional development systems for early childhood managers and teachers in Viet Nam.

4. Results

4.1. Assessing Regulatory Documents and Guidelines for Professional Development

The promulgation of central-level legal documents has created a proper legal environment to support the implementation of professional training at the local level. Most of the managers and teachers (86.7%-94.3%) highly maintained the completeness and effectiveness of these regulatory documents. However, some feedback from surveys and group discussions indicates that the current regulations contain several areas for improvement that create implementation challenges, including:

The requirement for periodic professional meetings at least once every two weeks, as stipulated in Circular No. 52/2020/TT-BGDĐT, dated December 31, 2020, which issues the Charter for Kindergarten Schools (Article 13, Section 3), does not specify the

exact time for these meetings. Given that early childhood teachers are responsible for their classes (especially in contexts where classes are understaffed and teachers cannot leave their students), this ambiguity complicates scheduling for teachers wishing to participate.

Circular No. 11/2019/TT-BGDĐT, dated August 26, 2019, which issues the program for continuous professional training of management staff in early childhood education, and Circular No. 12/2019/TT-BGDĐT, dated August 26, 2019, which issues the program for continuous professional training of early childhood teachers, only provide a list of topics and outlines without a standardized resource for nationwide use. This lack of uniformity makes it difficult for localities to compile, validate, and organize training materials. Moreover, the discussion groups suggested that legal documents, particularly concerning private institutions, need to be more concise and implemented promptly. Some legal documents must still be clearer to guide and support the private early childhood education system.

Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT, dated November 12, 2019, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, establishes the regulations for continuous professional training of early childhood education teachers, managers, and regular education institutions. This circular was amended by Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT, which modifies specific provisions regarding the organization of continuous training as outlined in Article 10. The preschool institutions are responsible for continuous training, including (a) institutions providing training for teachers and management staff, such as pedagogical universities, educational institutions with pedagogical departments, and those authorized to conduct training and professional development. The Department of Education and Training organizes training that must collaborate with training units under contractual agreements or assigned duties. This arrangement leads to two key issues:

- Management staff at the department and division levels, who possess expertise and are closely familiar with local early childhood

education, must coordinate with training institutions rather than implement training programs directly within their teams. The recognition of the completion of the continuous training plan (Article 12) is reasonably carried out by the Department of Education and Training while they are not directly involved in organizing or conducting the training. Due to this, civil organizational processes of professional training and issuing certificates for the full training programs are made more complex.

- Continuous training tasks exceeding 100 million VND are subject to bidding procedures, and Department and Division staff need more expertise in this area. In practice, procurement regulations based on bidding criteria complicate the selection of training providers that meet high-quality professional requirements. Institutions with quality training programs tend to have higher bids, while those less qualified may win the bid by offering lower prices.

Decree No. 105/2020/NĐ-CP, dated September 8, 2020, outlines policies for developing early childhood education (Article 11) and only provides support regarding materials and training costs for private early childhood teachers participating in professional development training. Decree No. 71/2020/NĐ-CP of June 30, 2020, identified the plan for improving the qualification of early childhood education teachers and notes that teachers participating in qualification training should be paid 100% of their salary and other allowances. However, preschools operating under self-financing mechanisms must still arrange for substitute teachers to cover classes; the lack of supportive policies for qualification enhancement challenges non-public preschool institutions.

Also, some recommendations were made about the legal works, which state that directives should be addressed and followed more promptly and in fewer words at the institutional level and that those documents should be more specific to private institutions. Some opinions from managers of the Department of Education and Training and the Division of the District need more completeness and practical applicability, hindering effective implementation.

The survey of the existing legislation also showed a relatively high degree of approval among managers and teachers; nevertheless, several of the difficulties were outlined in the process of development of the professional requirements, the unclear organization of the schedule of professional meetings, and the lack of a unified methodological base that would allow implementing trial and error within the framework of training programs while introducing localized changes. Further, the procedures for identifying training completion and the procurement regulation act as an extra layer to the mechanisms that challenge the arrangement of efficient professional development for early childhood educators. However, the procedures for training completion recognize the rules for procurement of such courses and complicate the issue of the professional development organization for early childcare professionals.

