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Exploring Novice English Language Teachers' Meaning-Making of Professional Development: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

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This qualitative study investigates how novice English language teachers perceive and make sense of professional development (PD) during the earliest stages of their careers. Drawing on an integrative framework that brings together teacher cognition, sense-making, and professional identity perspectives, the study examines how teachers interpret and internalize both formal and informal learning experiences across pedagogical, relational, technological, and ethical dimensions. Twenty-four novice teachers working in public high schools in Kermanshah Province were purposefully selected through criterion-based sampling to ensure analytically rich and contextually grounded accounts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis supported by MAXQDA 2022 software, which enabled a systematic and iterative identification of salient patterns, interpretive processes, and cross-participant convergences. Findings indicate that novice teachers conceptualize PD as a dynamic, evolving, and context-embedded process shaped more by experiential learning, reflective practice, and professional interactions than by formal workshops alone. The key dimensions of PD included maintaining up-to-date professional knowledge, strengthening instructional competence, fostering learner engagement, exercising ethical responsibility, and participating collaboratively in school and curriculum processes. Feedback from students and colleagues, involvement in professional networks, and navigating structural and technological constraints also played influential roles in shaping teachers' developmental trajectories. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of early-career teacher learning by emphasizing the identity-oriented, reflective, and context-sensitive nature of PD, advocating for models that recognize teachers as active agents who co-construct their professional pathways.

Keywords: English language teaching, identity, novice teachers, professional development, sense-making

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1. Introduction

Teachers are central to the quality of educational systems, and the formative years of teaching are particularly critical for establishing both professional identity and instructional competence. Novice teachers encounter evolving responsibilities, diverse expectations, and contextual challenges that demand high levels of adaptability (Nazari et al., 2023). Within English language teaching (ELT), these challenges are compounded by rapidly changing curricula, increasing reliance on educational technology, and heterogeneous learner populations. In such dynamic professional environments, professional development (PD) is widely recognized as an essential component of teachers' professional trajectories—not merely as a set of institutional workshops, but as a continuous, reflective, and transformative process that supports teachers' growth, retention, and instructional effectiveness (Eradze et al., 2023; Gao & Yang, 2022).

Beyond policy or structural considerations, an underexplored dimension is how early-career teachers themselves interpret and assign meaning to PD. Teachers' perceptions influence how PD is connected to pedagogical improvement, personal development, and professional legitimacy. These interpretations encompass multiple domains, including classroom practice, collegial collaboration, digital literacy, and professional ethics, and determine whether PD becomes an embedded, meaningful component of teachers' professional lives or remains a formal obligation. Empirical research indicates that teachers' perceptions strongly shape engagement, implementation fidelity, and broader professional efficacy (Datnow et al., 2023; Estaji & Molkizadeh, 2022).

Early-career teachers in ELT often begin with enthusiasm and recent training, yet they immediately confront diverse learner profiles, technology-rich classrooms, accountability systems, and identity-related pressures (Nazari et al., 2023). In these complex contexts, perceptions of PD significantly affect how teachers adopt instructional practices, maintain motivation, and shape long-term professional trajectories. Consequently, effective PD initiatives must align with teachers' views of their professional worth, purpose, and career development (Sydnor et al., 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic further reshaped the PD landscape. Rapid integration of digital tools, hybrid teaching, and shifting pedagogical priorities required rethinking PD's design and delivery (Eradze et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024; Khosravi Asl et al., 2024). Studies show that technology-mediated and network-based PD have become central to teachers' adaptive strategies; however, their success heavily depends on how teachers interpret and make use of these opportunities. Ignoring teachers' interpretive perspectives risks making PD hierarchical, misaligned, and unsustainable (Alosaimi, 2023).

Recent qualitative research emphasizes the need to explore how novice teachers construct meaning around PD. Quantitative studies of beliefs and engagement patterns (Estaji & Molkizadeh, 2022) provide useful insights but often fail to capture the lived, narrative, and contextual aspects of PD. Sense-making and identity-focused research demonstrates that teachers' emotional experiences, social interactions, and contextual constraints play critical roles in shaping responses to professional learning initiatives (Datnow et al., 2023; Nazari et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings reveal a gap: in-depth interpretive studies examining how novice ELT teachers conceptualize PD across pedagogical, social, technological, and ethical domains remain limited.

Responding to this gap, the present study examines novice English language teachers' perceptions of professional development through a meaning-centered, semantically oriented qualitative lens. By foregrounding teachers' narratives and interpretive work, the study seeks to understand how PD is experienced, valued, and integrated during the formative years of teaching. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. How do novice English language teachers interpret and make sense of professional development in their initial teaching experiences?
2. In what ways do they perceive professional development as contributing to instructional improvement, personal growth, and professional recognition?
3. How do novice teachers describe professional development across the core dimensions of teaching—pedagogical practice, collegial collaboration, technological engagement, and ethical conduct?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Understanding how novice ELT teachers perceive professional development requires an integrative theoretical stance that brings together cognitive, interpretive, and contextual perspectives on teacher learning. Research on teacher cognition conceptualizes teachers as active agents who construct and reconstruct professional knowledge, drawing on prior experiences, beliefs, and situational judgments when responding to both classroom challenges and PD initiatives (Borg, 2019; Nazari et al., 2023). Sense-making theory extends this view by underscoring how teachers interpret novel, ambiguous, or externally imposed initiatives; when encountering PD—particularly within rapidly changing educational contexts—teachers rely on prior mental schemas, social interactions, and affective responses to formulate meanings that become actionable in practice (Datnow et al., 2023). Empirical studies further emphasize that sense-making is not an isolated cognitive act but is socially and institutionally mediated

through shared norms, peer interaction, and the technological affordances available to teachers (Eradze et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024).

Parallel discussions in the literature on professional identity and teacher agency indicate that early-career educators interpret PD experiences in relation to their emerging sense of self and professional legitimacy. Novice teachers are particularly responsive to whether PD initiatives align with, affirm, or potentially disrupt their developing identities and autonomy (Alosaimi, 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024).

Taken together, these bodies of work support a meaning-oriented framework for understanding PD: novice teachers' perceptions develop through the dynamic interplay of cognitive structures (beliefs and prior knowledge), interpretive practices (sense-making), contextual affordances (institutional culture, mentoring, and digital environments), and identity-related concerns (agency and professional positioning). This integrative framework informs the analytical stance of the present study, positioning PD perception as a fluid, socially mediated, and context-sensitive process.