4.2. Current Situation of Professional Development for Managers and Teachers

4.2.1. Evaluation of the Professional Development Planning Process

This study surveys and evaluates the professional development planning process based on ten criteria related to objectives, content, development methods, participants, and the timeline for completing the plan. Overall, the planning process for professional development is assessed as relatively appropriate and meets the career development needs of management staff and teachers. Notably, most staff and teachers agree that the objectives, content, and development methods align with the practical job requirements, with agreement rates ranging from 90.5% to 95.9% among management staff and teachers. However, the agreement rates concerning the timing of plan formulation and reporting development needs to management annually are lower (Figure 1).

According to the reports presents at the workshop, some Departments of Education and Training have conducted surveys and compiled the training needs from preschool institutions through local educational offices at the end of each academic year. Based on these surveys,

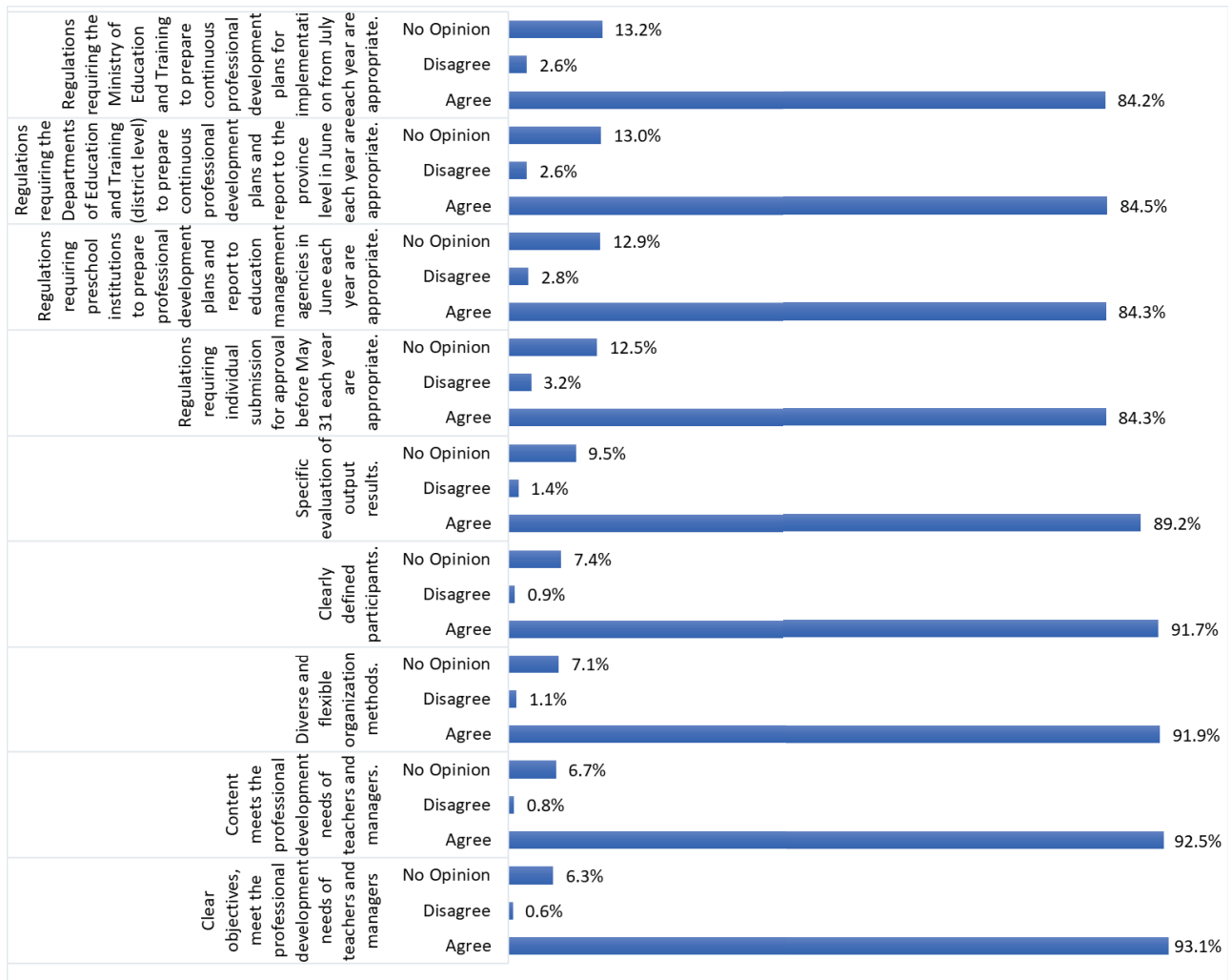


Figure 1: Evaluation of planning and organization of professional development

the Department of Education and Training establishes the plans for appropriate training, reflecting the target local and national groups, such as the Departments of Education and Training of Da Nang, Quang Nam, and Thua Thien Hue, etc. However, some representatives in teacher group discussions noted that according to the regulations in Circular 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT, the annual survey of training needs for teachers is conducted in May, at the end of the academic year, before the plans and tasks for the new school year are established. This timing causes challenges for teachers to put forward their professional development needs for the next academic year because they could not know what classes they would be teaching. Therefore, by suggestion of teachers, the needs assessment and training planning should take place after publication of the tasks and plans of the new academic year to consider the real demand.

Similarly, the managers and teachers pointed out a need to improve practice in fulfilling training planning based on the current situation and the early childhood education of every training group and region of the early childhood education system. The issue is when and what should be trained and be more flexible so that participants get their time right to ensure the quality of the training. Thus, the survey results indicate that the effectiveness of professional development planning is significantly enhanced when it is synchronized and closely aligned with professional development requirements.

4.2.2. Professional Development Organization at the Local Level

Professional development is a routine activity for educational managers and teachers. Figure 2 illustrates the survey results regarding

participation in professional development across various levels, from central to local, and self-directed learning.

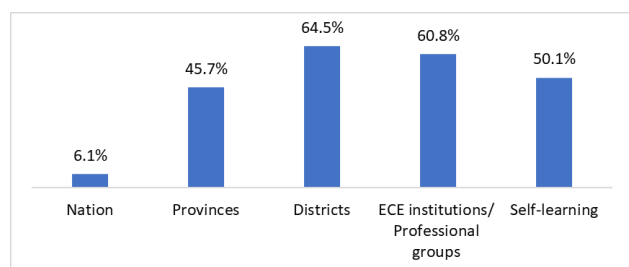


Figure 2. Levels of participation in the professional development of managers and teachers

The research also indicated that the primary responsibility for professional development lies with the education offices at the district level and preschool institutions or subject-specific teams (with participation rates of 64.5% and 60.8%). Attending self-learning contributed to participation rates of 50.1%, and managers and teachers participated in training at the province level of 45.7%. Thus, only 6.2% of the managers and teachers participated in national training. This situation squarely fits with the responsibilities of the local educational management in the professional development process.

The organizations that take the lead and collaborate in organizing professional development for managers and teachers are pretty diverse, including the Ministry of Education and Training (Department of Early Childhood Education, Department of Teachers and Educational Administrators, the Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, etc.), Departments of Education and Training at the province and district level, universities, colleges, training centres, and preschool institutions/subject-specific teams. Among these, the most active organizations—over 80% of professional development activities—are local education offices and early childhood institutions/subject-specific teams (participation rates of 88.8%, 87.3%, and 80%, respectively). The Ministry of Education and Training accounts for 54.8% of professional development activities. Meanwhile, universities, colleges, training centres, and

other organizations contribute less than 40% to professional development activities.

Some localities proactively collaborate with universities to organize professional development activities for educational administrators and early childhood teachers. For instance, in the 2023-2024 academic year, 5 out of 8 district education offices in Quang Binh Province actively collaborated with Hue University of Education to provide training for 100% of early childhood teachers and 50% of teachers on topics such as “Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness through Emotional Management” and “Building a School Culture Towards a Happy School.” Additionally, certain localities have organized numerous professional development activities with support from international organizations such as UNICEF, Onesky, Plan, CSR2, JICA (Japan), Chung-Ang (South Korea), and VVOB (Belgium). For example, in Da Nang, various projects support professional development for educational administrators and teachers, including capacity-building initiatives for managers, teachers, parents, and staff of independent private classes funded by Save the Children International and training for cooking staff sponsored by Nagasaki Prefectural University in Japan.

Thus, local units have the primary role in organizing professional development activities. At the same time, central-level training courses conducted by the Ministry of Education and Training are reserved for a select group of key personnel and teachers. Furthermore, professional development entails participation in various social organizations as required by law. This demonstrates the state management function of regulatory agencies at different levels in providing regulations concerning professional development in their respective regions.