Extending this integrative framing, the study approached teacher cognition, sense-making, and professional identity as analytically intertwined rather than discrete constructs. Teacher cognition informed how participants articulated teaching competence and professional growth, whereas sense-making illuminated how they navigated uncertainty, particularly when institutional demands conflicted with classroom realities. Functioning as an interpretive bridge, sense-making mediated the reconsideration and enactment of cognitive beliefs in practice while shaping negotiations of professional roles. Professional identity introduced temporal and affective depth, capturing how these cognitive and interpretive processes were internalized and reconstructed through reflection, classroom problem-solving, and collegial interaction, thereby reshaping evolving self-conceptions (Borg, 2019; Datnow et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024).

Empirically, this interrelationship surfaced when participants revised established pedagogical assumptions in response to classroom complexity. Prior cognitive schemas were unsettled through practice, negotiated dialogically, and reinterpreted via ongoing sense-making, gradually consolidating into reconfigured professional identities. From this vantage point, professional development is understood not as discrete skill acquisition but as an interpretive, contextually mediated, identity-infused trajectory grounded in lived experience (Ahmed et al., 2025; Borg, 2019; Datnow et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024). This conceptual orientation informed the coding design and thematic construction, ensuring analytic sensitivity to the dynamic interplay among cognition, sense-making, and identity while sustaining methodological rigor and transparency (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Carcary, 2024; Naeem et al., 2023).

2.2. Review of Previous Studies

Over the past decade, research on novice teacher development has shifted from descriptive accounts of early-career challenges to more interpretive studies focused on cognition, identity, and meaning-making. Early investigations primarily documented the difficulties teachers face when transitioning from pre-service training to independent classroom practice. Zhukova (2018), for example, provided a rich depiction of the induction phase, emphasizing emotional strain, classroom management challenges, and pervasive self-doubt. The strength of this study lies in its detailed exploration of emotional realities, offering valuable insight into the affective experiences of novice teachers. However, its descriptive approach limits understanding of how these experiences are cognitively processed or integrated into professional learning.

A more interpretive orientation is evident in Borg's (2019) synthesis of research on language teacher cognition. Borg conceptualized teachers as active agents whose beliefs, experiences, and contextual interpretations mediate professional learning and practice. The key strength of this work lies in its robust theoretical framing of cognition as central to teacher development. However, as a largely conceptual contribution, it offers limited empirical insight into how novice teachers' cognitions evolve through engagement with specific professional development activities.

Building on this foundation, researchers began to explore interpersonal and experiential aspects of professional development. Aghabarari and Rahimi (2020) examined mentoring and practicum experiences, demonstrating that mentorship can simultaneously support and constrain growth. Their findings revealed that mismatched expectations between mentors and mentees often hinder professional development. While the study contributes important insights into relational learning, its cross-sectional design restricts understanding of how mentoring relationships evolve.

Attention also turned toward institutional mechanisms supporting novice teachers. Akiri and Dori (2022) and Hayes et al. (2023) provided empirical evidence that structured induction programs and formal mentoring enhance confidence, instructional effectiveness, and retention. These studies underscore the systemic importance of institutional support. Nevertheless, by conceptualizing professional development primarily as a set of prescribed activities, they offer limited insight into how teachers personally interpret or appropriate these experiences.

Large-scale quantitative research offered complementary perspectives. Estaji and Molkizadeh (2022) investigated links among EFL teachers' beliefs, professional commitment, and engagement in PD activities. Methodological rigor and a broad sample provided valuable macro-level

insights. Yet, the reliance on correlational data overlooked the contextual and interpretive processes shaping individual teachers' professional learning.

Ethical perspectives have also contributed to understandings of teacher professionalism. Tirri and Kuusisto (2022) framed teaching as an ethical profession, highlighting teachers' moral agency and value-based decision-making as integral to professional identity. The strength of this contribution lies in foregrounding ethics as a core dimension of professional growth. However, its largely theoretical focus offers limited insight into how novice teachers negotiate ethical considerations within concrete professional development contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic further reshaped professional development, highlighting technology-mediated learning. Eradze et al. (2023) explored how teachers reorganized PD through online professional networks during emergency remote teaching, revealing both increased agency and emotional strain. While the study offers nuanced insights into adaptation under crisis, its short-term focus limits the understanding of sustained professional growth. Similarly, Datnow et al. (2023) applied a sense-making framework to examine how teachers interpret PD content within institutional contexts. Although conceptually significant, the focus on experienced teachers limits applicability to novices navigating early-career uncertainty.

Extending this line of inquiry, Huang et al. (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of global technology-based PD initiatives, identifying contextual relevance, institutional continuity, and collaboration as key success factors. The strength of this study lies in its comprehensive scope; however, its large-scale synthesis cannot capture the micro-level processes through which individual teachers, particularly novices, make sense of PD experiences. Likewise, Khosravi Asl et al. (2024) investigated English language teaching policies shaping online courses in Iranian language institutes, highlighting how institutional regulations influence teachers' pedagogical autonomy and professional learning. While the study's strength lies in its multi-layered policy analysis linking institutional directives to instructional practice and teacher agency, its document-based design provides more limited insight into teachers' lived experiences and enacted professional development.

Within English language teaching, research has increasingly emphasized identity and affective dimensions. Gao and Yang (2022) used narrative inquiry to illustrate how reflection, professional reading, and community participation shape evolving teacher identities. Sydnor et al. (2024) examined how novices negotiate identity tensions and seek professional recognition. Both studies provide deep qualitative insights, but small sample sizes and limited attention to institutional or technological contexts restrict generalizability. Complementary research by Nazari et al. (2023) and Alosaimi (2023) foregrounded emotional aspects of PD, linking

engagement to self-efficacy, belonging, and recognition, yet did not explore interactions among affective, institutional, and technological factors. Shapouran et al. (2024) explored Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of professional learning, highlighting how collaborative engagement and reflective practice shape teachers' development. A key strength of the study is its phenomenological approach, which captures teachers' lived experiences in depth, while a limitation is its focus on teachers within specific institutional contexts, which may limit generalizability to other settings or school types.

Finally, needs-analysis studies such as Akçor and Ergül (2025) and Hayes et al. (2023) highlighted persistent gaps between institutional PD offerings and novice teachers' preferences. While effective in diagnosing systemic shortcomings, these studies remain largely descriptive, offering limited insight into how teachers navigate these misalignments.

Taken together, the literature reflects a trajectory from descriptive accounts of induction challenges (Zhukova, 2018) to more interpretive, identity-focused perspectives (Datnow et al., 2023; Gao & Yang, 2022). Nonetheless, few studies examine how novice ELT teachers integrate pedagogical, social, technological, and affective dimensions of PD meaning-making. The present study addresses this gap through a meaning-centered qualitative approach, exploring how novice teachers interpret PD while developing their early-career professional identities.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative design to investigate how novice English teachers interpret and make sense of professional development during the early stages of their careers. Given that such interpretations are shaped by prior educational experiences, workplace contexts, and evolving professional identities, a qualitative approach was best suited to capture the complexity and context-specific nature of teachers' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Smith et al., 2022). Rather than seeking generalizability, the study aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives on professional growth.