4.2.3. Frequency of Participation in Professional Development

The given data reflects the participation of managers and teachers in the professional development of the organizations. The frequency results demonstrate that the number of participants in training is more than twice per academic year, which is the highest percentage,

50%. This is followed by the 23.6% of the respondents who participate once per year and the 19.8% who participate twice per year (Figure 3). Hence, most managers and teachers conduct professional development practices during the academic year as the legislation prescribes.

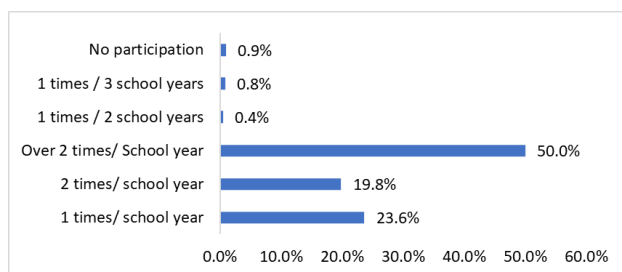


Figure 3. Frequency of participation in the professional development

4.2.4. Source of Trainers

The trainers are quite diverse and come from various sources. Survey responses indicated that the main source was staff and teachers from preschool educational institutions who had met the required standards of trainers (88.6% of responses). The remaining sources were experts, including foreign experts (58.7% of responses), lecturers from universities or colleges with early childhood education (46.9% of responses), and those from educational institutions authorized to train teachers and educational managers (41.5% of responses). Additionally, some localities have adopted innovative approaches by utilizing foreign speakers/lecturers from countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, etc., to train key management staff across the city while they are there to train teachers at international preschools with foreign investment in the locality.

According to the opinions from group discussions among teachers, in addition to the sources of speakers from quality training institutions with extensive experience in early childhood education, there are speakers from some training sources, such as companies registered for educational training activities, training centers, and institutions that do not meet quality standards. When some organizing managers observed professional development sessions, they indicated that some training

content delivered by some trainers is primarily theoretical and lacks practical depth, failing to meet the needs for enhancing the professional competencies of experienced managers and teachers. Additionally, local experts usually choose trainers for several advantages, including ease of planning, personnel mobilization, and reasonable project cost.

4.2.5. Forms of Professional Development

Survey and analysis of the organization and effectiveness of forms of professional development showed that the in-person form is the most common type and has the highest percentage of training sessions. This format allows instructors or trainers to provide direct guidance and ask questions. It is the most suitable in fostering experience exchange and professional discussion. Remote training has also gained traction, especially amid the digital transition and the COVID-19 pandemic, with online courses featuring interactive instructors. However, online courses with direct instructor guidance and early childhood education have low demonstrations and constitute a minor choice among learners. Blended learning combines in-person and remote training and increases flexibility for learners in their studies and work. Educational institutions are encouraged to vigorously apply information technology and online learning platforms to optimize resources and time to enhance training effectiveness.

In addition, managers and teachers have intensified their self-directed learning efforts, actively seeking information through online resources, books, and official channels to acquire valuable and practical knowledge for child care and education. Despite significant changes in the organization of professional development forms, the traditional training form still predominates. In the digital transformation context, greater emphasis should be placed on utilizing tools and software in professional development to maximize time and human resources.

Evaluating the effectiveness of various professional development forms, the majority of respondents indicated that the effectiveness ranged from 37.2% of responses with the online

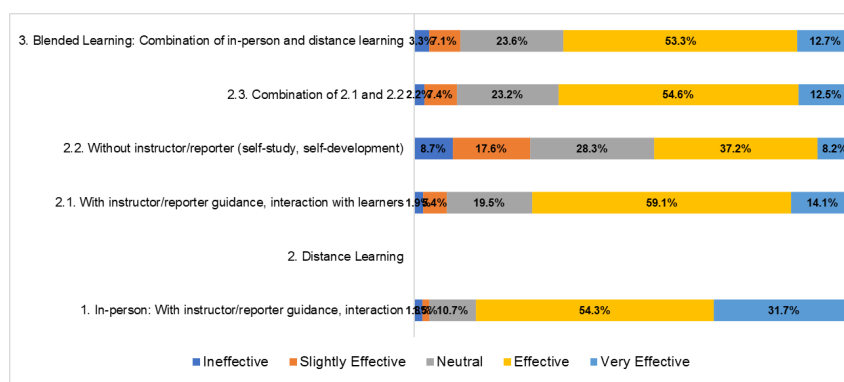


Figure 4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development forms

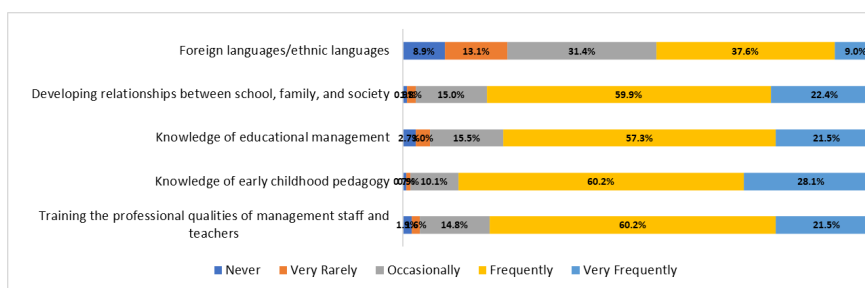


Figure 5. Content of professional development

training form without direct instructor interaction to 59.1% of responses with the online training form with instructor guidance; very effective rates were lower with the online training form without direct instructor interaction (8.2% of responses), and very effective rates were highest with the in-person training form with an instructor/lecturer who guides, interacts, and answers learners' questions. The least effective and least efficient was the distance training form, as online training without direct instructor interaction accounted for 26.3%.

4.2.6. Content of Professional Development

Professional development content can be divided into developing qualities, professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, management skills, fostering relationships between schools, families, society, and language/ethnic language training. Survey results show a high level of participation in content areas at frequent levels (ranging from 75.2% to 86.8%), except for language/ethnic language training (46.6%). Among these, the highest participation rates are related to professional knowledge and preschool pedagogical skills. Language/ethnic language

training is a rather specialized content area based on the needs of each school and region. Thus, the participation rate for frequent and widespread training is lower than for other content areas and is below average, which is appropriate. The survey results indicate that there is still a small percentage of content areas where participants have never or very rarely engaged in training. For instance, language/ethnic language training (8.3%) and knowledge of educational management (3.5%). This could be attributed to young teachers who are new to the profession and may not have had the opportunity to participate frequently in training activities or may have little or no interest in specific content areas such as ethnic languages, foreign languages, or educational management skills.

Some Departments of Education and Training organized professional development for specific groups based on local practices. For example, in Da Nang City, several initiatives have been implemented. Districts with industrial and export processing zones have childcare facilities for workers' children that offer early drop-off and late pick-up services and accept children as young as three months old. The Departments of Education

and Training organized training programs to enhance capacity in caring for, nurturing, and educating infants from three months of age. For preschools that enrol many children with disabilities, the Departments of Education and Training organized specialized training sessions on disability, inclusive education for children with special needs, and early intervention for children aged 0–6 years.

In districts with large numbers of children from ethnic minority groups or children in industrial zones whose parents have limited time to play and talk with them, the Departments of Education and Training organized training sessions to promote the creation of rich language-learning environments. This training is aimed at managers in industrial zones and focuses on caring for and educating children in mixed-age groups and kindergarten classes, as well as enhancing Vietnamese language skills for ethnic minority children.

4.2.7. Training materials

Training materials are one critical factor that influences learners' effectiveness. Thirteen criteria were surveyed regarding the sources of training materials, their specifications, and quality. The feedback indicates a consensus that the materials used have been compiled and validated from various sources, such as the training organization, management levels, or instructors providing materials, with an average agreement rate of 80.1%.

The specifications of the materials are diverse, being compiled in different ways to serve various training formats, including in-person, online, and blended formats, with an average agreement rate of 78.43%. The quality of the materials is evaluated based on criteria such as their relevance to training requirements and regulations, alignment with the participants' profiles, ensuring a combination of theory and practice, integrating knowledge, experience, and practical skills, balancing the duration and content between theory and practice, and ensuring the materials are updated with the latest theories and real-world situations. This opinion is consistent with the discussions and group discussions held at

the “Professional Development for Management Staff and Preschool Teachers” workshop in Hue and Ba Ria-Vung Tau in November 2023. This is something that training organizers need to pay attention to when selecting content and materials for their target audience. There is a need to systematically review all training materials and content to avoid duplication and overlap. Additionally, some participants suggested that greater attention should be paid to developing digital materials for ongoing training. The training materials should be concise and easy to understand, focus more on professional content, and closely align with real-world practices.