The research design integrated interpretive phenomenology and narrative inquiry as complementary lenses. Knowledge in phenomenology, grounded in a hermeneutic tradition, is constructed through individuals' interpretive engagement with social and institutional contexts (Manning, 2024). Participants' accounts were thus viewed as sense-making constructions rather than objective representations, highlighting how teachers interpreted professional development encounters, moments of challenge, and experiences of support. This lens allowed for the examination of core

experiential themes, including uncertainty, confidence building, identity negotiation, and perceptions of institutional support (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Smith et al., 2022).

Narrative inquiry complemented phenomenology by examining how participants organized and communicated experiences across time (Ambler et al., 2024). It offered insights into the development of professional agency, identity formation, and career trajectories (Clandinin, 2023; Kim, 2022; Neupane & Gnawali, 2023; Yang & Han, 2022). Participants recounted key episodes, formative influences, and turning points, revealing how they constructed coherent professional identities in relation to mentors, institutional expectations, instructional challenges, and personal goals.

The integration of phenomenology and narrative inquiry yielded a multi-layered analytical framework: phenomenology illuminated shared meanings, while narrative inquiry captured their evolution over time and contribution to developing professional selves (Ambler et al., 2024; Manning, 2024; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2023).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, chosen for its rigor and flexibility in identifying patterned meanings while remaining sensitive to context and individual variation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach enabled the exploration of recurring experiential dimensions alongside narrative structures through which novice teachers understood professional development, encompassing cognitive, contextual, and identity-related aspects of learning (Datnow et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024; Sydnor et al., 2024).

3.2. Participants

The study involved 24 novice English language teachers (14 males and 10 females) employed in public senior high schools across Kermanshah Province. A criterion-based purposive sampling approach was used to ensure close alignment between participant characteristics and the study's objectives. Eligibility required teachers to have no more than two years of teaching experience, to be actively teaching in a public high school at the time of data collection, and to demonstrate willingness to reflect on their professional experiences. At the time of the study, participants were responsible for teaching grades 10–12 and were engaged in full instructional duties, including lesson planning, assessment, and classroom management.

All participants had entered the profession through the national competitive recruitment examination and were simultaneously enrolled in a short-term induction program at Teacher Education University (Farhangian University). This recruitment pathway offered a particularly informative context for examining early professional development, as it diverges from traditional four-year teacher education routes by positioning novice teachers

in full professional roles while their foundational beliefs and instructional competencies are still taking shape.

Participants reflected varied academic backgrounds within English language education. Eighteen held degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (10 B.A., 8 M.A.), 4 had B.A. degrees in English Literature, and 2 held M.A. degrees in English Translation Studies. Teaching experience ranged from one to two years, with no participant exceeding two years of full-time classroom teaching, allowing for variation in early-career exposure while maintaining a clearly defined novice teacher profile. Although all met national qualification requirements for secondary-level English teaching, differences in disciplinary preparation appeared to shape how they initially approached pedagogy, curriculum interpretation, and classroom interaction.

Before formal employment, nine participants had completed short-term practicum placements or substitute teaching assignments, experiences they frequently drew upon when reflecting on early professional learning. These prior experiences varied in duration and intensity, ranging from brief observational placements to independent classroom teaching under supervision in private language institutions, as participants were not permitted to teach in Ministry of Education schools before formal employment. This combination of diverse academic specialization and limited yet varied experiential exposure enriched the dataset by capturing multiple entry trajectories into the profession and enabling comparative insight into how background and early experience informed teachers' sense-making of professional development.

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview protocol developed specifically for the present study (see Appendix A for interview questions). The initial version of the protocol was constructed after an extensive review of the literature on teacher cognition, sense-making, and professional identity formation. It contained broad, open-ended prompts designed to elicit rich narratives about participants' interpretations of professional development, their encounters with pedagogical and relational challenges, and how they negotiated expectations in their early professional environments. To enhance the credibility and qualitative validity of the protocol, two experts in ELT teacher education and qualitative methodology reviewed the draft and provided critical feedback on conceptual alignment, clarity, and flow. Their suggestions led to refinements in question wording and sequencing, ensuring that the protocol captured the constructs embedded in the theoretical framework without constraining participants' expressive freedom.

To further assess the protocol's effectiveness, a pilot phase was conducted with three novice teachers who met the inclusion criteria but did not participate in the main study. The pilot interviews illuminated minor issues related to question phrasing and the sequencing of follow-up prompts. These insights resulted in targeted adjustments that improved the accessibility and depth of the interview questions. Following this refinement process, the same researcher conducted all interviews to maintain continuity in tone, rapport, and interview style. Each interview was audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and transcribed verbatim shortly after completion. This approach preserved linguistic nuance, emotional tone, and conversational rhythm, thereby enhancing interpretive accuracy and supporting the trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

3.4. Procedure

The research unfolded in a series of interconnected stages designed to ensure methodological rigor and transparency. The researcher contacted school administrators and English language teaching group leaders across Kermanshah Province to introduce the study and request their assistance in disseminating the recruitment notice to eligible novice teachers. Teachers who expressed interest reached out directly to the researcher and, after their eligibility was confirmed, received detailed information about the study along with a consent form. Interviews were subsequently scheduled at times that best accommodated participants' schedules and were conducted either face-to-face in private rooms within their schools or through secure online platforms, depending on each participant's preference and availability.

A short pilot phase preceded the main data collection, during which the interview protocol was tested for clarity, relevance, and conceptual reach. The final version of the protocol was used in all subsequent interviews. Each session began with a brief explanation of the study's aims and reassurance regarding confidentiality, after which participants were invited to recount and reflect on their PD experiences. Interviews, lasting between 50 and 60 minutes, adopted a conversational style that allowed participants to move naturally between experiences while still addressing the conceptual domains of the study. Immediately following each interview, the researcher recorded field notes to capture contextual impressions, emerging observations, and nonverbal cues not fully conveyed in the audio recordings. Transcription occurred within 48 hours of each session, and all transcripts were anonymized before being uploaded to MAXQDA 2022 software for analysis. This iterative cycle of interviewing, transcribing, memo writing, and preliminary coding continued until the twenty-fourth interview, by which point thematic saturation had clearly been reached. The procedure concluded

with a phase of analytic verification involving participant feedback on summary interpretations and peer consultation on coding and theme development.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic framework. The process began with repeated, immersive readings of each transcript to build familiarity with the data and to identify emerging experiential and narrative patterns. This initial engagement allowed the researcher to trace teachers' perceptions, interpretive orientations, professional practices, and evolving identity positions. Line-by-line coding was then performed in MAXQDA 2022 to isolate meaning units relevant to these domains.