4.2.8. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Professional Development

There are multiple factors influencing the effectiveness of professional development, including regulatory and institutional conditions such as policies, regulations, and financial resources; instructor-related factors including teaching methods, professional competence, and enthusiasm; learner-related characteristics such as qualification level, personal attributes, learning motivation, and class size; professional development content; infrastructure encompassing venues, learning materials, and instructional support facilities; time allocation; mechanisms for evaluation and recognition of outcomes; and coordination among different levels of educational management. Survey results indicate that administrators and teachers perceive these factors as having a significant or very significant impact on professional development effectiveness. Learner-related factors were also identified as critical, particularly learning motivation, which emerged as the most influential determinant (90.5% of respondents), exceeding the influence of professional competence, age, learning styles, and class size. Professional development content and appropriate instructor selection were rated as highly influential (83.3%). Regarding organizational conditions, learning materials and instructional support facilities were perceived as the next influential factors (83.1% of respondents), followed by time allocation, mechanisms for certification and

recognition, post-training evaluation processes, and coordination among management levels. Some respondents also noted that geographical constraints and compressed training schedules negatively affect implementation. Instructor-related factors received the high evaluations (82.6% of respondents indicated a significant or very significant impact), and teaching methods, professional competence, and instructor enthusiasm were perceived to exert comparable levels of influence. Qualitative interviews further confirmed that instructors' professional competence plays a direct and decisive role in determining training quality. Finally, policy- and finance-related factors were rated as influential by approximately 69.6% and 70.7% of respondents, respectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that enhancing professional development effectiveness requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes instructor quality, relevant and needs-based content, adequate resources, and strategies to strengthen learner motivation and engagement.

4.3. Demands for Professional Development

4.3.1. Professional Development Contents

The demand for content in professional development in the next phase shows significant findings from the survey: the greatest need is for building relationships between schools, families, and society, accounting for 65.1%. This emphasizes the importance of connecting all parties to enhance educational effectiveness. Other professional development content is also highly valued, including updating and expanding knowledge of pedagogical practices in implementing preschool education programs and applying information technology in the teaching process. Both areas have high demand, with 64.8% of staff and teachers expressing a desire for development. Some topics have a lower demand level, such as updating knowledge about modern preschool education domestically and internationally, accounting for only 18%. This indicates that accessing global knowledge has yet to be a top priority for some educational institutions, especially in remote areas. The results align with group discussions at the workshop.

Additionally, preschool managers and teachers wish to enhance professional development suitable for each individual's job position. The development of foreign and ethnic languages can be considered based on the region and the educational institutions' needs for using foreign or ethnic languages (according to the opinions of preschool managers and teachers in Vung Tau).

4.3.2. Forms, Timing, and Scheduling of Professional Development

Most managers and teachers prefer concentrated forms of development combined with online and blended learning courses. The concentrated form is the preferred choice because it allows for direct exchanges with instructors and immediate clarification of questions. However, online and blended formats are also considered adequate, especially in digital transformation and the need for flexible scheduling.

Regarding the timing of professional development, most managers and teachers prefer to organize training sessions during the summer break, with a selection rate between 43.2% and 49.9%. This is when staff and teachers are not engaged in childcare and education tasks, except for those institutions with summer teaching programs. Approximately 30% of respondents wish professional development to be distributed evenly throughout the school year to avoid pressure at specific times. Additionally, about 15% of opinions suggest that training should be evenly split between the two semesters. Only a tiny percentage of opinions indicate that professional development can occur anytime. In terms of duration, most managers and teachers prefer each training session to last only 1 to 2 days, with a rate ranging from 55.9% to 65.7%, to ensure effectiveness without significantly impacting daily work.

Overall, the demand for professional development among staff and teachers is very high, focusing on practical content and the application of information technology. Solutions should focus on promptly meeting these needs while improving organizational methods to enhance effectiveness.

5. Discussion and Recommendation to Enhance the Effectiveness of Professional Development for Managers and Teachers

The study has shown that the policies and regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Training have established a legal framework for the continuous professional development of the education workforce. However, the implementation at local units and educational institutions still faces limitations, such as overlapping content, fragmented plans, and a lack of systematic training materials. This finding is consistent with the observations of Zaslow *et al.* (2010), who noted that professional development activities in many countries are often fragmented and lack coherence. Other issues also align with international research, including difficulties in arranging time for participation, insufficient incentives and rewards for staff and teachers engaged in professional development, and the limited effectiveness of certain formats—particularly online training without direct instructor guidance. This is the case despite the high demand among managers and teachers for enhancing their professional capacities, especially in practical pedagogical skills, technology application in the context of digital transformation, and building partnerships among schools, families, and communities.

Based on survey findings, the research proposes several solutions:

5.1. Supplementing and improving policies and guidelines

The Ministry of Education and Training should continue to review and amend mechanisms and policies regarding professional development to create the best conditions for administrators and teachers to enhance their professional skills. Some key policy issues to address include:

Adding regulations on the time for professional activities, as stipulated in the Preschool Charter, would prevent professional activities from being conducted outside of working hours.

Establishing regulations and guidelines for staff and teachers to develop their plans and

career development pathways in alignment with their career progression.

Support funding for professional development for managers and teachers in private preschool institutions participating in professional development.

Supplementing regulations for bidding on professional development packages for localities and preschool educational institutions and criteria for selecting the training units to ensure quality.

5.2. Developing Professional Development Plans That Meet Needs and Actual Conditions

The planning of professional development for the school year at all levels should pay attention to the following issues:

National Level:

The Ministry of Education and Training should develop a national professional development plan for each school year so localities can allocate funds and participants appropriately, avoiding the concentration of development schedules at the end of the year.

The central professional development plan should specify the training content to facilitate institutions' arrangements for suitable participants and locality development plans.

The plan should be proposed according to the fiscal year to allow localities to build plans related to funding proactively.

Timing: Central-level training should be organized in July so localities can implement it promptly before the new academic year begins.

Local Level:

Departments and divisions of education should advise relevant authorities to build development content suitable to the local context at specific stages. They should also collaborate with the Departments of Home Affairs, Finance, and Planning and Investment to advise on approving training and development implementation plans and funding.

Selecting training units or instructors with relevant qualifications, competencies, and experience closely aligned with practical issues.

5.3. Innovating Organizational Forms, Evaluation, and Recognition of Training Results

Strengthening remote training combined with in-person training using information technology. In this model, remote training is conducted first to allow participants to access materials and self-study, followed by direct training to facilitate discussions and address questions from instructors and other participants.

Enhancing practical education visits at preschool institutions to learn effective educational models. This includes organizing visits for localities to study excellent and practical models for conducting training and professional development.

Increasing professional activities in clusters and alternating locations will enable more teachers to learn from peers, increase the number of staff participating and sharing knowledge, and make it easier for teachers to travel.

Innovating evaluation and recognition of training results: Strengthening the system of assignments and multiple-choice tests at the end of training courses, supported by information technology. Based on this, results can be quickly updated, and participants can be recognized for training completion.

5.4. Updating Training Content to Meet Preschool Education Reform

Organizing specialized training to enhance practical teaching skills in implementing early childhood education programs, such as planning and organizing activities related to early childhood education reform, inclusive education, and integrated education, especially providing additional support for private schools.

Offering in-depth guidance on techniques for organizing care activities, such as basic first aid for young children, to enhance the quality of preschool education.

Training advanced educational methods (e.g., STEM/STEAM education models).

Including English-related content, in line with Circular 50 on implementing the English familiarization program.

Enhancing the application of information technology and digital platforms in early

childhood education. Organizing for management teams and core teachers to practice using useful software like Canva, Capcut, Recorder, Liveworksheet, Camtasia Studio, Active Isprite, MP3 Key Shutter, Format Factory, Virtual DJ 8.0, etc., in designing electronic lesson plans and building diverse resource libraries to support teaching (videos, games, etc.), making activities more engaging for children.

5.5. Strengthening and Supplementing Digital Resource Materials

Digitalizing educational materials and resources and organizing them systematically so staff and teachers can easily search for, access, and use them.

Diversifying sources of learning materials and resources and official digital lectures for staff and teachers to refer to and study.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study has highlighted the need for improving childhood education policies and practices related to professional development based on the demands of the participants in order to meet the educational reform. The findings indicate that professional development should focus on some content, such as updating pedagogical methods and integrating technology into the educational process, which are significant concerns for staff and teachers at this stage. Furthermore, establishing a systematic development plan, developing training materials and applying innovative training methods require attention. Continuous professional development is crucial, ensuring that educators are adequately equipped to meet the challenges of early childhood education reform in the current period.

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