MAXQDA 2022 served not simply as a data repository but as an interactive environment supporting layered coding, visualization, and reflexive memoing (Aghabarari & Rahimi, 2020). Transcripts were organized into a hierarchical coding structure, enabling movement between granular textual detail and higher-level conceptual abstraction. Code co-occurrence visualizations facilitated the examination of relationships among cognition, identity formation, and contextual influences, revealing recurring patterns, such as the alignment between engagement with feedback and the consolidation of professional confidence. Embedded analytic memos documented interpretive insights, theoretical connections, and coding rationales, preserving a transparent link between raw data and analytic claims (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Consistent with the study's phenomenological–narrative orientation, analysis employed a hybrid thematic strategy, combining inductive sensitivity with deductive structure (Ahmed et al., 2025; Byrne, 2022). Deductive coding drew on the conceptual framework, spanning cognitive, contextual, and identity dimensions, to establish sensitizing analytic lenses (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In parallel, inductive engagement allowed unanticipated meanings to surface, including emotional responses to evaluative feedback, locally situated curricular pressures, and tensions linking personal aspirations with institutional expectations. This dual approach ensured that the analysis was both theoretically grounded and responsive to participants' lived professional trajectories (Terry et al., 2023).

Coding proceeded in three iterative stages. Phase 1 (open coding) involved detailed line-by-line examination of transcripts, generating 186 preliminary descriptive codes representing discrete meaning units, such as learning through classroom experimentation, technology-related apprehension, and reliance on peer affirmation. Interpretive annotations,

ambiguous passages, and inclusion or exclusion rationales were recorded, enhancing analytic transparency (Byrne, 2022).

Phase 2 (axial coding and consolidation) clustered conceptually related codes through constant comparison. Examples such as spontaneously adjusting lessons, responding to emergent learner needs, and improvising instructional strategies were grouped under the axial construct of adaptive pedagogical reasoning. Decisions regarding code mergers, eliminations, or reconfigurations were guided by recurrence, conceptual alignment, and explanatory value, with memos documenting the analytic reasoning and preserving sensitivity to individual variation.

Phase 3 (selective and thematic coding) synthesized axial categories into higher-order themes aligned with the theoretical framework. Focused coding reduced the dataset to 64 refined codes, organized into 18 axial groupings and ultimately distilled into 10 overarching themes. Theme development involved iterative interrogation of inter-category relationships, refinement of thematic nomenclature, and verification against original transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2023). This process traced how micro-level textual fragments evolved into broader conceptual insights.

Thematic saturation was assessed through repeated meaning units, stabilization of the coding schema, and diminishing novelty in memos. By the twenty-second interview, no new codes emerged, and two additional interviews confirmed analytic sufficiency (Yanto, 2023). Saturation judgments considered cross-participant depth, memo convergence, and the maturation of thematic categories (Terry et al., 2023).

Across all stages, reflexive memoing, constant comparison, and decision-tracking protocols were systematically applied to ensure transparency and methodological rigor. This integrative and reflexive design enabled a rigorous, context-sensitive interpretation that captured both the experiential substance and narrative shaping of early-career teachers' professional development understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Byrne, 2022; Terry et al., 2023; Tracy, 2024).

3.6. Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigor, the study incorporated multiple strategies consistent with established qualitative quality criteria. Reflexivity was sustained through an ongoing researcher journal in which positionality, assumptions, and evolving interpretations were critically documented, helping to surface and bracket potential biases (Tracy, 2024). Credibility was further strengthened through member checking, whereby participants reviewed synthesized interpretations and confirmed their resonance with their lived experiences. Peer debriefing with two experienced qualitative researchers created space for critical dialogue around analytic decisions,

particularly during the transition from coding to thematic abstraction (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

An additional layer of analytic credibility was established through collaborative coding procedures. An independent coding reviewer coded approximately 25% of the dataset using the shared codebook. Divergences were carefully examined, and iterative discussions focused on the conceptual boundaries between cognition-oriented and identity-related codes, clarifying operational definitions and coding criteria. This process not only enhanced agreement but also refined the analytic framework by revealing subtle distinctions in how professional development was experienced. Initial concordance reached 82%. Through this negotiated process, the codebook was finalized for the remaining dataset. This calibration process enhanced coding dependability while preserving interpretive nuance.

Dependability and confirmability were reinforced through the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail, including analytic memos, coding records, and visual thematic maps that rendered the decision-making process transparent (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Carcary, 2024). Finally, thick, contextually grounded descriptions of participants, institutional environments, and professional preparation pathways were provided to support the transferability of findings to comparable educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Collectively, these procedures ensured that the study's interpretations remained credible, traceable, and methodologically robust.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

To offer a comprehensive account of how novice English teachers interpret and engage with PD, the analysis generated ten overarching themes comprising multiple subthemes (Table 1). These themes reflect the multidimensional character of early-career learning, spanning instructional practice, collaboration, ethics, and professional identity. Table 1 presents the core themes together with illustrative participant narratives, while a detailed mapping of the themes to the three research questions is provided in Appendix B. This cross-referencing enhances analytic transparency and clarifies how each thematic domain contributes to the study's central aims. To preserve conceptual coherence, the findings are organized according to the three research questions, with each subsection foregrounding the themes most directly relevant to the focal line of inquiry.

To strengthen interpretive engagement, participant quotations were systematically integrated with the thematic framework rather than included solely as illustrative examples. Each quote was selected for its explanatory value, showing how teachers' cognitive processes, identity negotiations, and

sense-making mechanisms, how they interpreted and acted upon classroom experiences, interacted within and across themes.

Table 1

Main Themes, Subthemes, and Sample Narratives

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Sample Narratives
Nature of Professional Development	Professional development is a dynamic and evolving process	“I have come to realize that professional growth is never fixed; each day I encounter something new that reshapes the way I teach.” (Interviewee No. 2)
	Growth is shaped through experience and reflection	“Much of what helps me in the classroom now comes from daily experiences rather than formal training sessions.” (Interviewee No. 7)
	Interconnection of personal and instructional growth	“A teacher needs to develop both personally and instructionally; these two dimensions reinforce one another.” (Interviewee No. 3)
Indicators and Criteria of Professional Development	Updating professional knowledge and skills	“If teachers don’t stay updated, they quickly fall behind the needs of their students.” (Interviewee No. 10)
	Flexibility and adaptability	“Classrooms are full of unexpected situations, and a teacher has to adjust to whatever comes up.” (Interviewee No. 14)
	Self-evaluation and receptiveness to feedback	“I regularly review my performance after each class to identify areas that need improvement.” (Interviewee No. 9)
	Ethical conduct and responsibility	“At the end of the day, we are responsible for students’ learning, so our professional behavior matters greatly.” (Interviewee No.)

1)		
Outcomes of Professional Development	Improved instructional quality	“Over time, my teaching has become more structured and intentional as my skills have developed.” (Interviewee No. 5)
	Enhanced student learning	“Whenever I change or improve my teaching methods, I immediately notice higher student engagement.” (Interviewee No. 8)
	Increased confidence	“Compared to when I first started, I now teach with much greater confidence.”
	Strengthened problem-solving skills	“I can find solutions to classroom challenges more easily than before.” (Interviewee No. 11)
Role of Feedback in Encouraging Professional Growth	Student feedback	“Students’ reactions and engagement tell me a lot about whether my teaching is effective.” (Interviewee No. 4)
	Peer feedback	“When a colleague observes my class and shares their thoughts, it gives me a new perspective.” (Interviewee No. 18)
	Using feedback to refine teaching methods	“Sometimes a single comment has led me to revise parts of my instructional approach.” (Interviewee No. 13)
Teacher Participation in Curriculum Processes	Need for teacher involvement	“Teachers know best where students struggle, yet our perspectives are not always considered.” (Interviewee No. 16)
	Participation in professional or subject committees	“In departmental meetings, we can raise curriculum-related issues, although time is often limited.”

	Structural constraints	(Interviewee No. 6) “Curriculum decisions are mostly centralized, leaving little room for teachers to participate meaningfully.” (Interviewee No. 5)
Professional Knowledge and Pedagogical Literacy	Importance of subject-matter expertise	“If I don’t fully understand the content myself, it becomes even harder for students to grasp it.” (Interviewee No. 20)
	Interplay between content knowledge and pedagogy	“Being confident in the subject helps me select more effective teaching strategies.” (Interviewee No. 17)
	Influence of expertise on classroom management	“When I’m well-prepared, the class runs more smoothly and students experience fewer points of confusion.” (Interviewee No. 15)
Enhancing Learner Engagement	Active learning strategies	“Any time I use group activities, student participation increases significantly.”
	Use of technology	“Digital tools and videos really boost students’ motivation to participate.” (Interviewee No. 21)
	Managing technology-rich learning environments	“Technology-based activities require more attention because it’s easier for students to get distracted.” (Interviewee No. 23)
Professional Networks and Educational Interactions	Role of families	“Communicating with families helps me understand the reasons behind some learning difficulties.” (Interviewee No. 12)
	School-level collaboration	“When school leadership and colleagues cooperate well,

		teaching becomes much smoother.” (Interviewee No. 8)
	Connection with the wider community	“Learning in real-life contexts has a stronger impact and engages students more deeply.” (Interviewee No. 24)
Assessment as a Component of Professional Development	Prevalence of direct assessment	“I mostly rely on quizzes and classroom tasks to gauge student learning.” (Interviewee No. 22)
	Limited opportunities for indirect assessment	“There isn’t a structured system for students to assess their own learning.” (Interviewee No. 19)
	Assessment as a tool for identifying needs	“Assessment results show me where I need to allocate more time or adjust my teaching.” (Interviewee No. 9)
Professional Ethics in Teaching	Creating a safe and supportive classroom climate	“Students learn better when they feel safe and respected.” (Interviewee No. 15)
	Fair and equitable behavior	“I make an effort to treat all students fairly, and this is reflected in how they respond in class.” (Interviewee No. 18)
	Acting as a role model	“Students pay more attention to our actions than to what we tell them.” (Interviewee No. 2)

4.1.1. Research Question 1: How Do Novice English Language Teachers Interpret and Make Sense of Professional Development in Their Initial Teaching Experiences?

The themes most closely related to this question, nature of professional development, professional knowledge and pedagogical literacy, and professional ethics in teaching, illustrate how early-career teachers conceptualize PD as simultaneously personal, instructional, and ethical in nature (See Appendix B for the full RQ–Theme matrix).

Teachers consistently described PD as a dynamic, evolving process shaped more by everyday classroom experiences than by formal training opportunities. One participant explained, “Every class brings something new that changes how I see teaching; it’s never finished.” Their accounts revealed that PD was rooted in continuous sense-making that intertwined reflection, emotional adaptation, and experiential learning. Participants emphasized that personal growth and instructional improvement were deeply interconnected. As one teacher shared, “Learning to stay calm and flexible in unexpected moments is part of becoming a better teacher.” In this way, novice teachers understood PD as both a practical learning process and a catalyst for identity formation.

For instance, when one teacher noted that “professional growth is never fixed; each day I encounter something new that reshapes the way I teach,” this account was coded not only under *experiential learning* but also under *identity recalibration*. The statement reflects how everyday instructional encounters prompt reinterpretations of professional self-understanding, illustrating the intersection of cognition, sense-making, and identity formation.

Participants also interpreted PD through the development of pedagogical and subject-matter expertise. They noted that deepening their knowledge base enabled them to make more intentional instructional decisions and manage the classroom more effectively. One teacher commented, “Being confident in the subject helps me select more effective teaching strategies.” This statement was analytically coded as pedagogical self-efficacy, as it reflects how growing content mastery reshaped teachers’ instructional reasoning rather than merely expanding technical knowledge. Confidence in subject matter functioned as a cognitive anchor that allowed novice teachers to anticipate student difficulties, make principled instructional choices, and enact authority in the classroom.

As teachers accumulated content-specific and pedagogical literacy, they increasingly understood professional development as a process of refining judgment and professional agency, positioning knowledge growth as central to their evolving conception of teaching competence.

Ethical awareness constituted another important dimension of teachers’ interpretations of PD. Participants described professional growth as closely tied to cultivating fairness, responsibility, and a supportive classroom environment. As one teacher noted, “Students learn better when they feel safe and respected.” Rather than being treated as a moral add-on, this account was coded under ethical enactment, capturing how teachers embedded ethical reasoning within everyday instructional practice. The emphasis on emotional safety illustrates how novice teachers interpreted professionalism as relational and affective, linking ethical conduct directly to pedagogical

effectiveness. Ethical considerations influenced how teachers positioned themselves in their professional communities and contributed to the formation of their early teaching identities, reinforcing PD as both a moral and instructional undertaking.

Together, these themes illustrate that novice teachers conceptualize PD as an experiential, ethical, and instructional journey. Building on these foundational interpretations, the next subsection examines how teachers perceive the effects of PD—specifically how developmental experiences contribute to instructional improvement, personal growth, and professional recognition.

4.1.2. Research Question 2: In What Ways Do They Perceive Professional Development as Contributing to Instructional Improvement, Personal Growth, and Professional Recognition?

The themes associated with this question, indicators and criteria of professional development, outcomes of professional development, and the role of feedback in encouraging professional growth, shed light on how teachers evaluate their own progress and understand the tangible impact of PD on practice (see Appendix B for alignment).

Teachers identified several indicators of meaningful professional progress, including staying current with pedagogical knowledge, adapting to classroom demands, engaging in self-evaluation, and upholding ethical responsibility. One participant emphasized the value of continuous learning, stating, “If teachers don’t stay updated, they quickly fall behind the needs of their students.” This perception was coded as anticipatory professional orientation, reflecting how teachers evaluated development not in terms of completed training but in relation to future classroom demands. Professional growth was thus framed as a forward-looking stance grounded in responsiveness rather than compliance.

Self-reflection and receptiveness to critique were viewed as essential pathways for instructional improvement and professional legitimacy. Teachers’ emphasis on self-evaluation indicates that PD was assessed internally through reflective judgment, suggesting that novice teachers were actively constructing their own criteria for professional adequacy.

Participants described clear instructional and personal benefits linked to PD. Improved lesson structure, more intentional teaching, and enhanced student engagement were among the most frequently cited outcomes. As one teacher observed, “Over time, my teaching has become more structured and intentional as my skills have developed.” This narrative was analytically linked to the subtheme instructional intentionality, capturing how professional growth was experienced as increased coherence between planning, enactment, and instructional goals.

Teachers also associated PD with increased confidence, stronger problem-solving abilities, and greater adaptability—capacities they considered vital for effective and responsive practice. Rather than isolated outcomes, these capacities were interpreted as mutually reinforcing, suggesting that PD contributed to a cumulative sense of professional readiness and resilience in early-career teaching.

Feedback from students and colleagues played a pivotal role in shaping teachers' perceptions of development. Rather than viewing feedback as evaluative, participants described it as a constructive resource for reflection and refinement. For instance, one participant noted, "A colleague's suggestion led me to revise parts of my instructional approach," which was analytically linked to the subtheme *relationally mediated cognition*. In this context, feedback operated as a social catalyst for professional reasoning, demonstrating that interpretive learning emerges through co-construction within professional relationships rather than solely through individual effort.

How PD fosters teachers' instructional and personal growth also highlights the varied contexts in which development unfolds. To address these broader contexts, the following subsection examines how novice teachers describe PD across core dimensions of teaching, including pedagogy, collaboration, technology, and ethics.

4.1.3. Research Question 3: How Do Novice Teachers Describe Professional Development Across the Core Dimensions of Teaching, Pedagogical Practice, Collegial Collaboration, Technological Engagement, and Ethical Conduct?

Themes aligned with this question, enhancing learner engagement, professional networks and educational interactions, assessment as a component of professional development, and teacher participation in curriculum processes, highlight the multifaceted and interconnected nature of early-career professional learning (Appendix B).

Teachers emphasized learner engagement as a central dimension of their professional growth. They reported using active learning strategies, group activities, and digital tools to increase student participation. One participant explained, "Any time I use group activities, student participation increases significantly." This account was coded under pedagogical experimentation, illustrating how teachers interpreted student responsiveness as evidence of their own professional learning. Engagement functioned as a feedback mechanism through which teachers evaluated and refined their instructional decisions.

While technology was valued for its motivational potential, teachers also acknowledged the need for careful management to prevent distraction. This tension highlights how novice teachers negotiated innovation and

control, positioning technological competence as an emerging component of professional judgment rather than a purely technical skill.

Collaboration emerged as a crucial aspect of PD. Participants described interactions with colleagues, families, and community members as enriching their instructional knowledge and expanding their support networks. As one teacher noted, “When school leadership and colleagues cooperate well, teaching becomes much smoother.” This statement was interpreted through the lens of distributed professionalism, indicating that teachers’ sense of effectiveness was co-constructed through relational support rather than individual expertise alone.

Such networks shaped pedagogical decisions and contributed to teachers’ developing professional identities. Professional development was therefore experienced as socially situated, unfolding through interaction, dialogue, and shared problem-solving within educational communities.

Assessment practices also served as an important source of professional learning. Teachers relied heavily on direct assessment methods—such as quizzes and classroom tasks—to gauge student understanding and adjust instruction. A participant remarked, “Assessment results show me where I need to allocate more time or adjust my teaching.” This account was coded as data-informed reflection, capturing how assessment outcomes functioned as diagnostic tools for instructional decision-making rather than merely measures of student performance.

At the same time, limited opportunities for self- or peer-assessment highlighted systemic constraints affecting PD. Teachers’ recognition of these limitations suggests an emerging critical awareness of how institutional structures shape the scope and depth of professional learning.

Teachers expressed a desire for greater involvement in curriculum-related decision-making. Although some opportunities were available through departmental meetings or committees, participants noted that centralized structures often restricted their contributions. As one teacher reflected, “Teachers know best where students struggle, yet our perspectives are not always considered.” This narrative was analytically linked to constrained professional agency, illustrating how teachers’ experiential knowledge was undervalued within formal decision-making processes.

Meaningful participation was viewed as essential for aligning curriculum with classroom realities. Teachers thus interpreted curriculum involvement as a critical site of professional development, where pedagogical expertise, contextual knowledge, and professional voice intersect.

Collectively, across all three research questions, the findings portray PD as a holistic, multidimensional process in which novice teachers integrate experience, reflection, feedback, ethical reasoning, and relational dynamics. Professional growth was framed not as compliance with formal programs but

as meaning-making grounded in classroom practice, personal development, and social interaction. This interpretive understanding aligns closely with the study's theoretical framework, emphasizing sense-making, teacher cognition, and identity formation (Datnow et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024).

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that novice English language teachers perceive PD as a dynamic, context-sensitive process rather than a series of disconnected workshops or externally imposed programs. Participants consistently emphasized that PD emerges from everyday teaching experiences, shaped by the intersection of personal dispositions, instructional challenges, institutional structures, and social relationships. This perspective aligns with sense-making and teacher cognition research, which underscores that teacher learning is inherently interpretive, requiring novices to adapt and reconstruct prior knowledge and beliefs in response to classroom realities (Borg, 2019; Datnow et al., 2023).

A dominant theme in the findings is the centrality of experiential learning. Teachers described their initial months in the classroom as an intensive period of reflection and rapid adaptation. These findings echo recent classroom-focused and methodological scholarship in ELT, which positions teacher learning as contextually constructed and pedagogically situated (Shapouran et al., 2024). Strategies introduced during preservice training often felt abstract until applied in authentic teaching situations, where they gained practical meaning. This process mirrors prior research suggesting that novice teachers refine assumptions and reshape professional identities when confronted with classroom complexities (Nazari et al., 2023; Zhukova, 2018). Participants highlighted qualities such as adaptability, patience, and emotional self-regulation as critical for navigating unpredictable classroom contexts. These insights support Gao and Yang's (2022) assertion that PD is inseparable from identity formation, encompassing both the acquisition of instructional skills and the development of one's professional self.

The study further demonstrates that novice teachers conceptualize professional competence as multidimensional. Meaningful development, according to participants, includes updating pedagogical and content knowledge, responding flexibly to unforeseen circumstances, embracing feedback, and maintaining ethical responsibility. Feedback emerged as a particularly potent driver of growth: student responses and colleagues' suggestions were valued as informative rather than evaluative, guiding instructional adjustments and strategy refinement. These findings corroborate research emphasizing the relational dimensions of teacher learning, where mentorship, collegial dialogue, and social interaction are central to early-

career development (Aghabarari & Rahimi, 2020; Akiri & Dori, 2022). Participants' focus on fairness, responsibility, and nurturing learning environments further highlights the moral and relational aspects of teaching emphasized by Tirri and Kuusisto (2022).

Technology integration and learner engagement constitute another significant dimension of PD. Teachers regarded digital tools as both opportunities and challenges: they enhanced motivation and participation but required careful management to prevent distraction. This dual perspective reflects broader research indicating that effective digital literacy depends on both individual teacher competence and contextual factors, such as institutional support, regulatory frameworks, and resource availability (Eradze et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024; Khosravi Asl et al., 2024). Participants identified active learning, collaborative group work, and multimedia use as strategies that effectively enhanced student engagement, illustrating that PD encompasses cognitive, affective, and relational growth simultaneously.

Curriculum participation emerged as an area where novice teachers desired greater influence. Many expressed a belief that their classroom expertise could improve the relevance and responsiveness of curricular decisions. Nevertheless, structural constraints, including centralized decision-making and limited access to committees, often curtailed their involvement. This tension reflects trends in the literature, where institutional PD initiatives do not always align with teachers' perceived needs or classroom realities (Akçor & Ergül, 2025; Hayes et al., 2023). The findings suggest that enabling teachers to participate more meaningfully in curriculum development could strengthen their professional agency and enhance instructional coherence.

Professional knowledge and pedagogical literacy were consistently highlighted as foundational for PD. Participants noted that mastery of subject matter reinforced confidence, facilitated classroom management, and supported effective instructional decision-making. The interplay between content knowledge and pedagogy observed in the findings aligns with studies demonstrating that perceived competence strongly shapes novice teachers' emerging professional identities and instructional effectiveness (Sydnor et al., 2024). Reflections on learner engagement, particularly through interactive and multimedia-based approaches, further reveal the interconnection between pedagogical knowledge, student motivation, and classroom dynamics in early-career development.

Interestingly, the findings diverge from studies emphasizing the impact of structured induction programs or formal PD initiatives. While studies by Akiri and Dori (2022) and Hayes et al. (2023) suggest that top-down PD frameworks can improve teacher performance and retention, participants in this study emphasized that formal PD alone did not account

for their most meaningful growth. Instead, development primarily occurred through classroom-based reflection, problem-solving, and social interactions. This divergence may stem from methodological differences: prior studies often rely on quantitative measures, whereas the present qualitative approach captures the nuanced ways teachers interpret and internalize PD within their lived contexts. Similarly, although Estaji and Molkizadeh (2022) report correlations between teacher beliefs and PD participation, their survey-based methods do not fully address the situated meaning-making highlighted in this study.

Finally, the results underscore the importance of professional networks and assessment in early-career teacher development. Participants relied on colleagues, administrators, families, and community members for guidance, emotional support, and contextual insight. Classroom-based assessment practices were used to identify student needs and inform instructional adjustments, reinforcing the notion that PD is a socially embedded, collaborative process rather than an isolated professional task.

Interpreted through an integrated theoretical lens, the findings indicate that novice teachers' professional development exceeds discrete learning events. Participants' narratives reveal a dynamic interconnection among cognition, sense-making, and identity positioning. Sense-making functioned as a mediating process through which teachers reinterpreted prior beliefs in response to classroom contingencies and recalibrated professional self-understandings. For instance, adapting instruction to student disengagement involved simultaneous shifts in pedagogical beliefs, interpretations of contextual feedback, and negotiations of professional legitimacy (Borg, 2019; Datnow et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024). This triadic interplay underscores that early-career learning is epistemic, interpretive, and ontological, shaping both practice and self-concept within institutional and relational contexts (Gao & Yang, 2022; Nazari et al., 2023). Meaningful development, therefore, emerges through sustained reflection, adaptive reasoning, and ongoing identity construction grounded in lived teaching experience (Aghabarari & Rahimi, 2020; Shapouran et al., 2024).

Collectively, these findings portray PD as an integrative, multifaceted journey shaped by instructional demands, ethical commitments, emotional resilience, technological adaptation, and collaborative relationships. By foregrounding teachers' own interpretations, this study complements and extends existing scholarship (Datnow et al., 2023; Gao & Yang, 2022; Sydnor et al., 2024), illustrating that novice teacher development cannot be fully captured through formal programs or standardized metrics alone. Effective PD must recognize teachers as active meaning-makers who continuously navigate complex classroom ecosystems, construct professional identities, and adapt to evolving pedagogical realities.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study examines how novice English language teachers understand and participate in professional development (PD) at the start of their careers. Instead of viewing PD as a series of isolated workshops or externally imposed requirements, participants described it as an ongoing process shaped by everyday teaching practice. Their accounts show that professional learning evolves through classroom experiences, personal beliefs, interactions with students and colleagues, ethical considerations, and reflective practice. In this way, PD is closely linked to teachers' developing professional identities, instructional decision-making, and sense of agency.

Experiential learning was identified as the main source of professional growth. Teachers emphasized that development happened mainly through real classroom challenges, where reflection, responsiveness to learners, and continuous adjustment of teaching strategies were crucial. Feedback from students and peers supported this process by encouraging reflection and helping teachers refine their instructional choices. These findings support earlier research suggesting that novice teachers actively interpret and construct their professional learning rather than simply receiving knowledge through formal training.

The findings also highlight the multifaceted nature of PD. Participants described growth not only in pedagogical and subject knowledge but also in ethical awareness, emotional resilience, collaboration, and digital skills. Effective teaching was seen as arising from the interaction of these elements in practice. Additionally, teachers expressed a desire to contribute to curriculum-related decisions, pointing to ongoing tensions between locally developed professional knowledge and centralized institutional expectations.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a regionally limited and similarly structured group of participants, and the findings mainly rely on self-reported perceptions. Future research could use longitudinal designs, include classroom observations, and explore a wider range of institutional contexts to better understand how PD develops over time.

Overall, this study offers a detailed view of novice teachers' professional development by emphasizing reflective, relational, and identity-related aspects. The findings suggest that context-sensitive, collaborative, and reflective PD models can support early-career teachers' growth while also enhancing the quality, relevance, and equity of language education. Importantly, the study advocates for professional learning models that recognize teachers as active agents in their own development rather than passive recipients of externally mandated programs.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. To begin, how do you understand “professional development” at this early stage of your career, and how have your day-to-day teaching experiences shaped that understanding?
2. When you encounter different forms of PD, such as workshops, classroom experiences, or interactions with others, how do you make sense of them, and what personal beliefs, prior experiences, or contextual factors most influence your interpretations?
3. In what ways have your professional development experiences, formal or informal, affected your instructional decisions, classroom strategies, and efforts to engage students in meaningful learning?
4. How do you use feedback from students, colleagues, or assessments of student learning to reflect on and refine your teaching practices?
5. How have relationships with colleagues, school leadership, families, or wider professional networks contributed to your growth as a novice teacher?
6. How do technological tools and the broader school or curriculum structures support or constrain your professional learning and development?
7. How are your early PD experiences shaping your sense of professional identity, ethical commitments, and the direction you envision for your continued growth as an English language teacher?

Appendix B
Alignment of Main Themes, Sub-Themes, Research Questions, and
Illustrative Participant Narratives

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Sample Narratives
Nature of Professional Development	Professional development as a dynamic and evolving process (<i>RQ1</i>)	“I have come to realize that professional growth is never fixed; each day I encounter something new that reshapes the way I teach.” (Interviewee No. 2)
	Growth is shaped through experience and reflection (<i>RQ1</i>)	“Much of what helps me in the classroom now comes from daily experiences rather than formal training sessions.” (Interviewee No. 7)
	Interconnection of personal and instructional growth (<i>RQ2</i>)	“A teacher needs to develop both personally and instructionally; these two dimensions reinforce one another.” (Interviewee No. 3)
Indicators and Criteria of Professional Development	Updating professional knowledge and skills (<i>RQ2</i>)	“If teachers don’t stay updated, they quickly fall behind the needs of their students.” (Interviewee No. 10)
	Flexibility and adaptability (<i>RQ2</i>)	“Classrooms are full of unexpected situations, and a teacher has to adjust to whatever comes up.” (Interviewee No. 14)
	Self-evaluation and receptiveness to feedback (<i>RQ2</i>)	“I regularly review my performance after each class to identify areas that need improvement.” (Interviewee No. 9)
	Ethical conduct and responsibility (<i>RQ3</i>)	“At the end of the day, we are responsible for students’ learning, so our professional behavior matters greatly.” (Interviewee No. 1)
Outcomes of Professional Development	Improved instructional quality (<i>RQ2</i>)	“Over time, my teaching has become more structured and intentional as my skills have developed.” (Interviewee No. 5)

	Enhanced student learning (<i>RQ2</i>)	“Whenever I change or improve my teaching methods, I immediately notice higher student engagement.” (Interviewee No. 8)
	Increased confidence (<i>RQ2</i>)	“Compared to when I first started, I now teach with much greater confidence.”
	Strengthened problem-solving skills (<i>RQ2</i>)	“I can find solutions to classroom challenges more easily than before.” (Interviewee No. 11)
Role of Feedback in Encouraging Professional Growth	Student feedback (<i>RQ1</i>)	“Students’ reactions and engagement tell me a lot about whether my teaching is effective.” (Interviewee No. 4)
	Peer feedback (<i>RQ1</i>)	“When a colleague observes my class and shares their thoughts, it gives me a new perspective.” (Interviewee No. 18)
	Using feedback to refine teaching methods (<i>RQ2</i>)	“Sometimes a single comment has led me to revise parts of my instructional approach.” (Interviewee No. 13)
Teacher Participation in Curriculum Processes	Need for teacher involvement (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Teachers know best where students struggle, yet our perspectives are not always considered.” (Interviewee No. 16)
	Participation in professional or subject committees (<i>RQ3</i>)	“In departmental meetings, we can raise curriculum-related issues, although time is often limited.” (Interviewee No. 6)
	Structural constraints (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Curriculum decisions are mostly centralized, leaving little room for teachers to participate meaningfully.” (Interviewee No. 5)
Professional Knowledge and Pedagogical Literacy	Importance of subject-matter expertise (<i>RQ3</i>)	“If I don’t fully understand the content myself, it becomes even harder for students to grasp it.” (Interviewee No. 20)

	Interplay between content knowledge and pedagogy (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Being confident in the subject helps me select more effective teaching strategies.” (Interviewee No. 17)
	Influence of expertise on classroom management (<i>RQ3</i>)	“When I’m well-prepared, the class runs more smoothly and students experience fewer points of confusion.” (Interviewee No. 15)
Enhancing Learner Engagement	Active learning strategies (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Any time I use group activities, student participation increases significantly.”
	Use of technology (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Digital tools and videos really boost students’ motivation to participate.” (Interviewee No. 21)
	Managing technology-rich learning environments (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Technology-based activities require more attention because it’s easier for students to get distracted.” (Interviewee No. 23)
Professional Networks and Educational Interactions	Role of families (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Communicating with families helps me understand the reasons behind some learning difficulties.” (Interviewee No. 12)
	School-level collaboration (<i>RQ3</i>)	“When school leadership and colleagues cooperate well, teaching becomes much smoother.” (Interviewee No. 8)
	Connection with the wider community (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Learning in real-life contexts has a stronger impact and engages students more deeply.” (Interviewee No. 24)
Assessment as a Component of Professional Development	Prevalence of direct assessment (<i>RQ2</i>)	“I mostly rely on quizzes and classroom tasks to gauge student learning.” (Interviewee No. 22)
	Limited opportunities for indirect assessment (<i>RQ2</i>)	“There isn’t a structured system for students to assess their own learning.” (Interviewee No. 19)
	Assessment as a tool	“Assessment results show me

	for identifying needs (<i>RQ2</i>)	where I need to allocate more time or adjust my teaching.” (Interviewee No. 9)
Professional Ethics in Teaching	Creating a safe and supportive classroom climate (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Students learn better when they feel safe and respected.” (Interviewee No. 15)
	Fair and equitable behavior (<i>RQ3</i>)	“I make an effort to treat all students fairly, and this is reflected in how they respond in class.” (Interviewee No. 18)
	Acting as a role model (<i>RQ3</i>)	“Students pay more attention to our actions than to what we tell them.” (Interviewee No. 2)
